

## **The Language of Lone Wolf Terrorists**

An in-depth study of the use of personal pronouns and identity terms in lone wolf terrorist manifestos

ANJA GIMSE

SUPERVISOR

Susan Lynn Erdmann

**University of Agder, Spring 2020**

Faculty of Humanities and Education

Master

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### **Abstract**

This thesis examines the manifestos written by four lone wolf terrorists, Elliot Rodger, Dylann Roof, Christopher Harper-Mercer, and Patrick Crusius before they carried out mass killings in the United States. By conducting an analysis of these perpetrators' use of the personal pronouns *I, me, us, we, you, they, and them*, this thesis looks at their presentation of themselves, their actions, and the perceived threats against which they are fighting.

Additionally, an examination of the identity terms *Black, Hispanic, White, Asian, Jewish, Muslim, Christian, woman, man, and immigrant* will further investigate ideological perceptions of the different identity groupings among the lone wolves examined here and the far-right activists who inspired them. Many of the authors are driven by self-entitlement and a sense of white superiority, and their language serves to describe themselves as martyrs and present their victims as the real aggressors. Further, the use of online forums as a platform to spread their ideologies and communicate with others with similar mindsets will be investigated as it is an essential element in the radicalization of the perpetrators and a factor in their influencing of others.

*Key words:* Lone wolf terrorists, manifesto, Critical Discourse Analysis, pronouns, identity terms, incel

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## **The Language of Lone Wolf Terrorists**

Ideologically-motivated mass killings have, unfortunately, become part of our cultural landscape. While every event has its own trajectory, similarities among the types of people who commit lone wolf attacks make for a productive analysis of possible commonalities between perpetrators capable of such actions. While not all mass killers leave a written record of their thoughts, many do. By analyzing the manifestos left by four lone wolf terrorists who have carried out attacks in the United States within the last decade, this thesis will seek to exam the linguistic traces of their motivation. To do so means to enter their psychological worlds and to attempt to tease out their personal and political motivation by examining the language they leave behind. The purpose of this thesis is to analyze these perpetrator's use of personal pronouns and identity terms categorizing groups of people to gain further insight to their ideological background and reasoning, in addition to their thoughts about self and others. Further, this thesis will examine the connections between the authors in terms of writing style, focal points, and descriptions of others. Furthermore, their connections to online communities as places of radicalization, influence, and belonging will be examined to see if lone wolves are closer linked than the name suggests.

## **Critical Discourse Analysis**

### **What is Critical Discourse Analysis?**

Discourse analysis is a study of language and its effects. There is no one strict definition of *discourse analysis* because it is used across a diverse range of fields. 'Discourse' generally refers to spoken, written, or signed language, and the 'analysis' of this language is the process of breaking down the components of the language and examining them (Johnstone, 2002, p. 27). Discourse also refers to language use that maintains, or even constructs, ideologies and belief systems, which through analysis can be described and studied (Johnstone, 2002, p. 27). There are multiple forms of discourse analysis, and some scholars like James Paul Gee (2010) focus on two; descriptive and critical. While the descriptive method includes language analysis and explanations of word choices, the critical method goes further by analyzing these things and additionally providing a social critique (Gee, 2010). This thesis is concerned with the latter