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Twisting History for Hate: Nordicism, Norse Pseudohistory, and Twenty-First Century American White Nationalism

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A Thesis in the Field of Anthropology and Archaeology

for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University

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Abstract

Nordicism—the belief in a Nordic or Aryan "master race"—emerged in nineteenth century anthropology as a form of scientific racism. As this ideology spread, a romanticized pseudohistorical version of Northern Europe flourished—most noticeably during Germany in the 1930s and 1940s. It continues to exist in the minds of white supremacists, neo-Nazis, the alt-right, and white nationalists today, with hate crimes and racial prejudice headlining the news in the United States daily. Understanding the patterns many extremists show on social media and internet forums is crucial—especially in the context of historical movements and ideas. This historiographical and phenomenological study presents a holistic view of the history and evolution of Nordicism and Norse pseudohistory and their modern use by white nationalists in the twenty-first century United States. It covers a variety of sources that speak on white nationalism, scientific racism, eugenics, and the fantastical concept of "Northernness." Collecting data from self-identified white nationalists and white supremacists on social media and internet forums, as well as incidents of racially motivated hate crimes, can help answer the question of how modern white nationalists use debunked science and history to promote their ideology. Results of the research showed a clear connection to Nordicism and Norse pseudohistory while also admitting a lack of direct racist content in many examples. This thesis aims to help identify those who would commit racially biased crimes, as well as fight disinformation.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Dr. Tim Dillon of Milligan University, who nurtured my love for history and social justice and taught me how to think for myself.

Acknowledgments

I owe a great deal of gratitude to the professors who helped during this process, especially my research advisor, Dr. Richard Martin, and my thesis director, Dr. Gloria Ayee. With their support, feedback, and encouragement, I was able to complete this project. Next, I would like to thank my mother, Marjorie Emmert, for helping me proofread and keeping me on track. My family, friends, and classmates have been invaluable during this process, and their belief in my ability has made this thesis possible.

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Chapter I.

Introduction

The very ink with which history is written is merely fluid prejudice.

—Mark Twain

On a hot Florida day in June 2023, visitors to the popular theme park Walt Disney World were greeted with a startling sight. A group of people dressed in black and masked in the heat waved flags with swastikas proudly displayed upon them (Morgan 2023). Their shirts and signs were a mixture of swastikas and black sun symbols (*sonnenrad*). Families, many with small children, were confronted with a type of outward hatred that has become more and more public in recent years (Novotney 2023). Beyond the blatant racism and Antisemitism espoused by these groups, they are also more and more involved in transphobic and anti-drag (queen) sentiments and protests (Wiggins 2023). They no longer hide in the shadows and privacy of home meetings or the deep web but proudly display their bigotry for all to see.

Among the more common symbols, such as swastikas, are often a selection of Norse rune variations used by the Nazi party in the 1930s and 1940s. These are often used in tattoos, patches, art, and jewelry. While not as noticeable as the swastika, many runes and "Viking" symbols are used by white nationalists more subtly. Runes and other Norse symbols are not necessarily evidence of extremism, as they can be used by modern pagans and those interested in Norse culture. For many, the use of these symbols and

cultural heritage by white nationalist groups is a source of frustration and the need for clarification.

The twisting of the historical narrative is not a new phenomenon. The oft-quoted "history is written by the victors,"[1] while not accurate in many cases (Norse history, for example), is an example of people in power changing the past to suit their bias. A more precise statement would be that a people's history is written to support the political and cultural ideologies of those who consume it. In a place with multiple groups of diverse populations, it is written or promoted by the wealthy or powerful. There is no better way to convince someone of a particular political truth than by presenting history in a way favorable to them. From downplaying the severity of slavery (Bushard 2022) to insisting that crusaders were all moral Christian knights fighting for religious freedom (Albin et al. 2019), our records and current news are full of people creating a whole mythos to assuage discomfort or promote a specific ideology.

The danger of white nationalism in both a domestic terrorism sense and as a radicalization of individuals has been real for generations. Even a period of relatively progressive politics, such as the twenty-first century, produces violence and xenophobia (the fear and hatred of those from other cultures and countries) among white supremacists. The civil rights movement was considered successful, and yet the effects of racism and colonization can still be seen in economics, education, employment, politics, interpersonal relationships, and law enforcement. The United States is not a post-racial society, and racism against Black Americans is far from the only form of discrimination still prevalent in the twenty-first century USA. The LGBTQ+ community, women,

[1] While there are many proposed originators of this phrase, its author or beginnings are not definitively known.

Indigenous Americans, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI), immigrants, the Jewish community, and people with disabilities all join Black Americans in receiving a large amount of discrimination, both legally and socially (Smedley and Smedley 2005).

Throughout the writing of this thesis, an increase in racially biased crimes and neo-Nazi demonstrations have made the subject even more relevant. Living in Florida, I have had a front-row seat to anti-LGBTQ+ legislation, the banning of books that cover marginalized history and LGBTQ+ themes, and the demonization of critical race theory (CRT). Neo-Nazi demonstrations have taken place mere minutes from my home, and a bomb threat was called into a theater where I was attending a drag queen show.

All these incidents happened after I had chosen to write about white supremacists and their crimes. The increase in Antisemitism and Islamophobia after the October 7, 2023, escalation of the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the war in Gaza has also changed the online trends of white nationalists considerably. Able to hide behind anti-Zionism that is not inherently Antisemitic, it was necessary to look at imagery and wording to parse if their criticism was aimed at the state of Israel and the Israel Defense Force (IDF) or if it was, in fact, Antisemitic. Many will not use swastikas and Hitler memes outright but will make subtle hints to Holocaust denial and racist Jewish stereotypes such as large noses and monetary greed. Many members of the Jewish diaspora and even Israelis have protested Zionism both in the past and currently, so anti-Zionist and Antisemitic are not synonyms. Ironically, even though the majority of Israel would be considered ethnically European according to the scientific racism espoused by Nordicists and white supremacists, one theme throughout the white supremacist and Alt-Right movement is the hatred of Jews over almost any other ethnicity or race.

What ideologies contribute to the extremist views of American white nationalists, and where did they originate? One theory that has persisted through centuries (and is still prevalent today in many domestic terrorist manifestos and alt-right social media accounts) is the concept of Nordicism—or the idea of a Nordic/Aryan "master race" (Bouvier and Rosenbaum 2020). Norse runes, Viking imagery, and the skewed history of Viking Age Scandinavia have been used by followers of scientific racism, Nazis in World War II (WWII) Germany, and the current alt-right movement. With similar themes, symbols, and wording that can be traced back hundreds of years, the American white nationalist community has co-opted a fetishized version of the ideal white human and culture (Grant 1916).

Nordicism and Viking Age imagery are most prevalent in the more extreme sects of white nationalism. The Ásatrú Folk Assembly, Wolves of Vinland, and Hearth and Helm are just a tiny sampling of a more significant American movement toward Norse heathenry and focus on white ancestry. Most neo-pagan practitioners of Ásatrú and Norse paganism do not practice with the intent to exclude and radicalize. Still, the groups who are racially focused make it challenging to separate white nationalists and those who do not consider the religions exclusive (Goodrick-Clarke 2002). Medievalism—the study and fascination with the European Middle Ages—has also found a following among many white nationalists. The Crusades, the Roman Empire, Anglo-Saxons, and Slavic culture have all gained significant interest among these communities (Valencia-García 2020).

Far from current scholarship that explores the diversity and complex genetics of historical Europe, white nationalists have invented a mythical history of pure white Europeans who built civilization and spread their advanced technology throughout the world. Echo chambers online support their beliefs, and confirmation bias provides them with all the proof they need of their correctness (Valencia-García 2020). Beyond mere historical inaccuracy, many white nationalists have turned to mythology and fictional ideas such as Hyperborea, Thule, and Atlantis to further their claims of superiority (Goodrick-Clarke 2002).

Rarely are white nationalists solely focused on racism. Instead, they tend to cover most avenues of prejudice. Misogyny, transphobia, homophobia, and ableism (discrimination against those with mental or physical disabilities) are all apparent in their social media posts. Different communities, such as involuntary celibates (incels) and "red pill"[2] forums, are rife with intersectional bigotry (Lavin 2020, 83). These online spaces serve to find like-minded people to validate their views and radicalize those who may be on the fence (Charron-Chénier and Kyler 2022). The causative relationship between pseudoscience and pseudohistory to hate speech and violence should be explored from multiple angles, hence why this research aims to be holistic.

This thesis focuses primarily on white nationalism as it presents in the United States; but in an ever more connected world with international organizations and

[2] *Red pill*/*red-pill* or *redpilled* refers to the primary quandary in the 1999 film, *The Matrix*. The main character is given a choice between the blue pill (staying content and ignorant inside the simulated world) or the red pill (awakening and being aware of all the truth that was previously hidden). So-called redpillers today consider themselves arbiters of truth and reality. This has led to multiple "pill" communities, such as "black pill" (a nihilistic form of the red pill), "purple pill" (a supposedly more moderate view of the world), and other creations. The writers and directors of *The Matrix* are trans women who have stated that the red pill was actually a metaphor for transitioning. This is especially ironic considering the amount of transphobia present in most red pill communities.

ideological diaspora, it is necessary to acknowledge the influence and expansion in other countries. Anders Breivik committed his slaughter in Norway, while Brenton Tarrant massacred Muslims in the Christchurch Mosque shooting. As Nordicism focuses on an obsession with a mythological racially pure Scandinavia of old, it is no surprise that there are many Nordicist organizations and groups active in Scandinavia currently. With Europe claimed as the motherland by many white nationalists in the United States, the white nationalist communities overseas are inextricably tied to American associations (Backlund 2022).

This research explores the relationship between historical Nordicism and how it presents itself in twenty-first century American white nationalism and examines the misuse of history and mythology to radicalization. An additional factor is how the use of specific imagery and symbolism can have real impacts on systemic issues. This thesis examines how white nationalism has rejected modern scholarship and held on to debunked pseudoscience and pseudohistory. Although much white nationalist and Nordicist thought is prevalent and influenced by European factions, the primary focus will be the United States—specifically, their online interactions in public spaces and the real-world consequences of these beliefs. What are the origins of Nordicism, and how was the ideology spread? What is the connection between the race scientists of the past and white nationalists of the American twenty-first century? How is pseudoscientific race science and a skewed view of history weaponized by modern extremists? Finally, what social media trends and patterns indicate that white supremacists are still promoting Nordicism and Viking fetishization? The goal is not only to answer these questions but also to produce ideas on counteracting these issues.

Definition of Terms

Nordicism is defined as the belief in a superior Nordic or Aryan white race. With its modern roots primarily in the scientific racism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, anthropologists leaned into eugenics to place people into a racial hierarchy, with the "Nordic race" at the top (Grant 1916). Although the scientific claims of Nordicists have since been debunked, there are still many white nationalists who believe it even in the twenty-first century.

Nordic refers not only to the countries and cultures of Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Iceland but also refers to the mythological race of pure white Europeans promoted by white supremacists. Nordic, Norse, and Scandinavian are often used interchangeably and may be used to mean the cultures of northern Europe. However, Norse is more specific to the Viking Age language (Old Norse) and culture, while Scandinavia refers to the modern countries of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland. The Viking Age is defined as taking place from 793 CE to 1066 CE. It is primarily associated with the Norse peoples and their voyages to raid and settle various areas of Europe, Asia, North America, and Africa. Not all Viking Age Norse were Vikings, and not all Vikings were Norse, but they are often associated with each other.

Nordicism, as the belief in a superior "Nordic" race of people, is a form of white supremacy. It posits that Nordic peoples are not only homogeneously white but also superior genetically. Popularized by Madison Grant in his 1916 book, *The Passing of the Great Race*, Nordicism took pseudoscientific evidence such as phrenology to assign the human races to various levels of hierarchy. Grant's theory included physical features, personality traits, and mental capacity. While easily disproven by modern science,

eugenics and scientific racism were relatively popular in the United States and Europe at the time (Pichot 2009).

White supremacists and *white nationalists* are groups of people who prize European (specifically northern European) ancestry. Their ideology is wrapped up with the notion of nation and *folk*, while they fear a supposed "white genocide." The two terms tend to be used interchangeably, but it is worthwhile to note that supremacism denotes an apparent belief in the hierarchy of races. At the same time, nationalism may be limited to the desire for ethnic separation—a fact that many of them use to deny accusations of racism. The *alt-right* is a movement of extremism that goes beyond conservatism and idolizes fascism (Charron-Chénier and Kyler 2022). Hate crimes, or bias-motivated crimes, are violent or criminal acts to intimidate or harm a particular race, sexual orientation, gender identity, or religion (Harwood 2021). In this research's context, dog whistles refer to words, symbols, or phrases that signal to others within a group that they are a part of said group while not explicitly stating them (Haney-López 2014). It can refer to words such as *folk*, *heritage*, and *replacement*; symbols such as runes, images of Crusaders, and the Iron Cross; and phrases such as *worth preserving* and *blood and soil*. Dog whistles are not incriminating on their own, but when combined, they often indicate racism or other forms of bigotry (Bouvier and Rosenbaum 2020).

The mythological aspect of Nordicism is often linked to the fictional continents of Atlantis, Thule, Hyperborea, and Lemuria. These legendary lands are discussed in various pieces of literature. With the advancement in navigation and exploration, it is considered highly unlikely that these were based on real locations. This fact does not deter those who believe they were home to an advanced race of humanity—a race that is

not coincidentally white. While not focusing a great deal on theosophy (a form of mystical spiritualism pioneered by Helena Blavatsky) and its effect on white supremacy, it is difficult to discuss the history of the ideology without mentioning the connection with the occult and spiritualism (Goodrick-Clarke 2002).

Ásatrú and *Odinism* are revived Norse pagan religions that have ties to white supremacy. Many sects of Ásatrú and Odinism specifically deal with the idea of folk or kin, and they consider the religion closed[3] to those of European/Nordic ancestry (Goodrick-Clarke 2002). While Norse paganism and heathenism are often used interchangeably, the Ásatrú Folk Assembly and Odinism are considered the religions most closely associated with white nationalist ideals. Within the pagan community, Ásatrú is not always suspect, but Odinists almost always focus on racial and ethnic exclusivity.

Pseudohistory is the twisting or outright falsifying historical scholarship to suit a particular ideology or political bias. This concept is not new or likely to fall out of fashion soon. The plethora of YouTube videos and TV shows about ancient aliens and the spread of deliberately misleading articles has found a foothold, especially on the post-Covid internet. While many of these beliefs seem harmless to the average reader, pseudohistory and historical negationism often have a particular ulterior motive—the desire to promote a specific ideology that current evidence does not support. For example, the idea of ancient aliens building the pyramids and other remarkable landmarks can be traced to a racially motivated disbelief that Africans could accomplish

[3] Closed religious practices (such as smudging with white sage or palo santo, Hoodoo, and the terms *spirit animal* or *totem*) are rituals or actions considered exclusive to people of a specific ethnicity or culture. Open practices (such as tarot reading, prayer, and spells) do not specify that one needs to be of a certain demographic.

everything they did (Rafferty 2023, 116). The idea of the Civil War not being about slavery but instead only about state rights is explicitly meant to ease guilt or shame about ancestral actions (Hoffer 2020). While there are many pseudohistory trends, ranging from the ridiculous to the more believable, not all contribute to modern hate crimes. Nordicism and the fetishization of an imagined Norse history are harmful in a direct way (Harwood 2021).

Background

In the eighteenth century, anthropologists began to publish pseudoscientific claims that focused on skull shape, racial features, and ethnicity as indicative of both physical and moral attributes. Often, these anthropologists placed human beings on a hierarchy based purely on ancestry and race, with those from northern Europe as the pinnacle (Grant 1916). With the emergence of Madison Grant's seminal work, the placement of a "Nordic Race" at the top of this hierarchy became a common thread among contemporary and future publications that promoted scientific racism (Stoddard 1920). Combined with a romanticized vision of the Viking Age and even before (Forssling 2020), Nordicism became more than simply a racial term. It also began to include cultural attitudes toward the "Northernness" of certain peoples (Wawn 2000).

Nordic people are commonly known in other areas of the world as descendants of the "Vikings." While today, Vikings have had a popularity boost (Arnold 2011), it was only in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that perceptions of Vikings changed from the "barbaric raider" to a "noble savage" trope (Wawn 2000). Becoming increasingly present in art, literature, and even early film, this fascination with a heavily mythologized Nordic past of Europe shifted from fascination to a more apparent desire to connect the

ancestry of various European peoples (Forssling 2020). We see this today with many ads claiming a DNA test can tell a consumer their "Viking Roots" (Dasgupta, Iturriaga, and Panofsky 2021).

Pseudohistory, or the twisting of historical scholarship to promote a different historical narrative than current evidence supports, has been an issue for hundreds of years (Albin et al. 2019). In the past couple of decades, it has become more rampant with the internet's ability to spread misinformation and historical conspiracy theories (Valencia-García 2020). While many historians are working to expose the histories of people of color, LGBTQ+, women, and other marginalized groups, others are promoting seemingly harmless ideas for harmful reasons.

The internet has brought people closer together through communication than ever and, in doing so, has contributed to globalization (Schroeder 2018). While many view this as a positive cultural shift, others do not. Nationalists view diversity and globalization as threatening homogeneous nations and territories, preferring to label areas as belonging to certain races or ethnicities (Charron-Chénier and Kyler 2022). Often overlooking the effect of colonization and its aftermath, they instead focus on the "Great Replacement Theory," which claims white genocide is inevitable. The ability to find echo chambers in online forums and social media sites has contributed a great deal to radicalization and the acceptance of extremist views. 4chan, Reddit, and forums for niche communities have led to hate crimes and a growing number of emboldened neo-Nazis and white nationalists (Lavin 2020).

While many consider Nazis and white supremacy to be a problem of the past, it is prevalent around the world in 2023 with little sign of slowing down. While many will

think of the “Unite the Right” rally in 2017 (Besley and Peters 2017) or the capital riot of January 6th, 2021 (Bucci, Kirk, and Sampson 2022), there are demonstrations and hate crimes happening at regular intervals even now. Florida has seen a great deal of neo-Nazi activity lately (Maxwell 2023). Recent hate crimes involving race (Yousef 2023) and LGBTQ+ people (AP News 2023) show boldness in perpetrating violence according to their beliefs.

Recent and current white nationalist social media is used in the discussion and results section, while the literature review focuses on a multi-pronged source approach. Analyzing primary sources in scientific racism, Nordicism, and Nazism forms a base to then concentrate on secondary academic sources and popular media. From archaeological and genetic evidence of Viking Age Scandinavia to current studies in domestic terrorism based on race, various information was used to form the background and context.

The conceptual basis for this research is that Nordicism, while often considered a remnant of another time, is used knowingly or unknowingly by many today. Additionally, it shows that online spaces populated by white nationalists use pseudohistory and debunked scientific racism to justify their hatred and, in turn, hate crimes committed by them. The theoretical framework shows that other scholars and social commentators have noticed a connection between Norse history, the “Nordic race,” and modern white nationalists. There has been a great deal of research on hate crimes and the rise of white nationalism in the twenty-first century United States, but not much on how they use Nordicism specifically. The hope is to help prevent radicalization by addressing these gaps and educating on the dangers of historical and scientific misinformation.

The methodology for conducting qualitative research in this thesis primarily focuses on social media posts. While more detail is covered in the methodology section, it is essential to note that all posts and named users were accessed from publicly available sites. Examining a variety of media, including written posts, pictures, and videos, allows a more complete picture of symbolism and dog whistles. The research is not meant to be a statistical data collection but instead focuses on individual examples.

There are a few research limitations to consider, including bots on social media and "trolls." Each account will be carefully vetted to ensure it is neither a bot nor a satire account. While such methods are not foolproof, there are ways to identify if a user is a real person posting earnestly (Knight 2018). One unexpected limitation is X's (previously known as Twitter) recent decision to require an account to view any account, even public ones (Duffy 2023). Making an account is still free, therefore I will be using tweets if the profile does not need a request to view.

While other scholars and researchers have talked about Norse history (Brink and Price 2012), Nordicism (Forssling 2020), and white nationalism (Zeskind 2009), there appears to be no direct comparisons to this thesis. Even the academic sources covering modern instances of Nordicism (Forssling 2020) are scarce, ensuring that this research contributes to existing scholarship while approaching the issue from a different perspective.

While conducting research based on social media posts and citing the profiles behind them, I did not interact directly with the subjects. The data collection was purely observational. This approach ensures that there will be no influence on the material, nor

did I conduct research involving interaction with human subjects. All material was posted in a public online sphere.

Nordicism and Norse pseudohistory have a legacy that is centuries old and yet have found a new home in the twenty-first century American white nationalist community, primarily online. While the connection seems amorphous at times, it is possible to follow the progression through the decades to its current manifestation in modern culture. By incorporating primary, secondary, and online content from white nationalists, the study aims to comprehensively capture the ideologies that post direct or indirect harm to discriminated communities. By studying these phenomena, we can recognize signs of extremism and help in preventing the radicalization of others.

Chapter II.

Literature Review

Nordicism has a sordid past. With its beginnings in racialist texts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, all the way to its current manifestation in American neo-Nazi groups and white supremacist organizations, Nordicism is a somewhat abstract concept that seems hard to pin down in a simple cause-and-effect. While connections can be made with the lack of subtlety many racists employ, creating a more concrete evidential link is the goal of this thesis. However, the dog whistles and subtle Nordicism are still essential to study.

The literature that this research utilizes covers hundreds of years and various viewpoints. From the original eugenicists to the current scholarly studies of modern white supremacists, the literature uses both the primary sources of eighteenth through twentieth century anthropology and secondary sources on alt-right social media. This thesis aims to tackle the issue of using pseudoscience and pseudohistory for twenty-first century hate and how it has affected politics in the United States. By separating the historical sources from modern scholars, the research can draw parallels and address the issues that the anti-racism movement faces. Many scholarly articles and books have been written on the concept of race, scientific racism, Nazi ideology, and the connection between modern Norse paganism and white nationalism. Still, few sources specifically address the application of Nordicism and Norse pseudohistory in the twenty-first century—especially

on social media. While there are some popular literature sources on white nationalism and even the connection between Norse fetishization and racism, this thesis connects the old scientific racism ideology of Nordicism to today.

This literature review focuses first on the historical context of the subject. By sorting through primary sources in Nordicism, scientific racism, Nazi ideology, and modern manifestos from domestic terrorists when available, a more complete vision of the path Nordicism took can be extrapolated. With secondary sources covering these same topics, the research focuses more on what academic and popular media have said about them.

With the primary sources, the goal of the research is to view either original archaeological evidence, writings from the person in question, or contemporary first-hand accounts. The primary sources of scientific racism consist of works from eugenicists and anthropologists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Primary sources of WWII include writings from Hitler and the Nazis themselves, along with contemporary eugenicists and Nazi sympathizers.

Secondary sources include scholarly and mass media discourse covering the subjects. The sources of Norse history also include articles and books on the Viking Age, Norse culture, language, and religion. While it is a lesser-covered topic, there are several articles and publications about scientific racism and eugenics. These sources also cover the modern debunking of race science and race as a biological concept. WWII and Hitler are widely written about among both scholars and mass media. Choosing which sources to include proved a challenging task with the plethora of options available and with many covering similar themes surrounding Nazism and the Holocaust.

Many of the sources include popular literature by self-styled historians or journalists. This fact, of course, does not discount the information they contain but instead focuses on trends among publications that deal with the subjects at hand. For example, *Extreme North: A Cultural History* (2022) by Bernd Brunner explores the fascination that Europeans and Americans have developed with the mysterious "North" of Scandinavia. While this is an easily observable phenomenon, few sources are written on society's obsession with Northernness and the Nordic race.

Other sources on Nordicism cover Madison Grant, Arthur de Gobineau, and Houston Stewart Chamberlain in detail, but Brunner exposes one of the most influential Nordicists, Hans F.K. Günther. Günther wrote *Rassenkunde des Deutschen Volkes*, or *Racial Science of the German People* in English. Used by Hitler as a guideline for his eugenics policies, *Racial Science of the German People* seems to have had a lesser known but no less vital role in the Nuremberg Race Laws and Nordicism as a whole. It is not well-known or circulated; so I could not find a copy of the source in English. Brunner does an excellent job of discussing the effect of this work and how Günther defined the Nordic race. Like Grant, Günther divided Europeans into separate ethnic identities but specifically narrowed his view to Germany. While Grant separated Europeans into three categories (Nordic, Alpine, and Mediterranean), Günther separated Germans into five sub-categories: Nordic, Mediterranean, Alpine, East Baltic, and Dinaric. His insistence that the Nordic type was superior fit neatly into his later role as a Nazi party member (Brunner 2022, 165).

Historical Landscape: Colonization and Rootlessness

It is necessary to discuss Nordicism's origin and its proliferation to discuss its continued influence in modern white nationalism. Racism itself became a widespread issue primarily with the beginning of European colonization in the fifteenth century, but scientific racism arose in the eighteenth century amid mass colonization across the world (Curran and Gates 2022). It is little wonder at the timing of this; with the subjugation and oppression of indigenous populations came the desire to justify these actions. Scientific racism, especially the hierarchical system used to classify humans according to contemporary anthropologists, was used by many enslavers to give credence to their practices. Not only was scientific racism justification based on (now debunked) "science," but it often included references to the Bible and Christianity that eased their conscience (Berry 2017).

Race as a concept gained traction in Europe and the Islamic world in the High to Late Middle Ages (Heng 2018). Although there are examples of separating and ranking people based on appearance and origin from classical antiquity (such as Hippocrates in Greece), most prejudice and discrimination were not based on appearance or origin but rather tribalism, assimilation, and religion. Colonialism led to a distinct pattern of xenophobia, exploitation of Indigenous peoples, and enslavement. Slavery has been present since prehistoric times, but basing enslavement on race is a relatively recent phenomenon. The timing of the beginning of colonialism with the Scientific Revolution and subsequent Age of Enlightenment made scientific racism a rather convenient way to combine the recently developed scientific disciplines with the rapidly expanding known world and justify the actions against Indigenous peoples. *Whose Middle Ages? Teachable*

Moments for an Ill-Used Past (Albin et al. 2019) is a collection of essays addressing historical misconceptions and their intent. Specifically, it touches on race, colonization, and the connection to modern political movements.

Whose Middle Ages is a collection of short essays by respected historians and scholars, but reading the book is beneficial both to understand and to fight the rise of weaponized pseudohistory. When researching this thesis, a few chapters were more valuable and poignant. "'Celtic' Crosses and the Myth of Whiteness" by art historian Maggie M. Williams would not be out of place in this thesis, with her focus on the mythical white history of Europe used by white nationalists. She even mentions Stormfront and usernames such as "Vikingcelt" to illustrate her point (Williams 2019, 221). Covering the appropriation of symbols, especially the Celtic cross by the website Stormfront, she explains the comparison many white nationalists have made between white indentured Irish Americans and enslaved Black Americans (Williams 2019, 227-229). This false equivalency has understandably earned the ire of both the Irish and Black Americans in the modern day. In a relatively short chapter, Williams makes a compelling case for misappropriating historical symbols.

Colonization had an interesting effect in that it helped usher in a more diverse and connected world, but also blurred the lines of nations and cultures. With migration, assimilation, and borders shifting, those in the colonizing countries started to see that their own countries were becoming less homogeneous and more global (Miyashiro 2019). While initially in favor of increased trade and wealth, nationalists soon searched for roots to hold onto, and when they could not find a suitable past to renew, they chose to create their own (Wawn 2000). While based on actual people, places, and religions, the rise of a

romanticized ethnic history from the nineteenth century forward was shaped and molded according to preference and bias. While previously the Vikings had been viewed as barbaric foreigners, Victorians of the British Isles and Germany shifted their perception toward the "noble savage" trope. This change renewed an interest in Norse history, religion, and culture that relied heavily on romanticized versions of blond warriors rescuing tall, blue-eyed maidens who were the ancestors of modern Europeans. Undoubtedly, the Norse settled in many areas and have many descendants, but it does not matter if their blood was pure "Nordic" or not. A fetishized white race was born and proclaimed endangered. While geneticists know now that there is no "pure" ancestry, nor is race a viable biological term, it was believed and spread by early anthropologists and racialists for a very long time (Forssling 2020, Wawn 2020).

Real Norse History: The Legacy of the Vikings

One of the most frustrating aspects of pseudohistory is that it not only seeks to "spice up" existing history with hyperbole and sometimes blatant falsehood but also masks the authentic and exciting history to be discovered. Norse history is a rich and full tapestry of culture, language, and fascinating aspects. From a surprising amount of women's rights for the time to sea-faring technology that allowed them to cross oceans and sail up shallow rivers, the Norse were a diverse and inventive people (Price 2020). While they did not ascribe to any sort of racial prejudice or hegemonic ethnicity, our view of them today is most often that of a tall and fair blond warrior with blue eyes. While those in northern Europe do indeed tend to have more of a propensity for fair hair and eyes, that is far from universally true. In fact, with the Norse's travel during the Viking Age and the raiding they subjected people throughout Europe, Asia, and North

Africa to, it is no wonder their DNA was found to be much more diverse than previously assumed (Wu 2020).

The US has been obsessed with proving that Vikings settled in the continental states for hundreds of years. From Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's insisting on a Norse presence in New England to the easily debunked Kensington Runestone in Minnesota, the assumption that "Vinland" must be somewhere in the USA was not new. When the archaeological site at L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland, Canada, was found, it was a huge discovery. Finally, the Norse settlement presumably described in the Vinland Sagas had been located, but it was clear they had not stayed long. Instead, skirmishes with the Indigenous tribes prodded a return to Iceland (Kunz and Sigurðsson 2008). Some still claim that the Norse made it to Minnesota or Massachusetts, but no firm evidence has been found to corroborate these claims.

The Birth of Nordicism: Origins of a Pseudoscientific Idea

Nordicism is an offshoot of scientific racism and began with the idea that Nordic and Germanic peoples were the descendants of a superior "Aryan race" from Proto-Indo-European history. Using now-discredited methods such as measuring skulls and early precursors to the intelligence quotient (IQ) test, eugenicists claimed that morality and intellect were hereditary and not the result of societal factors. Many believed that Nordic blood was superior due to the tendency of Scandinavians to be taller and lighter-skinned than other peoples. Blond hair, statuesque frames, and light skin were considered the apex of racial quality. This classification, of course, did not consider the many Scandinavians who had darker hair and skin; but according to racialists, it was simply due to miscegenation and the "lower" European races (e.g., Mediterranean, and Alpine)

mixing with the pure Nordic blood. Nordicists had differing views on the origins and migration of these Aryans, but most came from a misunderstanding of ancient Sanskrit Vedic literature of ancient Iran, Afghanistan, and India. Linguistically, Indo-European languages—including Germanic languages—do seem to have a common ancestor from the Iranian or Indian area, but there is no evidence that Aryans were considered a distinct race until Nordicism gained steam and assigned Northern European qualities to an ancient Sanskrit word (Birkvad 2020).

While there are a plethora of early scientific racism works, this research will focus primarily on Arthur de Gobineau's *The Inequality of the Human Races* (1915), Houston Stewart Chamberlain's *The Foundation of the Nineteenth Century* (1912), Madison Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race, or the Racial Basis of European History* (1916), and Lothrop Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* (1920). These are considered landmark texts of the Nordicism movement. While others may be mentioned, these four seminal texts are instrumental in the lasting effect of racialism and the idea of the Nordic race.

The seminal work is often cited as Madison Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race* when discussing Nordicism. While some of the other racialist texts that blatantly influenced Nordicism and Aryanism were written before Grant's publication, it is in this book that the term "Nordic Race" came into the popular lexicon. Adolf Hitler said Madison Grant's book was his "Bible" (Kershaw 2008). While the history of American eugenics and fascist support is often brushed aside, there is a great deal of evidence to show that racism in the United States influenced and even inspired Hitler and Nazism. Henry Ford, Charles Lindbergh, and famous silent film actress Lilian Gish (also a star of

D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*) were all members of the Antisemitic and pro-fascist America First Committee (Laqueur 2006). While WWII ended a great deal of the support for eugenics and fascism in the United States, it did not stop completely. Truthfully, it only went underground to emerge decades later when they felt more emboldened (Zeskind 2009).

Nordicists could cite many origins for their ideology, but Madison Grant was undoubtedly one of the movement's first and most central figures. In his *The Passing of the Great Race*, he had no qualms in ranking ethnicities and "subraces" of Europeans in the hierarchy of human beings. Mongoloid (Asian) and Negroid (African) people did not even qualify enough to be mentioned beyond the basic racial assumptions that all white supremacists used. This passage on page 150 demonstrates the core ideology of contemporary and later Nordicism:

> With the remaining race, the Nordic, however, the case is different. This is a purely European type, and has developed its physical characters and its civilization within the confines of that continent. It is, therefore, the *Homo europæus*, the white man par excellence. It is everywhere characterized by certain unique specializations, namely, blondness, wavy hair, blue eyes, fair skin, high, narrow and straight nose, which are associated with great stature, and a long skull, as well as with abundant head and body hair. (Grant 1916, 150)

This description of the distinct supposed appearance of the Nordic race influenced white nationalism for decades—continuing to this day.

Gobineau's *The Inequality of the Human Races* was incredibly influential on the emerging science of race and eugenics. Claiming that aristocrats had more Aryan features than the common folk, he was praised and quoted by American white supremacists and pro-slavery academics of his time. Predictably, his *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* put the Nordic or Aryan race at the top and was Antisemitic and racist against

Black and Asian peoples. His point of view was focused primarily on France, and he accused the United States of being inferior due to its multiracial makeup.

For this thesis, the translation of Gobineau from Adrian Collins in 1915 is used. His work in anthropology and scientific racism was used to form a movement called Gobinism, or Gobineauism, which in turn had a considerable influence on Nazism (Fluehr-Lobban 2006, 109). In his *The Inequality of the Human Races*, he makes many of the same arguments that modern white nationalists make today. For example, in arguing against the "defenders of human equality" (Gobineau 1915, 37), he says, "So the brain of the Huron Indian contains in an undeveloped form an intellect which is absolutely the same as that of the Englishman or the Frenchman! Why then, in the course of the ages, has he not invented printing or steam power?" (Gobineau 1915, 37) The argument centering on European inventions and discounting Indigenous peoples based on false equivalency is a popular one among white supremacists in internet comments and defense of racism.

Houston Stewart Chamberlain's work is fascinating as he was the son-in-law of Richard Wagner, a German composer notorious for using Norse history and symbolism in his music and operas. Wagner was also a favorite composer of Adolf Hitler, which once again brings connections into place. Chamberlain wrote *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* (1912), which pulled heavily from Gobineau's pseudoscientific publications to promote the idea of an Aryan or Nordic master race further. Born in England, Chamberlain moved to Germany because of his love for Wagner and the Germanic mythos. He even ended up marrying Richard Wagner's daughter, Eva von Bülow.

In *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, Chamberlain focused primarily on Antisemitism, with "Jewish," "Jews," and "Semites" mentioned hundreds of times throughout the text. Ironically, Chamberlain rants about how previous anthropologists did not believe in race enough and considers his scientific racism the science of the future.

> To think that he could fail to know that the shape of the skull in particular is one of those characteristics which are inherited with ineradicable persistency, so that races are distinguished by craniological measurements, and, in the case of mixed races, the original elements which occur by atavism become still manifest to the investigator!...O Middle Ages! When will your night leave us? When will men understand that form is not an unimportant accident, a mere chance, but an expression of the innermost being? (Chamberlain 1912, 210)

He is assigning personality and character traits to races, and the Aryan race is the uppermost in his opinion.

Lothrop Stoddard was a racialist who idolized Madison Grant and warned the world of what he considered the dangerous "rising tide of color" that threatened to overtake white supremacy. It is difficult to imagine now that so-called white world supremacy would be touted as a good thing in academic circles, but Stoddard was a well-respected member of various scholarly organizations and even graduated from Harvard University with a Ph.D. in 1914. His most well-known work, *The Rising Tide of Color: The Threat Against White World-Supremacy* (1920), focused on what he viewed as a dangerous immigration trend, the collapse of colonialism, and interracial relationships. As a firm believer in eugenics and a proponent of anti-miscegenation laws, he urged white nationalists to prevent the coming catastrophe of diversity by legal means.

The version of *The Rising Tide of Color* used in this review actually has an introduction written by Madison Grant, cementing the connection between him and Stoddard. In an evident relation to the social media posts of twenty-first century white

nationalists, Stoddard warns against racial admixture and how social equality and immigration are creating a dangerous world for the previously hegemonic white society. By attaching to the fear of white Americans and Europeans, he plays on the supposed hazard of a more globalized world. While he still extols the virtues of the Nordic race, he focuses primarily on fearmongering and calls to action the white people of the world. With dramatic and purposely emotional language, his desperation makes a point of relaying the severity of this imagined crisis.

> Over and above immigration, the tendency is toward a replacement of the more valuable by the less valuable elements of the population. All over the civilized world racial values are diminishing, and the logical end of this disgenic process is racial bankruptcy and the collapse of civilization. (Stoddard 1920, 302-303)

Madison Grant, Arthur de Gobineau, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and Lothrop Stoddard were just a few of the proponents of scientific racism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Before WWII, eugenics and scientific racism were relatively accepted in both academia and the public in both Europe and the United States; however, not all contemporaries agreed with these ideologies. Franz Boas, often named the "Father of American Anthropology," opposed these views and argued against the notion that race was a biological inevitability with immutable characteristics. Not only was he progressive for his time; but due to a lack of education on these issues, his writing would be considered forward-thinking even today. He accurately posited that characteristics such as behavior, appearance, and health were influenced primarily by location and culture—not race. Boas studied a variety of Indigenous peoples throughout his career and always maintained that they were not inferior in morality, intelligence, or talent. In his *Race, Language, and Culture* (1940), Boas explained that race was adaptable and not a biological constant.

The fact that he was progressive for his time does not mean his work was without its flaws. In contrast to racialists, he recognized and admitted when he was incorrect. For example, he was asked to assist the Department of Ethnology and Archaeology for the World's Columbian Exposition (or Chicago World's Fair) of 1893. The director in charge, Frederic Ward Putnam, wanted to showcase Inuit and First Nations people in what he considered their natural way of life. As a professional anthropologist, Boas traveled north to develop a working knowledge and relationship with. the tribes. However, when he saw how Putnam displayed the Indigenous Americans, he realized it was more of a human zoo than an ethnological educational opportunity. His belief in the integrity of anthropology was shaken, and he began to break away from mainstream opinion. In *Race, Language, and Culture*, he speaks on how miscegenation is good for genetics and culture in most cases:

> Judging merely on the basis of anatomical features and health conditions of mixed populations there does not seem to be any reason to assume unfavorable results [concerning miscenegation], either in the first or in later generations of offspring. The mixed descendants of Europeans and American Indians are taller and more fertile than the pureblood Indians. They are even taller than either parental race. The mixed blood Dutch and Hottentot of South Africa and the Malay mixed bloods of the Island of Kisar are in type intermediate between the two races, and do not exhibit any traits of degeneracy…The biological observations on our North American mulattoes do not convince us that there is any deleterious effect of race mixture so far as it is evident in anatomical form and function. (Boas 1940, 7)

Most modern anthropologists consider his work a relatively accurate account of race and culture, while his detractors are relegated to the annals of pseudoscience.

Mainstream Bigotry: The Rise and Fall of Scientific Racism

The word *Aryan* and the idea of a master race is associated today with the ideology of Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany. The genocide carried out by the Nazi regime killed an estimated six million Jewish people and hundreds of thousands of LGBTQ+, Roma, disabled, and mentally ill individuals. The motivation behind Hitler's obsession with Aryan racial purity can be linked to the influence of earlier eugenicists and Nordicists such as Grant and Gobineau. Before WWII and the Holocaust, eugenics and scientific racism were considered mainstream and accepted among respected leaders and thinkers of the day. After WWII, opinions on race changed; no longer was eugenics a popular trend, as many could see the extremes to which such an ideology could be taken (Fulbrook 2015).

Although arguments for the hierarchy of human races varied among anthropologists and biologists, until WWII the scientific community widely accepted the view that race provided innate morality and intelligence traits. The path from these initial beliefs and the Holocaust is not hard to follow, and it extended even beyond the 1940s into the twenty-first century (Forssling 2020). While the popularity of eugenics and scientific racism dipped significantly after WWII, it did not disappear completely. There were still those who supported Nazi ideology and white nationalism well after the Nuremberg Trials. It was not as socially acceptable, but a more insidious form of racism presented itself. "Separate but Equal" was parroted across the United States as a way of viewing segregation as a benefit to society. Excuses were made for white flight, clear racial discrimination among white businesses and legal services, and the Ku Klux Klan

emerged once more to not only intimidate people of color but also commit hate crimes (Saini 2019).

The Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s experienced a great deal of white backlash, and just as with the rise of modernity and immigration after colonialism, white Americans feared a loss of power and privilege. Using underhanded legal avenues such as voting restrictions, gerrymandering, and over-policing of minority neighborhoods, Black and Indigenous Americans especially were further marginalized and prevented from making progress in attaining equal rights (Wilkerson 2020).

Nordicism in the Twenty-First Century: Nordic Revival

Nordicism and Modernity (2020) by Gregers Forssling may be the work most like the topic on hand, as he speaks on the origins and evolution of Nordicist theory and its modern applications. However, it focuses primarily on the racial aspect, not the cultural obsession, which is an integral part of related research. Forssling's work was a great help in this thesis, and while his focus was not identical to this research, his references and work were invaluable. Not only does Forssling cover the beginning of Nordicism and its application through history, but he also speaks on the way it is still used. He addresses the global phenomenon of Nordicism and does not focus a great deal on the United States specifically; but as globalization had a considerable influence on white nationalism, it is vital to understand the international implications.

Forssling's *Nordicism and Modernity* contributed a great deal to this research. By discussing Nordicism directly and how it progressed, Forssling allows the reader to follow the journey from the nineteenth century to today. As a scholarly work, there is little fault in *Nordicism and Modernity*, with his historiography covering various

international Nordicists and their legacy. In the conclusion, he discusses the modern threat this thesis warns about. “Like fragmented remnants of the failed projects of late nineteenth and early twentieth century modernism, designed to bring about a mythologized ideal state of human existence, the threat of Nordicism is still present as an active force in today’s society.” (Forssling 2020, 251)

Leonard Zeskind’s *Blood and Politics: The History of the White Nationalist Movement from the Margins to the Mainstream* (2009) is a comprehensive history of white nationalism and its implications in the political landscape of the twenty-first century. Zeskind limits his scope to the United States; and while this book is over a decade old, it is more relevant than ever. Since its publication, white nationalism has only grown in strength and numbers, making it clear how much of a threat racism still poses to the United States. The names and details are invaluable to anyone studying the subject, although he focuses more on the Christian white nationalist movement than the Norse (Zeskind 2009, 60). However, Zeskind downplays the danger and importance of the internet and social media in extremism (Zeskind 2009, 452), which has proven to be a deadly underestimation.

In the twenty-first century, the obsession with and fetishization of a concocted “Viking” history is trendy among white supremacists online. This thesis covers the white nationalist’s idealized “Viking ancestor” and how it manifests in both internet spheres and personal practice. Tattoos, phrases, aesthetics, and religious practices can all be used as examples of the fascination with a racially pure Nordic history. The fetishization of Nordic countries and culture is sometimes known as Borealism, an exotification of northern culture and history, which significantly feeds into this thesis. Coming from the

Latin word for "northern wind," *borea* is a term used in more esoteric circles connected with Norse paganism and white supremacy (Spracklen 2015). The mythical land Hyperborea from Greek mythology is often used in white nationalist rhetoric, along with Thule—or the northernmost area known to Greek cartographers. When entering these terms into a social media site's search engine, they often inevitably lead to Eurocentric or racist messages. It has also been easy to see an interest in Norse and Viking Age history in recent years. TV shows, movies, music, comic books, and all forms of popular culture have been affected by the interest in Vikings (Arnold 2011). *Vikings* the TV show, *The Vinland Saga* anime, Thor from Marvel Comics, *How to Train Your Dragon*, *Norseman*, and viral TikTok sounds have all been infected by the Viking bug.

The Way of Fire and Ice: The Living Tradition of Norse Paganism (2019) by Ryan Smith is focused on the rituals and practices of modern Norse pagans and addresses the connection that many Norse pagans have with white supremacy and neo-Nazi ideology. In fact, Smith is a founding member of an organization called Heathens United Against Racism. As can be seen in social media accounts by Norse pagans, prominent practitioners often make a point to disavow the folkish sectors of their religion, and Smith is an excellent example of someone recognizing the need to combat racism within his faith. Several books are written by and for Norse pagans and Ásatrú practitioners on rituals, beliefs, and communing with the gods, but few address the problematic sects directly in these guidebooks. When looking at the individual groups, it is necessary to do background research on the name and members to be sure there is no affiliation with known white supremacists or folkish practitioners.

Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism (2003) by Mattias Gardell also speaks of how neo-pagan religions, especially those such as Ásatrú, have moved closer to white supremacy after WWII and into the twenty-first century. Gardell shows that certain Norse pagan sects (i.e., Ásatrú and Odinism) have veered toward ancestral veneration. While ancestral worship is not unique to Norse paganism, nor is it inherently racist, "folkish" Odinists and Ásatrú followers limit their religion to those who are supposedly descendants of Nordic and Germanic peoples. Their view of race means that color is more important than historical fact, leading them to accept those who appear white and reject anyone of color (Gardell 2003). In the same vein as other studies covered in this chapter, including *Nordicism and Modernity*, Gardell speaks on how globalization and multiculturism have contributed to the rise in white nationalist and white supremacist groups (Gardell 2003, 342). Unfortunately, it was written in 2003, which leaves twenty years of ethnic paganism and white supremacism uncovered.

Combining race or ethnicity with religion is not unique to Norse paganism, nor is it always linked to racism. There are certain ethno-religious groups,[4] such as the Jewish, that combine a common ancestry and culture with religious practice. Usually, ethno-religious groups are defined by a continuous practice in a specific culture or people from their beginnings. Norse paganism differs from these listed religions as those in Nordic areas have not continuously practiced it in recent centuries. After the Christianization of the Nordic countries around the turn of the first millennium, the vast majority were (and still are) Christians (Brink and Price 2012). The Norse religion of the Vikings and earlier

[4] Ethno-religious groups are groups of people either in a religion or common ethnic background that tie the two together. Whereas many religions are focused on conversion, ethno-religious groups usually share a common culture and may include those who do not currently practice the religion actively.

ancestors was primarily a cultural memory. The resurgence of sects such as Ásatrú in recent years can be traced in part to modernity's globalizing effect. With more and more diversity and a changing racial landscape in previously homogeneous countries, nostalgia and desire for ancestral identity arose (Forssling 2020).

Modern White Nationalism: Regressive Ideas in a Progressive World

Within the past ten years, a notable rise of white nationalism has occurred in the public and political spheres; and growing numbers of self-identifying neo-Nazis are willing to show themselves without shame or fear of consequence. "White Supremacism: The Tragedy of Charlottesville" (Besley and Peters 2017) and *Everything You Love Will Burn: Inside the Rebirth of White Nationalism in America* (2018) by Vegas Tenold speak on the resurgence of public racism and white nationalism along with the dangers the United States faces in addressing these threats. It is impossible to discuss the rising trend of white nationalism in the United States without covering the 2017 "Unite the Right" rally when a group of white nationalists and neo-Nazis carrying tiki torches descended on Charlottesville, Virginia, chanting "Blood and Soil" and "They will not replace us," which was a blatant reference to the Great Replacement Theory.

In "White Supremacism: The Tragedy of Charlottesville," Besley and Peters briefly explain the reason behind the "Unite the Right" rally in 2017 by covering how the protest was in response to the removal of a Robert E. Lee monument. While "Unite the Right" was not the first rally led by alt-right white nationalists, it was undoubtedly the most significant and most deadly, with a hit-and-run costing counter-protester Heather Heyer her life. This gave rise to the repetition of Heyer's last social media post as a mantra by anti-racists nationwide: "If you're not outraged, you're not paying attention."

("The Poignant Last Facebook Post of the Woman Killed at Charlottesville Anti-Fascist Protest" 2017) This quote is poignant for social justice activists in the twenty-first century and anyone fighting against the weaponization of pseudohistory and misinformation.

Tenold interacted with and grew to know white nationalists on a more personal basis. He joined marches, rallies, and meetings in person. While he did not use deception, he sought to understand and explain how white nationalism takes people and turns them into extremists for the cause. While he covers the movement's history a bit, it is more about current people and how they interact with each other. While it is an excellent read and outstanding journalistic work, it is more enjoyable as background reading than research.

The Cruelty is the Point: The Past, Present, and Future of Trump's America (Serwer 2021) posits that white supremacists grew bolder after the 2016 American presidential election of Donald Trump, while others suggest the 2008 election of Barack Obama—the first Black American president—angered white supremacists to the point that they came out of hiding (Allcorn and Stein 2018). Intent and impact can both be considered, but it is crucial to examine how the rise of far-right politicians and those who voted for them has emboldened certain sections of the population. White nationalism never disappeared, but the resurgence of being open with their beliefs is surprising to many Americans. While I attempt to remain unbiased politically in this thesis, it is still important to recognize when certain politicians or events contribute to white nationalism. *The Cruelty is the Point* is not impartial, nor does it pretend to be. It is a political commentary on the observable phenomenon of white nationalism in those who idolize

Donald Trump. “Racism is at the core of Trumpism. The movement cannot be rescued from its bigotry.” (Serwer 2021, 157) Racism and bigotry are not reserved for any particular political party, but Trump has made white nationalism great again for many followers.

It is impossible to speak on modern white nationalism without talking about the American alt-right movement and one well-known group: the Proud Boys. *In Proud Boys and the White Ethnostate: How the Alt-Right is Warping the American Imagination* (2019); author Alexandra Stern does an in-depth study on the white nationalist group and how they have infiltrated online spaces. Speaking on the prevalence and relevance of the alt-right in the United States, Stern does an excellent job of summing up the hard job researchers have in identifying and singling out the faithful actors in white nationalist groups:

> The alt-right is nowhere and everywhere. Nowhere, because its core believers constitute a tiny fraction of the white nationalist faithful in a bigger multicultural and multiracial sea. Its brand is dismissed and derided, and ongoing deplatforming has compelled its leaders and acolytes to play a perpetual game of online whack-a-mole. Everywhere, because alt-right ideas have set down sinewy roots in American discourse, culture, and politics. (Stern 2019)

In writing this thesis, I encountered issues she spoke directly about. For example, sites and accounts I had saved at the beginning of my research were deleted or banned a month later. This experience evokes the awkward feeling of being glad they cannot spread extremist views but disappointed in the lack of source material. This dichotomy of emotion regarding racist content was a theme throughout the project.

The goal of this thesis is to remain unbiased politically while still being cognizant that white nationalism is innately political. While using the terms alt-right and far-right, it is essential to point out that many white nationalists do not necessarily align with any

political party. While it is more often observed in the extreme conservative sections of the political spectrum, many consider themselves apolitical or independent. To many, especially those who have joined paramilitary and domestic terrorism groups, the government is an enemy. Many of the conspiracy theories espoused by white nationalists concern the "elite" or "New World Order" that is almost always referred to as Jewish. Donald Trump emboldened much of their rhetoric, especially during the January 6th insurrection (Bucci, Kirk, and Sampson 2022).

Pseudohistory: Creating a Narrative

This thesis addresses the worrying trend of mythologizing specific eras and cultures of history to promote an ideology or opinion. "Pseudo History/Weird History: Nationalism and the Internet" (Brown, Melleuish, and Sheiko 2009), "The Modern Myth of the Viking" (Cederlund 2011), *Far-Right Revisionism and the End of History: Alt/Histories* (Valencia-García 2020), and the previously mentioned *Whose Middle Ages?* (Albin et al. 2019) all deal with this topic in various ways, with some explicitly focusing on the internet, far-right political supporters, or the Viking Era. Hate crimes, or criminal activity perpetrated because of the victim's identity (gender, sexuality, race, religion, etc.), are inextricably tied to bigoted ideologies such as white supremacy and its rhetoric.

"The Modern Myth of the Viking" by Carl Cederlund uses excellent examples from both supposedly historical images and fiction to show the fetishization of Norse culture and history. While the author approaches the subject differently from Forssling's *Nordicism and Modernity*, the two have many similarities in their interpretation of the Viking in the modern imagination. Cederlund makes an interesting point in tasking

archaeologists of today with educating and clearing up the misunderstanding of Norse history.

> Is not the populist and, as I see them, false projections of the Viking of today really proof of the fact that archaeologists and others with qualified knowledge of these matters have failed to give a differentiated picture of Nordic society in the late Iron Age? Do we not instead go along with a phony parade of modern clichés and stereotypes? (Cederlund 2011, 33)

I would argue that most archaeologists and historians interested in the Viking Age (which Cederlund criticizes as an inaccurate label) do not go along with clichés and stereotypes but instead fight against the pseudohistory.

Far-Right Revisionism and the End of History: Alt/Histories is a collection of essays touching on the established connection between the far-right and pseudohistory. Of particular interest to this thesis is "Getting Medieval Post-Charlottesville: Medievalism and the Alt-Right" by Thomas Blake. While he focuses more on racial medievalism than Norse fetishization, the two ideologies overlap a great deal. The essay covers the recent efforts of historians to reveal the true diversity of Medieval Europe and how white nationalists and white supremacists have taken their mythologized homogeneous history to be absolute truth. Blake makes an excellent point that education alone is not enough to stem the tide of white nationalism (Blake 2020, 179). The solution he offers is to not only teach accurate and diverse history but also educate others on how white nationalists have co-opted history to achieve their own goals (180). It is a very logical and effective tactic that both public schools and universities should employ. Still, with Black history—on a kindergarten through 12th-grade level—and Critical Race Theory—on a university level—under attack by "anti-woke" activists and politicians, it is unlikely to happen any time soon in the United States (*Reuters* 2023, Anderson 2021).

Commonalities innately link Nordicism and the misuse of history. Without creating a false history marked by chivalrous white men and a racially homogeneous Europe, the idea of an Aryan "master race" does not make sense. While there is much evidence to counteract their claims, they must ignore mounting academic studies if they wish to continue spreading their white supremacist ideas (Valencia-García 2020). This area is where pseudoscience and mythic pasts combine to create a web of misinformation and fearmongering. This is where my research can contribute, as the intersection of these two subjects will be addressed in the thesis.

White Nationalists Online: Connected Through Fear

One of the foci of this research is the social media trends of self-identified white nationalists. In *Culture Warlords: My Journey into the Dark Web of White Supremacy* (2020) by Talia Lavin, the author discusses how she infiltrated certain online extremist groups and the patterns and reality of these online radicals. They have forums like Stormfront, The Daily Stormer, and other smaller sites. While most of their activity can be found publicly and without a deep dive into private pages, Lavin posed as an extremist in these spaces to discover a more complete picture. As my original research focuses only on publicly available information, accounts such as *Culture Warlords* are beneficial for another perspective.

As a Jewish woman herself, Lavin is a part of two demographics most affected by white nationalism and the people she studied. By making false accounts and infiltrating online spheres populated by white supremacists, she was able to gain an understanding of the inner workings. From a purely observational perspective, seeing the details hidden behind private accounts, forums, and groups is difficult. Lavin made an account on

WhiteDate.net (an online dating forum for people of white European ancestry and a clear white supremacist gathering ground),[5] incel forums, and found white supremacist groups on the social media platforms Gab[6] and Telegram.[7] Her work is invaluable to provide a journalistic counterpart to academic research.

While the social media habits of Norse pagans is explored in the results section, scholars and journalists have addressed white nationalists online in a variety of ways. With the rise of the internet age and social media platforms more accessible than ever, it is easy for like-minded individuals to find common ground through dog whistles[8] or blatant imagery and creed. From the blonde-haired, blue-eyed frolicking children of traditional "European" Instagram accounts and Facebook groups to subreddits[9] full of people commenting on why black people are genetically more prone to violence and sexual promiscuity, there is no shortage of people showing their fear of the "other" and decrying their supposed loss of privilege. While white cisgender men are still the most economically and socially advantaged of any demographic, they see the increase of rights for marginalized communities as discrimination (Stanley 2018).

An increasingly popular phrase that is often used to sanitize the message of white supremacy is, "It's okay to be white." Those using this hashtag or statement frequently claim colorblindness and acceptance of all, but there are always conditions. It is a dog

[5] WhiteDate.Net. https://www.whitedate.net/.
[6] Gab. https://gab.com/.
[7] Telegram. https://telegram.org/.
[8] Dog whistles are couched language used to either identify other racists/bigots or evade censors. While not all dog whistles are evidence of dangerous or radical beliefs, it is important to be aware of the most common to avoid certain groups or associations. These will be discussed more fully in the methodology and results sections.
[9] Within the site Reddit, there are subreddits. These serve as a sort of page or group. While most hate-focused subreddits or "subs" have been banned now, there are still many that exist in milder forms or recruit to private forums.

whistle that often attracts moderates and those who are wrestling with white guilt, with the majority not realizing that falling down a radicalization rabbit hole is often the result of over-exposure (Brooks 2020).

We often think of white nationalists and domestic terrorists as men, but there are women in these circles who contribute a great deal to the cause. Whether it is by denouncing feminism and encouraging other white women to embrace the "tradwife" lifestyle or promoting misinformation and white nationalist ideals themselves, it would be difficult for the white nationalist movement to exist without them (Darby 2020). This phenomenon is also true of LGBTQ+ members who offer a way for their compatriots to point out their "acceptance" of other kinds of people.

Research Gaps and Conflict

Must We Defend Nazis?: Why the First Amendment Should Not Protect Hate Speech and White Supremacy (Delgado and Stefancic 2018) argues that hate speech is such a threat that it should be handled with legal recourse. Exploring the discourse of scholars on free speech will allow a discussion of conflicting ideas. As this is one of the few areas in which scholarship opinion is divided, it is advantageous to study. Free speech is one of the foundational tenets of the culture and government of the United States, but in recent years, it has been repeatedly used to excuse hate speech and misinformation. The moral quandary of whether it is better to censor these words or let them speak without limitation is something that many scholars and laypeople disagree on the answer, on any side of the political spectrum.

Free speech versus public safety is not an easy problem to solve. The spread of misinformation and hate speech, particularly online, is a problem with real consequences,

such as the January 6th insurrection or racially motivated mass shootings. However, addressing it involves a careful balance between protecting an American citizen's right to expression, the human right of freedom from discrimination, and the right to bodily safety. Unfortunately, there is no good answer to the quandary, other than keeping an eye on dangerous hate speech and trying to more accurately define when it crosses from free speech into dangerous rhetoric with real-world implications.

The discourse surrounding this topic is not often contradictory, but academics do not always agree in some areas. Some anthropologists and biologists argue that while race is not a biological trait, it is still necessary to classify people by ethnicity to properly provide social services (Smedley and Smedley 2005). Others believe that eliminating racial terminology is needed for progress (Hochmann 2021). Arguments concerning free speech are also debated among scholars, with some positing that free speech is an absolute constitutional right. In contrast, others offer a more nuanced view that hate speech should not be permitted due to the potentially dangerous consequences it can have (Yong 2011). The subject of free speech is especially applicable in the current political climate, as accusations of censorship and promoting misinformation are two sides of a similar coin (Delgado and Stefancic 2018). The diverging arguments are valid and deserve to be explored thoroughly.

As for gaps in the scholarly literature, this research aims to bridge various ideas and sources to better understand the effect of false and accurate histories on our present and future. The sources included cover multiple approaches to the subject, such as historical misinformation (Albin et al. 2019), online hate speech (Bouvier and Rosenbaum 2020), racism within Norse paganism (Gardell 2003), American white

nationalism (Zeskind 2009), and Nordicism's evolution through history and modernity (Forssling 2020). The gap appears when looking at precisely Nordicism's effect on online white supremacist spaces and hate crimes.

The study of racism is not new, nor is it revolutionary in many ways; but as with all topics that endanger a significant portion of people and affect human rights, the more we study and understand it, the more we can identify patterns and hopefully prevent extremism from taking control of governments. At least at this point in human history, stamping out all forms of discrimination is impossible. However, doing nothing encourages those who view their bigoted crusade as righteous and moral.

Literature Wrap-Up

Research has been done on individual aspects of Nordicism, white nationalism, pseudohistory, hate crimes, and the weaponizing of false histories, but combining and applying context to a more holistic view is lacking. By crossbreeding the racial and cultural discourses since the beginning of Nordicism to our current age of internet misinformation, I endeavor to identify the warning signs for racially motivated violence. Research on social media will be up to date during the thesis's writing, allowing the use of examples of white nationalism as they appear. As this subject is a very relevant topic, new information and examples are produced daily, which presents an opportunity to cover it as it happens.

For better or worse, this subject is very current and consistently in the news. Whether it is another racially motivated shooting, a neo-Nazi demonstration, comments made by politicians that support the violent rhetoric of the alt-right, or a repeated conspiracy theory with roots in racist ideology, this subject is far from simply a historical

issue. It is easy to say that Hitler and Nazism's ideals are in the past, but in the United States especially, that is far from the truth. White nationalism and white supremacy are ramping up and show no signs of slowing down. In future chapters, original research offers up-to-date and relevant material, but the immediacy of many of these sources shows that other scholars and journalists see the need in our current climate. Studying the past is helpful primarily to better the future, which is the goal of this thesis.

Chapter III.

Methodology

White nationalism and hate, especially in the online and criminal contexts, are sensitive and contentious subjects. The purpose of the original research beyond the historiography of the subject includes viewing social media, forums, and recent hate crimes or white nationalist and neo-Nazi demonstrations in the United States through a scholarly lens. While examining the history and evolution of Nordicism and Norse pseudohistory is vital to the basis of this thesis, the goal is to explore its modern applications in American white nationalism and white supremacism. Many online examples portray Nordicism directly or indirectly, and this paper aims to explore a sampling.

Researching a sensitive and current issue is a balancing act. It must be as objective and unbiased as possible while providing accurate information. Even when looking at specifically hateful content, remaining ethical in the approach is not only responsible but also necessary in an academic context. While a few studies go into methodology for anthropological or sociological research on social media (Hall 2022, Snelson 2016), most methods were created to fit this thesis. The methodology for the original study was carefully considered and planned to stay detached personally while invested academically.

Data Collection Methods

This research used two primary qualitative methods: phenomenological and historical. Reviewing the collection of primary and secondary sources provided a great

deal of context and opening for scholarly discourse. Still, historical work was required to examine Nordicism and the path of false histories. The historical method can be seen in the literature review. Phenomenological research looked at the current social media white supremacists and their behavior, along with those who commit violent hate crimes.

Besides reviewing the literature, the primary methodology for this thesis was examining a corpus of various social media sites and the hate speech or dog whistles contained therein. Twitter (now called X)[10] was used to explore the wording and dog whistles that are especially popular among both well-known white nationalists and their followers. Instagram[11] is a visual medium, and therefore, it was helpful for tattoos, clothing, aesthetics, art, and symbolism of these trends. Instagram is also known for using hashtags to help find public posts that aim to radicalize or find others who believe in a similar worldview. Forums specifically made for extremist views, such as Stormfront,[12] and Incels.is[13] were used, but only what was accessible without creating an account. TikTok[14] was also be used, as it is popular among Asatru and Odinist practitioners. 4chan[15] is a good resource for extremist ideology, as it has been known to radicalize people in many instances. YouTube[16] is a hotbed for pseudohistorical content and extreme views presented in a video format. Some other sites, such as American Renaissance,[17] Red Ice TV,[18] and minor organization blogs, can provide limited but

[10] X. https://twitter.com/.
[11] Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/.
[12] Stormfront. https://www.stormfront.org/forum/.
[13] Incels.is. https://incels.is/.
[14] TikTok. https://www.tiktok.com/en/.
[15] 4chan. https://www.4chan.org/.
[16] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/.
[17] American Renaissance. https://www.amren.com/.
[18] Red Ice TV. https://redice.tv/.

valuable insight into the extreme and dedicated bases. While some sites offer more material than others, the methodology explored white nationalism in public online spaces.

All research on social media was conducted through the permission and guidance of the IRB. Posts or content requiring payment or a follow request were not used. If the information is not readily available by simply visiting the website without direct interaction or through a public link, it was not used. There was no direct interaction with users I observed, nor did I post anything that may recruit such people to approach. This investigation was strictly observational, with the aim of ethical examination. I used original posts and content made with full knowledge that the public can see the material at large or by anyone who makes a free account. Due to these considerations, I have asked the IRB (Institutional Review Board) for the NHSR (Not Human Subjects Research) determination and received confirmation. As all data was publicly accessible without direct interaction, social media posts were treated as primary sources.

From the beginning of writing and research, I saved and bookmarked posts or accounts that seemed promising, but only began collecting and entering the data during November and December 2023. Finally, a big piece of the methodology was limiting the hourly exposure to extremist content. While it is vital to the research, it is equally important to watch out for overexposure to hate and the detrimental effect that it can have on the researcher's mental health (Cavallaro and Kumar 2018).

Qualitative Dimensions

Qualitative dimensions for this thesis primarily involved purposeful sampling and inductive reasoning. By taking specific examples from social media and hate crimes, the phenomenon of Nordicism in white nationalism could be seen more holistically. Using

thematic methodology to identify patterns and trends allowed following trails between search terms and imagery most used among white supremacists online. The discourse surrounding this subject could be seen in the comments. While I did not use comments from Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube, there were replies and quotes of posts on 4chan and X that could be used to observe discussion and reactions by either other white nationalists or those who disagree with the user.

Analyzing the data required using both previous historiography and literature to identify usable content and being open to Nordicist echoes that may be new or unfamiliar. By looking through various accounts and posts within those accounts, it was possible to have a more complete view of the user and decide whether they are appropriate to cite. Once found, anonymity was a vital aspect to consider. While some better-known white supremacists or neo-Nazis proudly display their real names on their profiles, the majority choose aliases or usernames that do not give an idea of their real names. If someone used their real name on a smaller account, I decided to cite their username only. However, if the username was, in fact, their legal name, it is necessary to cite the name by *The Chicago Manual of Style's* citation rules. If the post contained a full-face picture of the user, it was not used. Browsing was done with no interaction to keep my anonymity and safety intact. However, the final thesis is publicly available by database. I have chosen to not delay publication, and I understand by using the required citation style, true anonymity is not possible.

Identifying Sources

The primary sources chosen were not random, as they were purposefully searched for and selected. A quantitative formula or survey was not used, but instead, a sampling

of content was used. Instead of statistical study or numerical analysis, individual posts and news stories were used. To effectively examine specific cases of pseudohistory and the observable impact of Nordicism on white nationalists online or in demonstrations, it was more appropriate to analyze a meticulously selected dataset for this thesis.

The internet is vast, with many social networks and forums that would be useful for this project. In recent months, new social media networks and apps have exploded after Elon Musk bought Twitter (now known as X). These sites, such as Threads,[19] Mastadon,[20] and Bluesky,[21] were not used. The method for choosing social media platforms focused on accessibility to public content, prevalence of relevant content, ease of navigation, and popularity. When choosing forums and blogs, it also focused on accessibility to public content and less on popularity. Aside from Stormfront, most white nationalist websites are not famous or well-known, and yet they provided a great deal of insight.

Five social media platforms will be utilized: 4Chan, Instagram, TikTok, X (formerly known as Twitter), and YouTube. Out of the possibilities, these five platforms are currently not only some of the most popular ("Biggest Social Media Platforms 2023" 2023) but are also easy to navigate due to my familiarity with them. Instagram is primarily image-focused, but videos are also allowed on the site/app. Many accounts specifically post content collected from other accounts, and this is an excellent place to find collections of white nationalist accounts and hashtags.[22] TikTok is the most popular

[19] Threads. https://www.threads.net/.
[20] Mastadon. https://joinmastodon.org/.
[21] BlueSky. https://bsky.app/.
[22] Hashtags are words or phrases that are metadata tags preceded by the # symbol. They are used to maneuver and find content on many social media platforms.

social media app currently. Primarily made for short-form videos, many use it for activism and education. This factor means bigoted ideologies also have a voice, and TikTok is notoriously bad about not banning hateful content. X is in a state of flux currently, with many white nationalists and neo-Nazis who were previously banned from the platform now able to access their accounts again due to the new ownership of Elon Musk. X is a primarily short-form text post platform, but images and videos can also be posted. While not necessarily considered a social media platform in the purest sense, YouTube has community interaction and engagement. As it is almost wholly videos (of all lengths), it has an abundance of content made to support pseudohistorical claims.

Along with social media content, also used were some of the public blogs and forums explicitly made by and for white nationalists or white supremacists. Stormfront is one of the largest and best-known white nationalist online forums, but I also used Incels.is. Incels.is is technically an incel[23] forum, but the incel community often overlaps with white supremacist ideology and symbolism. It has been observed that when a person is radicalized to one cause, such as white nationalism or misogyny, it is easy for them to pick up other forms of bigotry. Antisemitism, racism, misogyny, transphobia, homophobia, fatphobia, and Islamophobia are common themes among many radicalized communities.

Challenges

Depending on the interface and software used, forums are a bit more challenging to navigate. I decided against making accounts on forums or sites that are directly

[23] Incel stands for "involuntary celibate." It is a community of men who feel disadvantaged in the dating world and often choose to turn instead to misogyny and other forms of bigotry.

connected to white supremacy as a core tenet. My method was primarily looking through the public message boards and finding users or subjects that appear to address pseudohistory or Nordicism. On sites that are more of a blog format, such as Red Ice TV, it was a matter of scrolling through the posts and finding titles that addressed the research questions of the thesis. Blogs and conspiracy theory news sites were beneficial to discover what dog whistles, images, and trends are especially popular in current white nationalist content.

One of the most challenging processes in this research was finding content suitable for use as data. While Google was helpful in initial searches, it was within the actual social media platforms that most of the searching and parsing was done. Searching hashtags was the most beneficial way to find accounts and content applicable to this thesis. While searching through hashtags was not always quick or valuable, one can find content by looking at the search results and branching off into further hashtags and linked accounts. When one nationalist or pseudohistory account is found, you can follow the trail of their followers or those they follow. As these communities are insular, they often follow other white supremacist accounts.

Some accounts could be found through comments or replies, but the only content used directly in this thesis consists of posts made to be public to non-followers. However, on certain platforms such as 4chan and X, retweets and comments may be posted as separate links. When this is the case, they could be used as data. Some accounts may appear to be white nationalist simply by viewing their profile picture, bio,[24] or

[24] A "bio" is a short biography or personal text on a social media profile.

username,[25] but if the account was private, it was not used. Examples of hashtags searched for include: #1488, #Atlantis, #BloodAndSoil, #Europa, #EuropeanHeritage, #Folk, #Hyperborea, #ItsOkayToBeWhite, #TheGreatReplacement, #TheyWillNotReplaceUs, #Thule, #WhiteAmerica.

There is a considerable amount of white nationalist content online, so the most challenging part was deciding what to include and what to exclude. It would be hard to fit everything relevant, so the process of choosing and sorting was constant when researching. While there are many pseudohistorical obsessions and pseudoscientific beliefs propagated by white nationalists, the focus was limited to Nordicism and Norse history. Another challenge was ensuring I did not accidentally interact with a post or fall for trolls or bots in their satire. While there is no exact method to be entirely assured of that, using a discerning eye and following guidelines set out by other researchers can help ensure that all data is legitimate ("Overcoming Bots and Trolls in Research on Social Media" 2019). Even though I received exemption status from the IRB, I was in contact with my thesis director throughout data collection to ensure my method was ethical and abided by academic principles.

Another challenge is the transience of online content. This is usually due to accounts being banned or deleting their own content. To make sure my data was not lost, I took screenshots of every post I cited. While I attempted to make sure the posts were all still viewable at the time of completion, there is the possibility that some may be deleted

[25] Username or screenname are used interchangeably to refer to the actual name and link of a social media profile. On sites like Instagram, TikTok, and X, it is often preceded by the @ symbol. While the profile name may be different, the username is the base identifier of any social media profile.

before or after publication. Making sure I have all the screenshots ensures that I do not lose the data. These screenshots are stored in a Dropbox folder with access upon request.

Initially, I planned only to use examples from the internet, but with the rise of hate crimes and neo-Nazi demonstrations around the USA, hatred in the real world is an undeniable consequence of their extremism online. Taking examples from the headlines and news articles, primarily focusing on words chanted or symbols used on flags and t-shirts in these white supremacist demonstrations gave a pattern to their ideologies. Racially motivated hate crimes and the news coverage of the crime and perpetrator were also vital sources for modern white nationalism and how it can escalate to violence. If there are archival records of the perpetrators' manifestos or social media activity before the crime, then that was an invaluable resource for discovering the motive and path to extremism they took.

There was some coverage in the literature review of the January 6th insurrection due to its connection with vocal white nationalists. While in theory, these demonstrations were not advertised as white nationalist gatherings, it became clear during and after the fact what many of those gathered believed. A variety of antisemitic, white supremacist, neo-Nazi, and alt-right imagery was used. While any news source can be helpful, the goal was to take primarily from the least biased sources. Places such as Reuters,[26] the Associated Press (AP),[27] and organizations such as the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)[28] tend to be trustworthy and fact-based. Media Bias/Fact Check[29] is a reputable source to judge news sources.

[26] Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/.
[27] AP News. https://apnews.com/.
[28] Southern Poverty Law Center. https://www.splcenter.org/.
[29] Media Bias Fact Check. https://mediabiasfactcheck.com/.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this research that needed to be addressed. First was the presence of "bots" on social media platforms. These are accounts created to collect information, attack others, or spread political propaganda. While it can be relatively easy to identify the more obvious examples of bot accounts, many can mimic real people convincingly. Caution is paramount. Since comments or replies were not used, I believe it was easier to avoid this pitfall. Addressing this limitation required careful study of bot patterns and erring on the side of caution when unsure.

The second limitation was parody accounts or trolls. While on the surface, these types of accounts may seem harmless, many parody accounts or trolls will parrot alt-right points and do so in a way that makes it hard to distinguish between their true beliefs and satire. Of course, these parodies were of interest to the subject, but it was vital not to misrepresent someone or their views, so precautions were taken to identify these accounts by reviewing full timelines and their follower lists.

A third limitation was the secrecy and privacy of some white supremacists online. While the research was focused on how these extremists have become more mainstream, much of their ideology is still spread behind closed doors. Initially, the plan was to use only content available to someone visiting the site without an account, even on social media. However, social media platforms are often limited to those with accounts. If paying or revealing personal information to obtain an account was necessary, I opted not to use that site. However, for sites like X and Instagram, it is free to make an account and requires no private information except an e-mail address. Because anyone can create an e-mail account for free as well, these sites were considered public. If an account was set

to private and required a follow request[30] to view their content, it was not used, but rather only content from creators who did not have a reasonable expectation of privacy. If accessing a particular post would require any further interaction with the user than simply visiting the page, it was not used.

Dog whistles are another topic that can be difficult to translate accurately. While some can be identified based on the rest of their online activity, occasionally someone who does not ascribe to these beliefs innocently uses a dog whistle. Dog whistles such as "The Great Replacement," "Folk," "European Heritage," and "1488" are reasonably well-known in the communities. Dog whistles can be innocent, and it takes discernment to decide if it is a bigoted dog whistle or someone just speaking about an unrelated subject. Most do not care to be mistaken for "normies,"[31] so their content will show the truth of their convictions.

Finally, personal bias and privilege must be remembered. My personal experience as a white American with no individual racial discrimination affects the way I see the world and, therefore, the way I approach the research. As for bias, this subject tends to bring out bias in most. However, I have tried to remain unbiased in my observations while offering informed interpretations. These limitations could be mitigated by thorough and ethical research. By remaining cautious and only using the most prominent examples, producing accurate and quality data was possible. Keeping these limitations and risks in

[30] Private accounts require you to send a request to follow them, allowing the account to deny or accept. Public accounts do not require this.

[31] "Normies" is a term used by conspiracy theorists and extremists to mean those who don't follow their ideology. This is often a result of them seeing themselves as the only people who see the truth and others as "sheep" who only follow mainstream or conventional opinions.

mind as I researched this thesis, I am confident that the limitations were not significant obstacles.

The methodology of this thesis was crafted over the months spent writing to give the most holistic, ethical, and unbiased approach to the information gathered. By sticking strictly to observation and not directly interacting with the white nationalists mentioned, I aimed to protect both my privacy and the data's objectivity. While some researchers and journalists do meaningful work by interviewing these subjects directly, I attempted to keep enough separation so that I was kept safe and that the observation did not compromise the users and accounts.

While the methodology did evolve with the project, the steps and procedures covered in this section should enable the replication of my results, even if the specific items would be different. The reproducibility of this research depends on the continued presence of white nationalists online, which currently shows no sign of abating. However, it is my sincere hope that eventually, the study will not be as reproducible in the future due to societal shifts and progress.

Chapter IV.

Results and Discussion

In the research of this analysis, I have combed through social media, forums, blogs, and news stories to find examples of Nordicism and Norse pseudohistory in modern American white nationalism and white supremacism. While I had expectations going in, there were several surprises, such as dog whistles I was not previously aware of and more strict regulations on hate speech by certain platforms and domain hosts, leading to the banning of accounts and sites I had initially planned to use. Social media trends constantly evolve with current events and new focuses, making maintaining a static coverage of the material challenging. However, even a snapshot of a particular time can be a valuable insight into a group's ideologies.

Cultural Dynamics

Within the white nationalist world, cultural factors play a considerable part in radicalization. An upbringing in an isolated and white community can make any diversity seem dangerous. Feeling lonely as a teenager and young adult can lead many people to search out groups to foster a sense of community. Extremist sects are exceptionally talented at bringing in the lonely and vulnerable. If they feel forgotten or overlooked by the world, they look for a reason they can blame, and it often falls to a form of imagined white discrimination (Lavin 2020).

When Nordicism and Norse pseudohistory enter an individual or group's core tenets, it becomes clear that most of these followers have some real or assumed Nordic ancestry. Using the excuse that they are honoring their ancestors, they weaponize ancestry tests and family legends to claim descent from famous Norse kings or mythical saga heroes (Dasgupta, Iturriaga, and Panofsky 2021). The obsession with identifying roots in a similar way to the nineteenth century romantics takes over their lives and informs all aesthetic and pastime choices. Many develop a preoccupation with runes, axe throwing, Viking swords, and Viking Age reenactments. Tattoos, makeup, hairstyles, jewelry, and social media profiles declare their love for everything Viking (Birkett and Dale 2019).

Instagram: Do It for the Gram

Instagram is a social media site that focuses primarily on images. It also allows "reels"[32] and "stories,"[33] but it was initially started to share pictures. While most accounts are personal, users can have multiple accounts; many businesses and organizations use them for activism or advertisement. In white nationalist spaces, there is a plethora of accounts that post pictures of all-white, usually blonde, families. They are especially focused on children and the act of having white children due to the "14 words"[34] many claim to value as a life motto. Collages of European scenery, traditional European dress (often German, Scandinavian, or Slavic costumes), and particularly young women with

[32] Reels are short-form video posts on Instagram and Facebook.
[33] Stories are images or short videos that can be posted to a social media profile that automatically disappear after 24 hours.
[34] "14 words" or even just the number "14" in a white nationalist context refers to a quote coined by David Lane. "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children."

their hair in crown braids showing off their bright blue eyes and freckled smiles are among the most popular aesthetics. Large Norse runes, Norse mythological illustrations from the nineteenth century, and pictures of Greco-Roman statuary are equally prevalent. Overlaid with words such as "Protect white women,"[35] "Protect your heritage,"[36] and "Defend Europa,"[37] it is evident the message these accounts are attempting to send—to reject modernity, embrace traditionalism, and go back to a "white" cultural homeland that never truly existed. Ironically, in calling their followers to learn history and never forget their ancestors,[38] these creators deny evidence-based historical research and instead choose to believe that the romanticized story white supremacists have created is the truth.

Often, the posts on Instagram are designed to elicit fear and outrage, with loaded language meant to promote the idea of a white genocide[39] or complain about the supposed oppression of white men specifically.[40] Pseudoscience is very prevalent among white nationalists on Instagram, with images of skull shapes and an insistence that modern science has changed its evidence based on political motivations.[41] As Nordicism

[35] They must be stopped (@this_must_be_stopped), "Did you know over 100 w-hite [sic] women are raped evey [sic] single day by a b lack[sic] man... (in the u.s.) If those roles were reserved [sic] it would be practically zero..." Instagram, April 7, 2021, https://www.instagram.com/p/CNYILbbAjge/.
[36] Hyperboreanrising (@hyperboreanrising), "Protect the only thing that matters - your people and your culture," Instagram, September 20, 2019, https://www.instagram.com/p/B2oLK9lgohu/.
[37] Revolt Against Modernity (@revolt_against_modernity_), "Stand with Greece [Greece Emoji]," Instagram, March 7, 2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/B9cqv-fgEiL/.
[38] Revolt Against Modernity (@revolt_against_modernity_), ". . ." Instagram, March 3, 2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/Capn6kQt3rr/.
[39] Dead man walking (@coffeeshock556), "#diversityiswhitegenocide #whitegenocideisreal," Instagram, October 30, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/CzBgdOVsfH9/.
[40] They must be stopped (@this_must_be_stopped), "The strait [sic], white, christian male is the most hated person in the world right now," Instagram, August 17, 2021, https://www.instagram.com/p/CSrkx0xAbXO/.
[41] WHITE-LIVES-MATTER (@when_will_white_lives_matter), "Just as it was once universally accepted that races differ in intelligence, so the study of physical differences was once entirely respectable." Instagram, September 23, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/CxiGBJsP_uM/.

was and is a large part of scientific racism and phrenology,[42] a connection can be seen in posts such as those listed above.

Norse pseudohistory and Viking fetishization are a bit harder to parse out in these cases. Still, once you find one account showing the connection between runes and white nationalist slogans, it often leads to more like-minded accounts. It is hard to determine whether they are using the runes as representations of the Nazi usage or the futhark alphabet. Usually, it is a mix of both.

Instagram had no shortage of white nationalists[43] or Viking enthusiasts.[44] The issue arose when trying to find the overlap. More and more Norse pagans are speaking out against racism, and I found quite a few posts that condemned the folkish and ethnicity-focused followers of their religion.[45] With the rise of awareness of the white nationalist problem in their community, people are speaking out against the appropriation of symbols and history.

White nationalists and white supremacists are quite adept at navigating the line between blatant racism and covert tactics. Aside from using an ever-growing list of dog whistles, many know how to maintain plausible deniability. Often, this skill is gained from repeated suspensions and account deletions as they discover what is and is not acceptable to the site's censors. As there is a fine line between an inconspicuous

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[42] The study of the shape and size of the skull or cranium to determine racial, mental, and character traits. (OED)

[43] Westernkind (@whitewellbeingcommunity), "This page is dedicated to sharing White Wellbeing community that has White Positive language/Lessons." Instagram, Accessed November 25, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/whitewellbeingcommunity/.

[44] VIKINGS || Viking Warriors (@runicfella), "[Fire Emoji] Victory or #Valhalla [Flexed Biceps Emoji]," Instagram, Accessed November 25, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/runicfella/.

[45] Wodaz (@wodaz_), "Be proud of who you are and where you come from. Love Your Folk!" Instagram, Accessed November 25, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/wodaz_/.

nationalist and an innocent user accidentally using dog whistles, it is vital not to include posts from anyone without blatant extremist content.

One of the most significant trends seen in these Instagram accounts is a focus on white children,[46] white women,[47] and especially procreation.[48] Interracial relationships[49] and sexually liberated women[50] are demonized, while traditional wives[51] who want to birth a brood of white children[52] are idolized. Often, these accounts are run by men fantasizing about imaginary future relationships[53] that will supposedly make their ancestors proud,[54] but many women are involved as well. In accepting their own oppression, they receive special status in the movement. With the focus on genetics and heritage, it is no surprise that they fight against the current understanding of race and biology,[55] especially when it comes to transgender people.[56] Virulently anti-LGBTQ+,[57]

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[46] The Northerner (@northerner_store), "Alps [Snowcapped Mountain Emoji] [Mountain Emoji]," Instagram, February 5, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/CoSumKVrKAF/.
[47] TradWest (@trad_west_), "What country are you from? Represent your country in the comments [Double Exclamation Mark Emoji]," Instagram, September 30, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/Cx0tKN9tWzy/.
[48] Young Traditionalists (@youngtraditionalists), "Keep your bloodline alive." Instagram, May 3, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/CryB8MuurTx/.
[49] nationalist_united_official (@nationalist_united_official), "What is the red pill?" Instagram, July 6, 2021, https://www.instagram.com/p/CQ_1EacDVYk/.
[50] Only Conservative (@only_conservative_), Instagram, October 14, 2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/CjtoiYWrxUQ/.
[51] Traditional Aesthetics (@worth__fighting__for), "Which one would you choose?" Instagram, October 29, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/Cy_lzTQNToo/.
[52] Trads Posting Their Wins (@trad_wins), "Happy mother's day [Thumbs Up Emoji]," Instagram, May 14, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/CsOiehFNH3Z/.
[53] Sprendax (@sprendax), "I will never eat the bugs," Instagram, July 8, 2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/CfwL8OeuByP/.
[54] Wodaz (@wodaz_), "You are here because your ancestors stepped up and created structure from chaos." Instagram, June 26, 2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/CfR4sYsgihF/.
[55] Westernkind (@whitewellbeingcommunity), "It isn't the similarities that make us the same, it is the differences that make us different." Instagram, September 29, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/CxytLeRyK9e/.
[56] Jugs (@jokesdepartment), "Good Morning Kings," Instagram, April 28, 2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/Cc5EdjzuQ7p/.
[57] Home of the Appalachian Right (@rightwingism_appalachia), "Yeahhhh that ain't happening -W [Deer Emoji]," Instagram, June 13, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/Ctb7QVKuq57/.

they claim that the Western world has fallen to degeneracy,[58] which includes anything they disagree with.

Religion is often included in their identity, and the competition between Christian white nationalists[59] and Pagan/Heathen white nationalists[60] can be seen primarily in the comments of any religious post. They agree on white supremacy, but they disagree on the merits of Christianity versus Norse paganism. The anti-Christian view is often motivated by Antisemitism, which causes them to reject all forms of Abrahamic religion. While this research focuses more on the Norse pagan white nationalists, there is a good deal of research on Christian white nationalism—especially in the US (e.g., Gorski, Perry, and Tisby 2022).

One surprise on Instagram was their ability to stick to dog whistles and vague references to heritage without crossing the line into explicit racism. While I expected most accounts to be good at avoiding the censors, I found certain users that would post symbols strongly associated with Nazi Germany, such as the *sonnenrad*; they would argue it simply represented the sun in their religion. The *othala* rune can be innocent; however, with added "wings" on the end, it is specific to racist interpretations.[61] The most telling sign is usually a lack of addressing racism within the community. It is no secret that racism has infested Norse pagan and Ásatrú groups across the globe, and therefore, many have made a point to disavow the racially focused practitioners

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[58] Men of the West (@west.wingism), "Our ancestors watch us." Instagram, May 18, 2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/Cdt2JUuP1qQ/.
[59] [Crown Emoji] Chad [Crown Emoji] (@its.okay.to.be.christian), "[Folded Hands Emoji] Disciple of Christ [Folded Hands Emoji]," Instagram, Accessed November 30, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/its.okay.to.be.christian/.
[60] Angelcynn (@angelcynn.heathen), "[Bow and Arrow Emoji] English Patriot," Instagram, Accessed November 30, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/angelcynn.heathen/.
[61] Taurëlëo (@taureleo), "Love Your Folk," Instagram, April 22, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/CrWd_jTOF5Y/.

publicly.[62] While a public statement denouncing white supremacist views should not be necessary, it is an unfortunate reality that in these spaces, unless explicitly stated, it is uncertain what their ideologies are.

During my research, one trend that was revealed was that European paintings and sculptures featured heavily in image posts. The paintings are primarily a mix of Renaissance[63] and romantic,[64] while the sculptures are usually classical.[65] In their minds, these artworks exemplify European superiority in talent and beauty. There are often pictures of ethnic costumes,[66] European traditions,[67] and architecture.[68] Another interesting thing I have noticed is that while Hitler and eugenicists of the past tended to consider Mediterranean, Slavic, and Celtic peoples as beneath Nordic and Germanic (Grant 1916), modern white supremacists tend not to make this distinction. They value all European ethnicities but do make a point of posting the Nordic archetype as the "ideal."[69] The most common imagery used in explicitly racist accounts usually consists of memes

[62] Pagan (@asatru_community_), "Racism is not welcome here." Instagram, September 14, 2017, https://www.instagram.com/p/BZAh2TLhYQ6/.
[63] Aristo of the Soul (@moderndaycritias), "Even Plato himself favored vegetarianism for the plebians, in order to curb any life force they might have had." Instagram, June 18, 2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/Ce8kSc3t_TZ/.
[64] Conservative League (@conservativeleague), "Appreciate true beauty." Instagram, March 25, 2021, https://www.instagram.com/p/CM2MkTIF3Gf/.
[65] EVROPA (@old.europe), "Even as the Sun doth not wait for prayers and incantations to rise," Instagram, February 7, 2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/CZrDd9PFS61/.
[66] The indigenous Europe (@indigenous_europe), "Traditional Slavic pagan wedding [Slightly Smiling Emoji]," Instagram, February 5, 2021, https://www.instagram.com/p/CK5y-O6gCI9/.
[67] European People (@european.people), "#european #couple #marriage #relationship #traditional #culture," Instagram, September 24, 2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/Ci6NjJ8ojYC/.
[68] White Enjoyer (@whiteenjoyer), "Hi! Welcome to my account. For my first post, I decided to post pictures of a few European cities. Enjoy!" Instagram, August 23, 2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/ChncYSMNn8-/.
[69] Beautiful Europa (@proudeuropean_), "Norwegians [Norway Emoji]," Instagram, July 16, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/Cuw86LPN-CY/.

and meme figures such as Wojak,[70] Pepe the Frog,[71] Yes Chad (also known as Nordic Gamer, which fits the Nordicist theme),[72] and more rarely, cartoon characters such as Spongebob Squarepants[73] to spout nationalist rhetoric. With Roman imagery so prevalent, a gold helmet known as Aurelian's helmet[74] is often laid over the user's face to create a meme known as "Sol Chad."[75] Screenshots of news articles[76] to spread their propaganda, whether real or altered, are plentiful on the site and are often presented without context.

4Chan: Anonymous Hate

4chan is an imageboard and social media site where most users post anonymously. It does not have registration, allowing people to feel bolder and untouchable with their content. It is known for hosting memes and a variety of hateful commentary.[77] Certain movements and memes have even found their creation on the site. The "/pol/"[78] message board is known for attracting a great deal of bigotry[79] and violent rhetoric (Ling 2022), with Payton Gendron even writing about the board in his racist

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[70] Wojak Archive (@wojakarchive), "compilation of wojaks," Instagram, Accessed November 30, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/wojakarchive/.
[71] BASED Department (@_based_department___), "Go bed church tomorrow," Instagram, November 4, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/CzP9502tq7e/.
[72] Shrrrrrp (@shrrrrrp), "Yes it's an OC dump." Instagram, August 21, 2021, https://www.instagram.com/p/CS0oECxNnSJ/.
[73] Traditionalist Chad (@traditionalist_chad), "all true," Instagram, June 24, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/Ct4TCn6S63Q/.
[74] The original use of this helmet design was in the video game, *Total War: Rome II*.
[75] Sunnatru (@sunnatru), "Painted over dorky faux-gym slogan with the colors." Instagram, August 3, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/CvgiVo8ut6u/.
[76] SeanPatrickArts (@seanpatrickarts), "Finally some attention to the matter!" Instagram, July 28, 2021, https://www.instagram.com/p/CR4TdgYr4Aw/.
[77] Anonymous, "[racial slur] thread," 4chan, December 4, 2023, https://boards.4chan.org/pol/thread/450908677#p450908677.
[78] https://boards.4chan.org/pol/
[79] Anonymous, "IT'S TIME TO PLAY NAME THAT SNEAKY JEW!" 4chan, December 4, 2023, https://boards.4chan.org/pol/thread/450909280#q450909280.

manifesto before committing the May 14, 2022, supermarket shooting in Buffalo, New York (Closson, McKinley, and Traub 2022).

4chan is known for its lack of censorship, which makes it easier to find a variety of hateful content and slurs. Since October 7, 2023, and the heightening of the Hamas/Israeli conflict, many have used this as a convenient way to openly proclaim their Antisemitism with the assumption that valid criticism of the Israeli government and actions will make their hatred more palatable. They are conflating the Israeli government and actions with not only Israeli civilians but also Jewish people worldwide. With the rise of Islamophobia and Antisemitism in response to the war (Yang 2023), it is not a surprise that white nationalists are twisting the fraught situation to fit their violent agenda.[80]

On the main page for the "/pol/" board, a feed of supposedly current events with a "politically incorrect" analysis reveals primarily bigoted content. The posts focus mainly on racism,[81] white nationalism, transphobia,[82] Antisemitism,[83] and misogyny.[84] A plethora of content demonstrates that when people can post anonymously, the content becomes incredibly offensive. The freedom and lack of consequences lead and permit people who may very well be upstanding members of society to post vile opinions and images. 4chan does not ban or delete posts based on slurs, and this can be seen in a

[80] 53, "/chip/ - Comfy Happening in Palestine #696," 4chan, December 5, 2023, https://boards.4chan.org/pol/thread/450976381#p450976381.
[81] Anonymous, "Indian hate thread," 4chan, December 6, 2023, https://boards.4chan.org/pol/thread/451089257.
[82] Anonymous, "How can we stop white men from [transphobic slur] out?" 4chan, December 5, 2023, https://boards.4chan.org/pol/thread/451075873#q451075873.
[83] Anonymous, "Dust is not settled yet, but I truly am curious about this- how did anti-Jewry sky rocket so quickly?" 4chan, December 6, 2023, https://boards.4chan.org/pol/thread/451080916#q451080916.
[84] Anonymous, "Women," 4chan, December 5, 2023, https://boards.4chan.org/pol/thread/451006934#q451006934.

variety of posts criticizing representation,[85] immigration,[86] and white people choosing not to have children.[87]

There are a few examples of Nordicism[88] or Aryanism[89] specifically and Norse fetishism[90] on the site, but overall, 4chan is more focused on general white nationalism with little explanation behind the reason for their hate.[91] With many comments supporting the original poster or even posting additional bigoted content to escalate the emotion further, it can also grow even more intense. While some users may attempt to disagree, they are often mocked and chased off.

Since there is very little moderation on 4chan, users can praise mass shooters and hate crimes.[92] There are also comments telling others to kill themselves, although that is far from unique to 4chan (Milmo 2022). Threats of violence and urging for suicide are seen as commonplace and acceptable, while slurs are posted without censorship or consequence.[93] Throughout my research, I have become aware of some of the language of these spaces, but there are new words that I have been unable to find the meaning behind due to the secretive nature of these communities. Some are easy to parse, such as

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[85] Anonymous, "WTF IS THIS SHIT?" 4chan, December 5, 2023, https://boards.4chan.org/pol/thread/450980492#q450980492.
[86] Anonymous, "In less than a month illegal [racial slur] will be getting free healthcare in California," 4chan, December 5, 2023, https://boards.4chan.org/pol/thread/450995982.
[87] Anonymous, "Best way to shame intentionally childless 'people' #8 Shills Seem Big Mad Edition," 4chan, December 5, 2023, https://boards.4chan.org/pol/thread/450992486#q450992486.
[88] Anonymous, "Nordic women," 4chan, December 6, 2023, https://boards.4chan.org/pol/thread/451090747#q451090747.
[89] Anonymous, "Aryans are Odin's chosen people." 4chan, December 5, 2023, https://boards.4chan.org/pol/thread/450989850#q450989850.
[90] Anonymous, "Why did white people abandon their gods?" 4chan, December 5, 2023, https://boards.4chan.org/pol/thread/450993595#q450993595.
[91] Anonymous, "Whites will collectivise in the coming global economic collapse, and it will be so [expletive] glorious," 4chan, December 5, 2023, https://boards.4chan.org/pol/thread/450992640.
[92] Anonymous, "Breivik," 4chan, December 6, 2023, https://boards.4chan.org/pol/thread/451063517.
[93] Anonymous, "I exposed myself to [transphobic slur] subreddits and [transphobic slur] twitter for days after the nashville shooting…" 4chan, December 6, 2023, https://boards.4chan.org/pol/thread/451096610.

adding "tard"[94] to a particular word (e.g., libtard) or "cuck," (e.g., Canacuck)[95] while others would involve a more in-depth interaction with the users than I am willing or able to do for this thesis.

4chan can be a site for free speech and important discourse, but overall the content allowed is often dangerous and has even led to violence offline (Sardarizadeh 2022). The danger to vulnerable young men is explicitly a worry for many social media sites and forums, but 4chan is an especially egregious offender in that regard. However, due to the site's trolling and meme content, it is not the most useful source for data. It is still important to discuss, though, with its reputation and direct influence on real-world violence.

X: The Site Formerly Known as Twitter

Twitter (now X) was previously stricter about banning accounts that used hate speech and promoted violence before Elon Musk bought it in October 2022 (Burghardt et al., 2023). It is also harder to differentiate misinformation due to changing the requirements for verified accounts. Previously, accounts were verified by proving identity as a brand, celebrity, or professional entity. Musk changed the requirements so that anyone could pay for a verified account; therefore, some official accounts do not have a verification. At the same time, someone can make an account appear more credible by paying for the verification (Frenkel, Hsu, and Myers 2023).

[94] Anonymous, "NEVADA MASS SHOOTER CONFIRMED WHITECEL MAGAT," 4chan, December 6, 2023, https://boards.4chan.org/pol/thread/451108336.
[95] Anonymous, "CANACUCKS GETTING EXTORTED BY INDIAN GANGS," 4chan, December 6, 2023, https://boards.4chan.org/pol/thread/451101488.

X has a large community of neo-Nazis, white nationalists, and alt-right users. Not able to use the slurs and outright threats that 4chan includes, users post fewer memes and outright jokes. Like Instagram and TikTok, many accounts take their ideologies very seriously. However, as X is primarily a text-based platform, white nationalists tend to use it to both write their own spiels[96] and to retweet[97] accounts or tweets that agree with their worldview. With various symbols like the *sonnenrad,*[98] swastikas,[99] and runes,[100] it is more blatant now that the moderation is more lenient. The subtler symbolism, such as pictures of white women,[101] propaganda posters from 1930s and 1940s Germany,[102] and Greco-Roman statuary,[103] is as prevalent as in Instagram.

One of the most common forms of pseudohistory, and specifically white nationalist pseudohistory, manifests on X in Holocaust denial.[104] With many accounts and posts declaring the Holocaust impossible.[105] With the recent escalation of the

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[96] Ancestral Vril (@AncestralVril), "How to end Jewish supremacy," X, December 11, 2023, https://x.com/AncestralVril/status/1734221024663638451?s=20.

[97] Retweeting is an action that quickly posts another user's content to your own page, and allows for you to add

[98] Asatru Folk Assembly (@FolkAsatru), "Appalachian Hearth of Tennessee, the newest official AFA Kindred," X, December 6, 2023, https://twitter.com/FolkAsatru/status/1732491247678529630?s=20.

[99] ᛞᚠᚹᛁᛞ ᚱᛟᛏᚺᛗᚱ (@DaveyJo14), "The Sawstika belongs to Europeans," X, December 4, 2023, https://twitter.com/DaveyJo14/status/1731781682397630765.

[100] ᛉ (@evolacore), X, Accessed December 12, 2023, https://twitter.com/evolacore.

[101] ÞuliR [Leaf Fluttering in Wind Emoji] [Man Mage Emoji] ᛉ [Mushroom Emoji] ᛟ [Sun with Face Emoji] ᛋ [Deciduous Tree Emoji] [Pirate Flag Emoji] (@BornLik23266), "To avoid (some of?) the destructive effect of civilization; its auto-domestication & inevitable hybridization, you…" X, December 2, 2023, https://twitter.com/BornLik23266/status/1730872909697019990?s=20.

[102] White_Nation_United (@White_Tribe_), "We have become at war with one another. Traditional roles have been forgotten and the family has suffered." X, December 7, 2023, https://twitter.com/White_Tribe_/status/1732752264446595517?s=20.

[103] Arktos Journal (@ArktosJournal), "The Struggle for the Soul and Blood of Europe, by Guillaume Faye, published by Arktos." X, December 2, 2023, https://twitter.com/ArktosJournal/status/1731001124793004130.

[104] Last Son of the West (@SonofTheWest35), "Add your perspectives. I could say 'I wish it had.' However, that would limit this Tweet's visibility!" X, December 12, 2023, https://twitter.com/SonofTheWest35/status/1734642434821242973.

[105] Into the Memory Hole (@frogNscorpion), "Asking AI about Auschwitz," X, December 5, 2023, https://twitter.com/frogNscorpion/status/1732186303188320539?s=20.

Israeli/Palestinian conflict, Antisemitism has become more prevalent on X than ever before.[106] Conversely, there are also increased accusations of antisemitism against individuals who criticize the Israeli government or seek to raise awareness about the plight of Palestinians in Gaza.[107]

One trendy symbol among white nationalists is the *sonnenrad*, or "black sun." The specific black sun that neo-Nazis and white supremacists use originated in Nazi Germany and consists of twelve *sig* runes[108] (very similar to those used by the SS[109]) arranged around a central black circle. As it is not as recognizable by most people as the swastika, many use it in graphics to indicate their allegiance to the white race. This fact is especially true on X, with one user calling themselves a "Nord" in their bio and Norse runes in their display name.[110] This same user posts blatantly racist content,[111] and the *sonnenrad* is emblazoned on pictures.[112] While the user claims to be from "Svitjod,"[113] it is a common tactic among American white nationalists and Norse fetishists to list their location as their alleged ancestral home. The tendency of accounts not to list their location or be clear on their home makes it hard to pinpoint American white nationalists

[106] Mighty [Latin Cross Emoji] Thor [United States Emoji] [Switzerland Emoji] [Ireland Emoji] (@Mighty_Thor0), "IDF troops [Israel Emoji] are FUKCING [sic] ANIMALS." X, December 12, 2023, https://twitter.com/Mighty_Thor0/status/1734653762835452126.
[107] Zimmlaw 175 (@Zimmlaw175), "HOW DISGUSTING IS THE UNITED NATIONS! Siding with terrorists as usual." X, December 12, 2023, https://twitter.com/Zimmlaw175/status/1734567976014143727.
[108] The *sig* rune was an Armanen rune creation, but it is based on the *Sól* rune of the younger Futhark.
[109] The SS, or *Schutzstaffel*, was a paramilitary unit in Nazi Germany most famously led by Heinrich Himmler.
[110] [Evergreen Tree Emoji] ᛟ Huldra ᛒ [Evergreen Tree Emoji] (@korpbarn), "// Nord // Hedning/Odinist // Embracing my heritage //" X, Accessed December 8, 2023, https://twitter.com/korpbarn.
[111] [Evergreen Tree Emoji] ᛟ Huldra ᛒ [Evergreen Tree Emoji] (@korpbarn), "Reminder!!! And if you don't want to follow me you're you're black," X, November 30, 2023, https://twitter.com/korpbarn/status/1730202710752846275.
[112] [Evergreen Tree Emoji] ᛟ Huldra ᛒ [Evergreen Tree Emoji] (@korpbarn), "[Flexed Biceps Emoji]" X, September 23, 2023, https://twitter.com/korpbarn/status/1705554052958794055?s=20.
[113] An Old Norse word roughly translating to either the "Land of the Svea" or the "Swedes" (tribe).

on social media precisely. Still, some accounts purposely make it evident that they are American.[114]

Trends among white nationalists and white supremacists include ableism and an obsession with fitness.[115] There is an urge to prepare for the supposed collapse of civilization by being as physically fit and conventionally attractive as possible.[116] This focus results in a hatred of anything that is not their version of a perfect and beautiful white human—which is usually tall, blonde, blue-eyed, pale, and slender (for a woman[117]) or muscular (for a man[118]). This vision of perfection can be easily traced to Nordicism and the belief that the "Nordic race" is superior in genetics and beauty (Grant 1916). Disabilities are not only mocked but reviled,[119] especially in the interest of eugenics. This stance is, of course, in line with the sorts of "science" and discrimination pushed by the Nazi party (Kershaw 2008) and proponents of scientific racism (Saini 2019).

X may not allow as many slurs and as much blatant racist imagery as 4chan does, but the tweets can be just as sinister and hateful. They are calling for genocide,[120] mass

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[114] The American Sun (@NewAtlantisSun), "American Revisionism," X, Accessed December 12, 2023, https://twitter.com/NewAtlantisSun.
[115] Powerliftist (@qowerliftist), "14 88," X, April 7, 2023, https://twitter.com/qowerliftist/status/1644324854231887873/video/1.
[116] Wrath of Liberty (@wrathofliberty), "Having a healthy and beautiful population with high IQ and positive personality traits is more important than any consideration about…" X, October 31, 2023, https://twitter.com/wrathofliberty/status/1719535730836316514.
[117] Flower of Europa (@EuropaFlower), "Europe is a special place #whitewomen #whiteness," X, July 18, 2021, https://twitter.com/EuropaFlower/status/1416699482780184581.
[118] The Towers Don't Build Themselves (@towerbuilder88), "Nothing will stop us this time." X, December 9, 2023, https://twitter.com/towerbuilder88/status/1733478823071482141.
[119] Gifts [Honeybee Emoji] (@GiftsUngiven_), "'Woke' Leftist ideology in designed to make you distrust your instincts." X, November 28, 2023, https://twitter.com/GiftsUngiven_/status/1729634531328795130?s=20.
[120] Karl Radl (@KarlRadl), "One down, 700k to go I guess." X, December 13, 2023, https://twitter.com/KarlRadl/status/1735022383134597363.

displacement,[121] and brazenly false propaganda against the communities of color.[122] Many white nationalists idolize Hitler[123] and the Nazis,[124] with references to them in their tweets[125] and imagery.[126] Apocalyptic warnings and predictions are also a favorite tool of white nationalists, as the "Western world" is supposedly declining and dying due to globalization and immigration.[127] Pseudohistorical claims are presented as fact, with either anti-Christian or pro-Christian sentiments expressed in cherry-picked quotes.[128]

The *valknut*[129] is a Norse symbol associated with Odin and popular with folkists. However, it is also a famous symbol used by various people who may be non-folkish Norse pagans or even just those interested in Norse history. Like runes, it cannot be parsed if the symbol is used in a racial context unless other posts clarify the intent. Some accounts[130] use it in what may appear to be an innocent religious way,[131] but their other

[121] Great White (@GreatWhiteLight), "All non-Whites must be removed from every White Nation," X, July 2, 2023, https://twitter.com/GreatWhiteLight/status/1675479672715640832.
[122] Anna (@prussianblu111), "Whiteness prevents (whites) from connecting to humanity he says. White ppl built the most human & considerate civilization of all time." X, December 5, 2023, https://twitter.com/prussianblu111/status/1731998675256418682.
[123] [Frog Emoji] (@suspendedfrog), "there will come a day, when all the lies will collapse under their own weight, and truth will again triumph," X, November 16, 2023, https://twitter.com/suspendedfrog/status/1725270729749401611.
[124] Wendy #1 Fan (@robotwendyfan), "There was no 'popular disillusionment' toward the Nazis," X, December 11, 2023, https://twitter.com/robotwendyfan/status/1734343190625579118.
[125] Stephen McNallen (@McnallenStephen), "Looking for a German paratrooper tee shirt that says…" X, October 2, 2023, https://twitter.com/McnallenStephen/status/1708908430944342474.
[126] Völkisch Spirit ᛟᛏ (@Ehrenkrieg2), "The Spirit of Race," X, December 11, 2023, https://twitter.com/Ehrenkrieg2/status/1734306976081805319.
[127] Mithridaticus (@Mithridaticus), "America's future." X, December 6, 2023, https://twitter.com/Mithridaticus/status/1732388523938881732.
[128] Odinets the Pale (@DENISSS98945260), "Not a single trace of the jesus christ personage can be found in authentic history," X, December 11, 2023, https://twitter.com/DENISSS98945260/status/1734358483364200897.
[129] The *valknut* is usually depicted as three triangles overlapping, and is thought to have possibly been a symbol of Odin due to its presence on mythologically themed runestones.
[130] Angry Saxon (@hailvictory14), "We must secure the existence of Our People, and a future for White Children." X, Accessed December 13, 2023, https://twitter.com/hailvictory14.
[131] Angry Saxon (@hailvictory14), "It is Wotan's Day." X, December 13, 2023, https://twitter.com/hailvictory14/status/1734942115186999789/photo/1.

posts make clear their ideology of white supremacy.[132] Even their bio includes the "14 words" in their entirety. Another account uses one of Hitler's paintings as their display banner, with an "88" in their username.[133]

X is one of the largest social media sites in the world, and even with the drop in popularity it experienced after Elon Musk's purchase, it is still highly active, and there are many prolific accounts. Due to the excess of white nationalist and Nordicist content on the platform, it would be easy to focus entirely on X and not cover any other site. It is also much easier to navigate and search than many other source sites, providing an easy way to gather samples. The data presented in this section is a tiny sampling of the mountain of bigoted content X hosts.

TikTok: Dancing and Nazi Fetishists

TikTok is a newer social media site and app, but it is currently the most popular app in the world ("Most Downloaded Apps Worldwide 2022" 2023). Initially focused on 30-second videos, it now allows videos up to 10 minutes in length. Content includes comedy, beauty, education, dancing, music, and politics. Like all social media platforms, it has had a problem with hate content (O'Connor 2021), but it seems more complicated to censor on TikTok. As the app is particularly favored among teenagers (Gelles-Watnick, Massarat, and Vogels 2022), it is especially worrisome that propaganda and misinformation are being spread to vulnerable ages (Paul 2023). TikTok seems especially insidious due to the design of the site and app. It is made to be an addictive experience of

[132] Angry Saxon (@hailvictory), "Race-mixing is betrayal." X, December 12, 2023, https://twitter.com/hailvictory14/status/1734714340668805194.
[133] Littlesisster88 (@littlesisster88), "European Pride .. German in America." X, Accessed December 13, 2023, https://twitter.com/littlesisster88.

constant scrolling that is hard to break away from, which means hateful content can show up without a user searching for it, and the algorithm feeds more just like it directly to their "For You Page."[134]

Most people on "Viking TikTok," or "VikingTok," are reasonably harmless. They cosplay[135] or sing Norse-sounding songs and chants[136] while using makeup[137] and hairstyles[138] that are historically inaccurate. There are even a few "Vikings" on TikTok that are people of color,[139] and both they and historians[140] educate others on the diversity and actual history of the Viking Age.[141] With TikTok's ability to curate niche communities, the "Vikings of TikTok" are primarily enthusiasts without any visible ulterior motives.[142] However, like Norse pagans and Viking enthusiasts tend to be, there are quite a few less-than-innocent examples of white supremacist leanings as well.[143]

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[134] The "for you" page on TikTok is the feed of videos that the algorithm chooses for your individual account.
[135] SKÅLFAMILY.OFFICIAL (@skalfamily.official), "The modern vikings!" TikTok, September 12, 2023, https://www.tiktok.com/@skalfamily.official/video/7278022111136959776?lang=en&q=vikingtok&t=1702686815601.
[136] Peyton Parrish (@peytonparrish), TikTok, July 9, 2021, https://www.tiktok.com/@peytonparrish/video/6983039070687595781?lang=en.
[137] Valkyrie.vixen (@valkyrie.vixen), "Miss my Vikings." TikTok, July 9, 2020, https://www.tiktok.com/@valkyrie.vixen/video/6847550673056271621.
[138] Fox (@nordic_fox), "[Warning Emoji] SFX [Warning Emoji]" TikTok, April 15, 2021, https://www.tiktok.com/@nordic_fox/video/6951308890055216389.
[139] Ivor (@ivorthegod), "all jokes aside there are so many more than I thought…" TikTok, November 30, 2023, https://www.tiktok.com/@ivorthegod/video/7307356303263829294?lang=en.
[140] Archaeodeath (@archaeodeath), "Informed & ethically responsible creative art helps archaeologists and archaeological scientists fight racial…" TikTok, April 6, 2022, https://www.tiktok.com/@archaeodeath/video/7083409212788788486?lang=en.
[141] Digging up ancient alien (@digging_up_ancient_alien), "Viking archaeologist on why we need to stop steal [sic] indigenous practices." TikTok, November 1, 2023, https://www.tiktok.com/@digging_up_ancient_alien/video/7296480704500649248?lang=en.
[142] Beardedviking7 (@beardedviking7), "Spreading Light & Love, Living life as a Modern Viking," TikTok, Accessed December 14, 2023, https://www.tiktok.com/@beardedviking7.
[143] Heathen Swamp (@american_heathen_swamp), "[Italy Emoji] American [United States Emoji] Heathen [Norway Emoji]" TikTok, Accessed December 14, 2023, https://www.tiktok.com/@american_heathen_swamp?lang=en.

TikTok's most prominent issue is misinformation, and especially pseudohistory[144] and pseudoarchaeology.[145] While most of these creators may not intend anything nefarious, the origins of many Atlantis and ancient alien conspiracy theories are rooted in racism and nationalism (Halmhofer 2021). The supposed discovery of giant skeletons in various places worldwide has recently been a viral trend in pseudoarchaeology and conspiracy circles.[146] TikTok has an abundance of creators who push theories of hidden origins[147] and pseudoscience,[148] but most of these people are not white nationalists. Even if the beginnings of many of these theories were problematic, many people advancing them are either unaware or even people of color themselves.[149]

As TikTok is a very active and popular app, new hashtags and dog whistles are constantly being created or spread. Many dog whistles are unrecognizable to those who study this specifically, making identifying them even more difficult. However, when a pattern emerges, it bears further research. One statement that seems to be popular on

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[144] Vibrate higher (@wakenminds), "History is a lie," TikTok, April 20, 2023, https://www.tiktok.com/@wakenminds/video/7224216103315115291?lang=en&q=tartaria&t=1702689311069.

[145] Ancient Aliens (@ancient.aliens0), "Sumerian Civilization's Mysterious Cosmic Knowledge," TikTok, August 8, 2023, https://www.tiktok.com/@ancient.aliens0/video/7264926676658818336?lang=en&q=ancient%20aliens&t=1702689455995.

[146] Corey delouche (@corey_adam), "Giants are real!" TikTok, March 30, 2023, https://www.tiktok.com/@corey_adam/video/7216420172536597803?is_from_webapp=1&web_id=7301805364557874731.

[147] ChillWill (@chillwill2441), "#hiddenhistory #chicagoworldsfair #colombianexposition #conspiracytiktok #tartaria," TikTok, March 4, 2023, https://www.tiktok.com/@chillwill2441/video/7206860547583659307?is_from_webapp=1&sender_device=pc&web_id=7301805364557874731.

[148] Mudder_x_2 (@_wv_momma_), "We told ya so!" TikTok, October 12, 2022, https://www.tiktok.com/@_wv_momma_/video/7153536677498178859?is_from_webapp=1&sender_device=pc&web_id=7301805364557874731.

[149] Allknowing_999 (@ak_999allknowingjayy), "The truth about Atlantis…" TikTok, August 25, 2023, https://www.tiktok.com/@ak_999allknowinggjayy/video/7271250615064382763?is_from_webapp=1&sender_device=pc&web_id=7301805364557874731.

TikTok is “never lose your smile,” which refers to the skull used by the SS for their insignia.

One famous diagram among white supremacists online is an eye color chart with behavioral and intellectual traits assigned to each one. Unsurprisingly, the light and bright blue eyes are the highest tier, while dark brown eyes are the lowest.[150] The tier list directly connects to Nordicism and the belief that blue eyes and light hair indicate the highest quality of human beings. Idolizing mass murders such as Anders Breivik,[151] Dylann Roof,[152] and Brenton Tarrant[153] is extremely popular online. Anders Breivik was incredibly influenced by Nordicism and the belief in Nordic and white supremacy in his crime. Of course, Norse runes (often Elder Futhark) are used in names and bios.[154] While some are the ones used by the Nazi party and twisted, such as *othala*, *tyr*, and *sól*, some will use them to spell out English words or Old Norse translations.[155]

TikTok has an abundance of dangerous misinformation, but most white nationalists on the platform have private accounts. The following lists and follower lists are full of similar accounts, which makes sense, as echo chambers are much easier to use to justify their ideologies. While many Hitler and Norse enthusiasts are on the app, they

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[150] Indo-European (@proud_indo_european), “#indoeuropean #t50 #a10 #europe #geemany [sic] [Germany Emoji]” TikTok, March 18, 2023, https://www.tiktok.com/@proud_indo_european/video/7212004624633531654?lang=en.
[151] Nicholas Breivik (@nicholas_breivik), “[Poland Emoji] [Latin Cross Emoji]” TikTok, Accessed December 15, 2023, https://www.tiktok.com/@nicholas_breivik?lang=en.
[152] DDD (@dtdrdz), “[Heart Hands Emoji] #dylannrooof #dylann,” TikTok, November 13, 2023, https://www.tiktok.com/@dtdrdz/photo/7301056505053334789.
[153] Brentonn_tarrant21 (@brentonn_tarrant8814), “Remember Lads…Subscribe to Pewdiepie,” TikTok, Accessed December 15, 2023, https://www.tiktok.com/@brentonn_tarrant8814?lang=en.
[154] [High Voltage Emoji] ᛟᛞᛁᚾᛋᛏ [High Voltage Emoji] (@lux.natsoc), “Pan-Germanic, Nativist, EcoNat/Soc, Main got banned.” TikTok, Accessed December 15, 2023, https://www.tiktok.com/@lux.natsoc?lang=en.
[155] ᚾᛟᚱᛞᛁᛈ (@based8164), “[Evergreen Emoji] ᛉ [Evergreen Emoji] Embrace tradition,” TikTok, Accessed December 15, 2023, https://www.tiktok.com/@based8164?lang=en.

often keep their overlap behind a follower wall. Nordicism can, of course, be seen primarily in the idolization of European people and nationalities.

YouTube: Please Subscribe

While YouTube is not considered a social media platform, there is still a great deal of interaction, either in the comments or posting the videos themselves. Anyone can open a YouTube account and post videos, allowing creators to spread misinformation and bigotry. YouTube has stricter guidelines and moderation than many other sites, so often the smaller accounts get away with the most. However, large accounts and well-known creators still exert a considerable influence on their audience. Once someone is large enough to bring a lot of money to the site, YouTube is less likely to apply punitive measures.

Some creators make a great deal of money by posting pseudohistory and pseudoarchaeology, insisting that they are qualified anthropologists or historians. While there is no evidence most of them have the education or qualifications to make such claims, their audience believes the videos to be the work of experts in these fields. Robert Sepehr, who touts himself as an anthropologist, is particularly notorious for using pseudohistory[156] to further the white nationalist agenda.[157] As of December 2023, his account is still up on YouTube. A few notable white nationalists have been removed from the platform, such as Stefan Molyneux, Richard Spencer, and former grand wizard of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, David Duke (Hern 2020).

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[156] Robert Sepehr, "White Giants of the New World – ROBERT SEPEHR," YouTube, December 20, 2021, Video, 1:12, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwWjCxKzWYA.
[157] Robert Sepehr, "Debunking Out-of-Africa Theory in Under 15 Minutes – ROBERT SEPEHR," YouTube, April 10, 2022, Video, 13:37, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7MKbT9YxLF4.

Many white nationalist and pseudohistory channels are obsessed with separating Africans into North African and Sub-Saharan groups. This differentiation allows them to claim that while Egypt is technically in Africa, the pyramids and scientific advancements of Ancient Egypt were not done by Black Africans.[158] While studying the differences between cultures is important, the insistence on not counting North Africans as actual Africans is a blatant attempt to keep their white supremacy narrative intact. Any attempts by historians to cover a broader range of subjects and course-correct from the previously Eurocentric profession are met with disbelief and hostility by these creators.[159]

One noticeable trend among white nationalists is the blame for violence on the victims. There are prominent examples, such as blaming the Jewish diaspora for Antisemitism, but there are more subtle attributions, such as blaming the "degeneracy" and "fall of the West" for mass shooters. Similarly, they blame Weimar Germany for Hitler and the Holocaust and often indicate that the United States is deserving of destruction due to the similarities. Often, influencers will stop short of encouraging violence, but the understanding they show to perpetrators makes it clear where they stand.[160]

YouTube has done a decent job in removing and banning extremist content, with many former white supremacist YouTubers now inactive or taken off the site altogether. While certain accounts will repost saved videos of the creators,[161] it limits their ability to

[158] Metatron, "Were the Ancient Egyptians Black? The TRUTH," YouTube, February 26, 2022, 18:35, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jnGfzEj12mk&t=1s.
[159] The ArchCast, "We Wuz Carthaginians! Hannibal Barca to Get the Netflix Race Swapping Treatment!" YouTube, November 14, 2023, Video, 11:16, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_1dMLe0TJa0.
[160] Blonde in the Belly of the Beast, "Brenton Tarrant, Acceleration & Collapse," YouTube, March 16, 2019, Video, 15:41, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7nXZAfDiCY.
[161] Based Jared Taylor, "A place for Jared Taylor's weekly videos…" YouTube, Accessed December 19, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/@basedjaredtaylor.

reach new audiences in an active way through the platform. However, pseudohistory is prevalent on YouTube[162] and shows little sign of slowing down. In a similar way to TikTok, many pseudohistory accounts are not intended to support white supremacism, but misinformation is harmful, no matter the original intention.

Forums: Their Own Space

Due to many social platforms censoring hate speech and banning extremists, many white nationalists open blogs or host forums. Stormfront and Red Ice TV are two of the most well-known white nationalist sites, with each boasting many consumers and an impressively long run for extremist sites. While they are far from the only forums and blogs, they are two of the most open with their hate. Incels.is also makes no attempt to hide its bigotry and extremist views, which only serves to radicalize others more easily.

Stormfront is a self-identified white nationalist internet forum focusing on pro-white material. As an echo chamber full of fellow white supremacists, they primarily discuss strategies for advancing the white nationalist agenda[163] and rant about diversity.[164] Conspiracy theories[165] (often Antisemitic[166]) are common, as are threads that

[162] HISTORY, "Sunken Artifacts from Atlantis Recovered | Digging for the Truth (S3, E1) | Full Episode," YouTube, April 9, 2023, Video, 1:30, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zyw2GlksaQ0.
[163] SBWPWW, post to "White Nationalist Construction Manual for a White Homeland," Stormfront, February 7, 2018, https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1241064/.
[164] LesPatterson, post to "The invasion of White countries continues," Stormfront, September 19, 2023, https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1394818/.
[165] vikingcelt, post to "The Federal Government is Tracking the Unvaccinated," Stormfront, February 15, 2023, https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1381796/.
[166] H2H, post to "Jews Just a Front for the Illuminati," Stormfront, December 24, 2007, https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t447050/.

discuss miscegenation with disgust.[167] The idolization of Nazi Germany[168] and Hitler[169] is standard, with many openly calling themselves neo-Nazis[170] or National Socialists.[171] Of course, fundamental racism is also widespread.[172]

It also does not take long to find Nordicism on Stormfront, as keeping the Nordic blood alive through reproduction[173] is a considerable concern for many members. The site's membership is primarily men, and white women are both idolized and vilified. Members will self-identify as Nordic with clear pride in their supposed Aryan ancestry. Dating requests (which are allowed on Stormfront) are often focused on Nordic ancestry. This view is present in both men and women on the site.

Pseudohistory is rampant, with a whole board on historical revisionism.[174] While it is mostly Holocaust denial,[175] there are a variety of false histories that they claim to be hidden by mainstream historians. Pseudoscience, particularly eugenics[176] and scientific

[167] Gott Mit Uns 28, post to "Mudshark Madness! The Consequences of Mudsharking," Stormfront, October 16, 2023, https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1396277/.
[168] Emgeedee, post to "Interesting quote from Joseph Goebbels," Stormfront, December 12, 2023, https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1399020/.
[169] Gott Mit Uns 28, post to "The Hitler We Loved and Why," Stormfront, October 16, 2023, https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1396284/.
[170] Siegfried815, post to "Joining intention from Europe," Stormfront, December 18, 2023, https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1397163/?postcount=2#post16171166.
[171] Paul Bunyan, post to "National-Socialism for Newcomers," Stormfront, September 27, 2016, https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1179206/.
[172] Whiteskin200, post to "Why are blacks so awful?" Stormfront, October 27, 2017, https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1229040/.
[173] Analyst, post to "Young beautiful European women, what's stopping you from having many children?" Stormfront, August 18, 2023, https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1392967-2/?postcount=13#post16096873.
[174] History & Revisionism, Stormfront, https://www.stormfront.org/forum/f36/.
[175] Russell James, post to "Holocaust or Hollow Hoax? 10 Reasons the 'Holocaust' Never Happened," Stormfront, February 18, 2019, https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1271778/.
[176] SCAryanSister82, post to "Eugenics: Offering Cash Incentives?" Stormfront, September 17, 2023, https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1394738/.

racism,[177] are popular topics. Stormfront could be a focus of the research on its own, but it is only one part of the white nationalist presence online.

Red Ice, or Red Ice TV,[178] is an alt-right company founded and run by white nationalists Lana Lokteff and Henrik Palmgren—a married couple. While Henrik is Swedish by birth, Lana is American, and they live in the United States (Darby 2017). The Nordicism[179] and Norse fetishism are on full display here,[180] with their social accounts calling themselves Vikings,[181] Rus, and Valkyries.[182] Focusing a lot on ancestry,[183] race,[184] and eugenics,[185] they promote Norse paganism[186] and the Armanen runes that the Nazis utilized.[187]

Incels.is is a forum for self-identified incels. It is filled primarily with misogyny,[188] as incels blame women for their lack of dating success. However, when in an echo chamber filled with fellow incels, their bigotry tends to spread to race,[189]

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[177] Russell James, post to "Race = Subspecies," Stormfront, August 7, 2023, https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1392345/.
[178] https://redice.tv/
[179] "Sweden: The De-Balling of the Vikings," September 1, 2015, https://redice.tv/news/sweden-the-de-balling-of-the-vikings.
[180] "Norway Starts School for Vikings," August 5, 2015, https://redice.tv/news/norway-starts-school-for-vikings.
[181] Henrik Palmgren [Sweden Emoji] ᛟ (@Henrik_Palmgren), "Konung @redicetv ᛟ Rus wife, 2 Little Vikings & 1 Valkyrie," X, Accessed December 21, 2023, https://twitter.com/Henrik_Palmgren.
[182] Lana (@LanaLokteff), "Slavic-American Wife of a Swede," X, Accessed December 21, 2023, https://twitter.com/LanaLokteff.
[183] "Culture Etched on Our DNA More Than Previously Known, Research Suggests," January 20, 2017, https://redice.tv/news/culture-etched-on-our-dna-more-than-previously-known-research-suggests.
[184] "Race, Biology & Modus Operandi of Jewish Extremists," October 14, 2015, https://redice.tv/red-ice-radio/race-biology-and-modus-operandi-of-jewish-extremists.
[185] "Better Marry a Redhead- Turns Out They Might Be Genetically Superior," March 7, 2015, https://redice.tv/news/better-marry-a-redhead-turns-out-they-might-be-genetically-superior.
[186] Henrik Palmgren, "Asatro: The Purity and Beauty of the Northern Germanic Soul," September 8, 2014, https://redice.tv/news/asatro-the-purity-and-beauty-of-the-northern-germanic-soul.
[187] "The Story Behind The Yule Celebration," December 21, 2023, https://redice.tv/red-ice-tv/the-story-behind-the-yule-celebration.
[188] Efiliste, post to "Are Women Naturally Evil or has Society Made Them So?" Incels.is, December 21, 2023, https://incels.is/threads/are-women-naturally-evil-or-has-society-made-them-so.555722/.
[189] Lv99_BixNood, post to "Lowly [racial slur] ascends with Nordic Stacy," Incels.is, December 21, 2023, https://incels.is/threads/lowly-chink-cook-ascends-with-nordic-stacy.555737/.

sexuality, disability,[190] and a variety of other demographics. There is not a great deal of Nordicism on the site, but their focus on sex[191] and reproduction does often lead to scientific racism and eugenics talk.[192] The community has its own vocabulary and often includes slurs and dehumanizing language. "Femoids/Foids"[193] or "Toilets"[194] are used to refer to women. Beautiful women are called "Stacy,"[195] while attractive men who often have success in dating are called "Chads."[196] To go "ER"[197] refers to Elliot Rodger, who went on a shooting spree in 2014 in Isla Vista, California (Glasstetter 2014). He was allegedly motivated by incel hatred of women and "Chads." Promoting violence against women and others is often followed by "in video game" or "in Minecraft."[198] Allegedly to provide plausible deniability in any legal actions that may be taken against a threat. Pedophilia is seen as natural biology,[199] and many speak of wishing they could sexually

[190] The.oracle, post to "The hoax of 'mental illness,'" Incels.is, May 4, 2022, https://incels.is/threads/the-hoax-of-mental-illness.372735/.
[191] Incel TV, post to "What does sex feel like?" Incels.is, December 20, 2023, https://incels.is/threads/what-does-sex-feel-like.555414/.
[192] Randomguy1235, post to "Attractive people are objectively smarter (genetically superior) than unattractive people," Incels.is, April 19, 2018, https://incels.is/threads/attractive-people-are-objectively-smarter-genetically-superior-than-unattractive-people.37474/#post-656353.
[193] Bus27jihad, post to "The more beautiful a foid is more evil she is," Incels.is, December 20, 2023, https://incels.is/threads/the-more-beautiful-a-foid-is-the-more-evil-she-is.555194/.
[194] Zhou Chang-Xing, post to "Toilets explain male Inceldom through the feminine world experience…" Incels.is, August 30, 2023, https://incels.is/threads/toilets-explain-male-inceldom-through-the-feminine-world-experience-hence-they-cannot-comprehend-it.520926/.
[195] CantEscapeYourFate, post to "What is the lowest standard you are willing to go in women to date them?" Incels.is, December 19, 2023, https://incels.is/threads/what-is-the-lowest-standard-you-are-willing-to-go-in-women-to-date-them.555007/#post-12800305.
[196] Gendocel, post to "Toilets and Chads are not our main enemy, normies are," Incels.is, December 21, 2023, https://incels.is/threads/toilets-and-chads-are-not-our-main-enemy-normies-are.555638/.
[197] General Alek, post to "great ER quote," Incels.is, December 20, 2023, https://incels.is/threads/great-er-quote-i-saw-sex-as-an-evil-and-barbaric-act-all-because-i-was-unable-to-have-it.555498/.
[198] Aesthetic_recon, post to "TRIBUTE TO ALL INCELS WORLDWIDE AND SCHOOL SHOOTERS (MINECRAFT OFC)" Incels.is, December 19, 2023, https://incels.is/threads/tribute-to-all-incels-worldwide-and-school-shooters-minecraft-ofc.554989/.
[199] IncelKing, post to "12 year old girl stabbed a woman to death," Incels.is, November 22, 2023, https://incels.is/threads/12-year-old-girl-stabbed-a-woman-to-death.547321/post-12609114.

assault both women[200] and female children.[201] Surrounded by many men who feel wronged by the world, extremism is common, and radicalization lures especially vulnerable young men.

Hate Crimes: White Nationalism in Practice

Racially motivated hate crimes, especially mass murder with a white supremacist motivation, have become more prevalent in the past few years. As the white genocide conspiracy theory gains traction in extremist communities on and offline, it radicalizes young men who are easily swayed by white nationalist propaganda. The Great Replacement theory was mentioned in multiple manifestos of mass shooters, both American and internationally. Taking ideologies to violent extremes, innocent people bear the consequences of their hatred. In this section, the manifestos and social media activity of the murderers are explored.

William Atchison was a 21-year-old school shooter who went into his former school, Aztec High School in Aztec, New Mexico, on December 7, 2017, to fatally shoot two students and then turn the gun on himself. When looking at his social media history, it is a compelling progression from initially denouncing racism and violence (Atchison 2017, 7) to eventually becoming pro-Hitler and determined to commit mass murder—specifically of Jews (60). Idolization or obsession with other mass shooters is often a sign of potential future violence.

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[200] xkcdCleftcel, post to "The only political activism foids should do is get raped and passed around," Incels.is, October 23, 2023, https://incels.is/threads/the-only-political-activism-foids-should-do-is-get-raped-and-passed-around.538085/.

[201] Grim_Reaper, post to "12 year old girl stabbed a woman to death," Incels.is, November 22, 2023, https://incels.is/threads/12-year-old-girl-stabbed-a-woman-to-death.547321/#post-12608934.

On April 27, 2019, John Earnest opened fire in the Chabad of Poway synagogue located in Poway, California. With one death and three injuries, it was discovered to be an Antisemitic crime motivated by white nationalism and idolization of Brenton Tarrant, who perpetrated the Christchurch Mosque shootings of 2019 (Hoyle, Shah, and Taylor 2019). A manifesto was posted to 8chan[202] (now called 8kun[203]), an imageboard with even less moderation than 4chan. Touting his European ancestry and the Christian religion as his superior identity, he committed his crime to specifically murder Jewish people. In the manifesto, he confesses to committing arson on a mosque in Escondido, California, earlier that year (Gage 2019).

The May 14, 2022, supermarket shooting in Buffalo, New York, was perpetrated by Payton Gendron. In a diary and manifesto that was over 650 pages, he detailed his radicalization and the role of 4chan in convincing him that Jewish and Black people were to blame for the world's ills. A believer in the Great Replacement Theory, he was angry about immigration, a supposed white genocide, and transgender inclusiveness (Frosch et al. 2022). He credits 4chan with directly influencing his actions, which begs the question of how to curb violent ideologies while respecting the constitutional right to freedom of speech, especially on sites accessed internationally in countries with varying legal statutes.

The above hate crimes are just three examples from the last ten years, which had many racially biased crimes to choose from (Farrell and Lockwood 2023). While not all mass shootings are hate crimes, it is common to discover from a shooter's manifesto or

[202] 8chan was founded by Frederick Brennan, but afterward he has publicly disavowed his creation and recommended it be taken offline.
[203] 8kun. https://8kun.top/index.html.

social media presence that they have been radicalized in some form of bigotry. Racism is one primary motivation, but misogyny and anti-LGBTQ+ sentiments lead to a great deal of hate violence as well (Hanson and James 2021). Often, misogyny and anti-LGBTQ+ beliefs are included in the impetus of racially motivated killers. As is seen in white nationalist social media and forums, bigotry against demographics often overlaps.

Discussion

Analyzing the data collected in this thesis allows the research to make connections between Nordicism, pseudohistory, and twenty-first century white nationalists in the United States. Following and noticing trends gives an overview of what white nationalists post more frequently, and studying historiography can give context to the background and culture behind these ideologies. In a particularly volatile time for race and LGBTQ+ relations, it is more important than ever to study and identify hatred and extremism.

The primary challenge in collecting data was being unable to tell whether the white nationalists were American or European. Many will gladly declare their country of origin, ancestry, and current residence, but not all. The more blatant examples of fascist and white nationalist leanings were often under anonymous accounts, which made understanding the differences between American and international white supremacists difficult. However, studying both has its place, as with the internet—and ironically, globalization—more and more white nationalists are connecting around the globe. While there may be slight differences, the idea of "white countries" and the superiority of European ancestry remains a constant across the community.

Most accounts do not post references to Nordicism or the Nordic race directly, but the effect of Madison Grant and peers' scientific racism on their content can be easily seen. Post after post with images or references to blonde hair, blue eyes, tall stature, and a muscular frame dominate these accounts.[204] Women and children with light hair, usually blonde or red, and bright blue eyes with pale skin are their primary arguments for preserving the white race.[205] Many know not to directly reference eugenics on the more public sites such as X, Instagram, or TikTok; but 4chan, Stormfront, and the smaller white nationalist sites have many references to breeding, racialism, and promoting scientific racism.[206]

In *Nordicism and Modernity*, Forssling follows the evolution of Nordicism from its origins to its current manifestation. He mainly focuses on how modernization led almost directly to the romanticization of a mythic racially pure past and, from there, white nationalism. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the emergence of Nordicism coincided with a period marked by globalization, fueled by colonization and advancements in technology such as the steam locomotive, the telegraph, and the industrial revolution (Wolf 2014). Ironically, the colonization that many white nationalists justify so fiercely also led to the increase in global diversity and immigration (Hopkins 2002). In turn, this drove a feeling of rootlessness among many people in the colonizing nations (Forssling 2020, 16). A new narrative was born in many European countries to combat this perceived lack of national identity.

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[204] White Lives Aesthetic (@wlm.beauty), "Magnus Samuelsson," Instagram, October 28, 2021, https://www.instagram.com/p/CVlzviMvDjM/.
[205] Hyperboreanrising (@hyperborean rising), "#bloodandsoil," Instagram, September 18, 2019, https://www.instagram.com/p/B2jHz-sAfqf/.
[206] JohnJoyTree, post to "Evidence that Racial Groupings Match Real Genetic Profiles," Stormfront, February 1, 2005, https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t182050/.

With the invention of the telephone, television, computers, and finally, the internet, the world became and remains more connected than ever before. Air travel and long-distance communication allowed people to migrate all over the world, whether due to war, poverty, or family. While white nationalists condemn immigration, even legal immigration, their argument that it is only "white countries" that people want to move to is flawed for two related reasons. First, many of the countries they use for an argument as racially homogeneous—such as India, China, and many countries in Africa—have not engaged in recent imperial colonization (Hoffman 2017). Second, most immigrants moved for a better life, and the colonizing powers destroyed economies and cultures in the nations they occupied (Sagaskie 2019). Blaming immigrants for moving to a wealthier nation when that same nation purposely conquered the governments and subjugated the peoples of their home countries is a type of cognitive dissonance that requires creating false histories to justify (Forssling 2020, 126).

The same narrative of a glorious and homogeneous past with honorable warriors and beautiful damsels has taken over the modern white nationalist imagination. With strong and blonde Vikings dominating the aesthetics of white nationalists[207] and young women in dirndls and crown braids giving a view of what they consider an ideal European,[208] there is little wonder how the effects of Nordicism have continued to twenty-first century social media. They value not only racial "phenotypes"[209] but also the life and history of Northern Europeans. This obsession is never more apparent than when

[207] Goldenhair_beauties (@goldenhair_beauties), "Happy Sigurðr day #viking," Instagram, April 23, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/CrZbZXINflR/.
[208] Trad.beauty (@trad.beauty), "I absolutely adore dirndls, so here are some modern variants. Maybe we can bring this style back." Instagram, June 3, 2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/CA9hK4vhEHy/.
[209] While phenotype is a legitimate scientific term, white supremacists use it to identify different races by appearance alone.

they use German Nazi propaganda from the WWII era, which also heavily features similar imagery. The runes they tend to use are primarily *Tyr*, *Sòl*, and *Othala*, which were used often by the Nazis. Whether they are interested in the runes aside from Hitler's use of them is debatable, but it is more likely that their fascination was directly influenced by WWII and their idols in the Nazi party.

Runes, blondes, traditional European clothing, and European architecture harken back to the romanticized visions of colonial and Victorian society, with no shortage of Alpine vistas, young women with rosy cheeks and young children, and nuclear families with patriarchal values. The fantasy of a pure white society and a submissive, virginal wife consumes the minds and social media accounts of white supremacists, with a refusal to accept the reality of a multicultural world.

The difficulty in parsing out the intentions of social media users makes it nearly impossible for anyone to pinpoint a user's true feelings. However, as social media content is most often a by-product of a user's ideologies and beliefs, most accounts post material intended to advocate and advance their opinions. Even if an account was a troll or a bot, the impact of dog whistles and white nationalist symbolism cannot be discounted.

The findings, while somewhat different from what was initially expected, did indeed show the connection of Nordicism and pseudohistory to current white nationalism. It was less of an explicit connection than initially anticipated; but instead, it was indirect and implicit. Imagery with specifically Nordic features and an obsession with Northern European ancestry influence many accounts, which can lead back to the popularity of Madison Grant and his peers. I also expected more obvious pseudohistory from white

nationalist creators, but pseudoscience and denialism were more prevalent. That said, pseudohistory was often present in comments and supported by the account. With pseudohistory and pseudoarchaeology heavily influenced by colonialism and white supremacism, it is no surprise that the recent popularity of such misinformation has coincided with the rise in white nationalist sympathy and violence.

Initially, I planned to include an equal amount of content from each social media platform, but that ended up being impossible. Due to the abundance of content available on Instagram and Twitter, and a surprising lack of content on 4chan, TikTok, YouTube, and white nationalist forums, it ended up being unequal data collection. The implicitness or explicitness in manifestos and hate crimes also posed an issue. Information on criminal motivation can be scant, and manifestos are often unavailable to the public. While there are articles covering some content from manifestos, Nordicism is usually found in the wording not broadcast in shortened news articles. The debate on whether manifestos should be available for public consumption is often spoken of in legal and journalistic circles, but anthropology has not contributed much yet (Kern 2022).

While individually selected and referenced, the data gathered shows themes such as runes, Nordicist aesthetics, and an obsession with an imagined romanticized past. Nordicism, Norse pseudohistory, and their influence on American culture in the twenty-first century can be observed. Still, one does have to know what to look for by studying the historical context and connecting modern social media to the original scientific racism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Studying their habits and interests is vital to truly understanding why these extremist groups gain traction. Perhaps, by doing so, we may be able to help prevent

future acts of mass racial violence. The precious balance of free speech and damage prevention is a sensitive matter with no easy answer, but learning how to identify patterns in possible domestic terrorists before they reach the tipping point may give some hope for a future with less bias-motivated crime and bigotry.

Chapter V:

Conclusion

History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.

—Maya Angelou, "On the Pulse of Morning"

This thesis was an unexpected journey, with both surprises in data and current events. The secondary sources in the historiography did not produce many shocks, but reading the words of eugenicists and proponents of scientific racism is something that can only be described as disquieting. Continuously viewing and reading racist content affects the mentality of the researcher, and there were many times during the writing that I had to close my computer and talk to friends or family to remind myself that there are good people in the world. It is easy to become discouraged when reading extremist ideologies, but the fact that there are so many people fighting against hatred gives hope for the future.

One challenge was due to the ongoing crisis of domestic extremism and the recent escalation of the Israel and Palestinian war. This conflict has changed the social media habits of white nationalists dramatically, with more focus on Antisemitism instead of other forms of racism. It has also shown to be a fraught time for anyone who attempts to express anti-Zionist sentiments while still supporting Jewish civilians (Beinart 2019). Antisemites have grasped onto the legitimate critique of the Israeli government and military actions to advance their conspiracy theories and agendas. The need to remain steadfast against Antisemitism when advocating for Palestine has never been more vital.

While the results and data gathered did not necessarily follow my expected path, it was worthwhile and enlightening. Keeping the research question of Nordicism and Norse pseudohistory in twenty-first century American white nationalism in mind, there were many tangents it was hard to keep from following. Writing this has confirmed that there is so much more beneath the surface, both in historiographical content and social media data.

Results: Discoveries Among the Rubble

The results from the data gathered show more of a subtle connection to Nordicism than a blatant one. While there are some white nationalists, specifically on forums and sites such as Stormfront, that speak on the Nordic race, eugenics, and scientific racism, most public white nationalism has a more indirect connection. It can be seen in their obsession with blonde hair, blue eyes, a tall stature, and physical strength that shows a clear progression from the Nordicism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Many casual white nationalists may not even be aware of Grant, Gobineau, or Stoddard. Still, the impact of their work is evident in the separation of humanity by a tier of racial hierarchy.

The link between Nordicism and modern white nationalism can also be traced through the symbology and ideology of the Nazi party in 1930s and 1940s Germany. The obsession with Teutonic/Germanic and Nordic mythology and culture was apparent in many aspects of the party's practices and platform (Ørskov 2020), not only with the use of the altered Armanen runes created by Nazi influencer Guido von List (Goodrick-Clarke 2002) but also the propaganda imagery and eugenics focus. Due to many white nationalists' unsurprising fascination with Hitler and Nazi ideology, it is inevitable that

the same Nordicism that informed WWII Germany would also carry through to the twenty-first century (Forssling 2020). As the Nazis used the term Aryan to describe the Nordic "race," the use of Aryan could be argued also to be a Nordicist remnant.

Pseudohistory, specifically Norse pseudohistory, is quite popular in the twenty-first century imagination (Arnold 2011). It is not always a purposeful misrepresentation but often a lack of understanding of accurate historical research. For a layperson consumer of media such as Marvel's Thor comics, *Vikings* (the TV program), and the video game *Assassin's Creed Valhalla,* Norse culture is a fun escapist world not unlike *Game of Thrones* or *Lord of the Rings.* For some, most noticeably the white nationalists studied in this research, Norse history is a callback to romanticized European ancestors (Wawn 2000). Whether they take Norse mythology as factual or prefer to believe the mythologized white alpha masculinity of actual historical Vikings, the obsession is intrinsically tied to their very identity. This fetishization leads to the use of pseudohistory and Nordicism to justify violence against people of color and other marginalized communities.

While the thesis surprised me in many ways, there was still a great deal of expected content that confirmed my hypothesis of Nordicism and Norse pseudohistory infecting current white nationalism in the United States, specifically through their internet activity. Limiting data collection to the internet without interaction also limited my ability to dig deeper into individuals' psyche and cultural factors. However, observation can—and did—give a holistic picture when studied with the historiography.

In a world where racism and bigotry show no signs of disappearing any time soon (Farrell and Lockwood 2023), it is the responsibility of academia to observe the patterns

and trends that accompany these ideologies accurately. Social media is the most widespread tool for advocacy and personal opinions, leading many researchers to focus on these online spaces to form a more holistic view of any movement. White nationalism is indeed a movement with a set agenda and goal—the development of a purely white society and an end to all immigration (Stern 2019). Many see themselves as activists for a pro-white cause, as they feel that "anti-white" sentiment and white genocide are real issues in the modern world.

Future Action: What Can We Do?

Before presenting future actions we can take in addressing hate and white nationalism, there is an applicable conversation to cover. In "Is 'White Nationalism,' Nationalism?" the authors offer a view that the term *white nationalist* is a sanitization of the more apt term of *white supremacist*. They argue that white nationalists often proudly proclaim themselves white nationalists, as white supremacism is less likely to receive mainstream support. While many use the terms interchangeably, Holmes and Rigney offer a convincing explanation for using the more accurate term, not the one they chose for themselves. With white nationalism, they can claim the "separate but equal" view of the Civil Rights era, whereas white supremacy cannot be argued as anything besides racism (Holmes and Rigney 2023).

I considered changing the wording of this thesis after reading the article, but I have decided to keep the title and text the same for this paper. In the future, I will likely use the more apt *white supremacists* instead of *white nationalists*. Using the term *white supremacists* instead of *white nationalists* would be an excellent way to work toward

more direct antiracist action. Adjusting our terms and evolving our language are essential steps to progress to a more equitable society.

Due to the active nature of many of these extremist groups, such as the Proud Boys, Patriot Front, and various neo-Nazi gangs, it cannot be left simply to scholarship. The implications for this research can ideally help anti-racist non-governmental organizations and nonprofits assess threat levels and work to counteract the demonstrations accurately. For any government agency keeping track of potential threats, being aware of the many faces white nationalism can present will help determine what accounts are dangerous versus harmless.

The use of this type of data could be used by identifying images and dog whistles most commonly spread to find like-minded white nationalists. While being careful to protect the freedom of expression and speech, software could be used to identify racist signals and study each example to decide whether the user is a danger to the population. Hate speech on the internet is not a black and white issue, nor is it something AI can do solely. It would require sociological, psychological, and anthropological expertise in identifying innocent versus alarming. There is no perfect process, and future research into this phenomenon may be able to provide a more applicable answer to this issue.

Law enforcement is the first group one would think of as benefitting from information about possible prejudice-based criminals. Still, with the genuine fact of law enforcement endangering people of color and having been a haven for white supremacists in the past, it can be worrisome to rely on police and federal agents to address domestic threats. Law enforcement agencies often have cybercrime units, which could be expanded to include threats and violent language online. With the help of psychologists and

sociologists, an artificial intelligence (AI) program to identify those most likely to commit hate crimes could be made and utilized.

Organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) or SPLC would be ideal for dealing with hate speech. However, with no official enforcers associated with NGOs and non-profits, there would still need to be cooperation with government law enforcement. If all police and military were required to attend diversity and prejudice-based crime recognition training, it could positively change the relationship between communities of color and law enforcement. This training could also help prevent or address domestic terrorism more actively.

All of these ideas, no matter how well-intentioned, still have to consider freedom of speech, right of privacy, and freedom of expression. Thought crimes are not illegal, and with a plethora of satirical accounts and trolls online, it would be complicated to identify the genuine threats. Therefore, the requirements for intervention would have to be very clear and stringent. Direct threats of violence to an individual or group with multiple posts, claims of owning firearms or explosive devices with intent to use on a person or demographic, and a criminal past combined with multiple posts of hateful rhetoric could all be used in deciding who requires intervention. Finding the balance between individual human rights and protecting the safety of citizens makes the subject controversial and complex.

The ultimate goal of this work is to make research like this unneeded in the future. Ideally, future research will focus on historiography rather than current phenomenology; realistically this will require much social progress and hard work. In this way, I hope the research contributes meaningfully to advancing equality and a better understanding of

hate groups. Additional white nationalist fascinations, such as 1950s Americana, the Knights Templars, crusaders, and the Roman Empire, would be excellent avenues to study patterns and identify trends.

Final Words

In searching for justification for bigotry, hate movements will latch onto debunked science and history. By using academia in any form, no matter the research age or current consensus, they feel a sense of legitimacy that passes as factual to those who read the misinformation. Misinformation, especially pseudoscience, has grown in online spaces such as Facebook and YouTube in the past three years. It is a problem that sites have tried to fight to little avail (Hswen 2022).

Using pseudoscience and pseudohistory, white nationalists have carved out a disinformation-filled echo chamber online. By connecting with like-minded individuals or radicalizing vulnerable young people, white supremacists have grown their influence to a terrifying degree. The effect of Nordicism makes its presence known in symbolism, imagery, and terms that refer back to the mythological land of the supposed Nordic race. Norse pseudohistory, while not as dangerous at the surface level, encourages a form of toxic white masculinity that can manifest in violence and hateful ideology. Intending to preserve the white race and so-called white countries, their claims of white genocide and the dangers of immigration are directly traceable to early Nordicist works.

One of the tragedies of white supremacists and white nationalists is the inability to see the world as it truly is and appreciate the beauty of a diverse and multicultural society. The United States has an ugly history of colonialism and oppression, but the population is one of the most incredibly diverse, with a mosaic of languages, cultures,

appearances, and ethnicities. The inability to appreciate such an opportunity for connection and education makes blissful ignorance a more appealing option.

While the future of white nationalism in the United States is uncertain, the continued connection to Nordicism is unlikely to fade soon. Popular culture's fascination with Vikings and Norse history also seems unlikely to disappear. Therefore, it is vital to counteract these narratives, wherever one may come across them. Whether it is reporting posts and comments for misinformation or trying to educate and reach out to those who may be falling into extremist circles, we must do something.

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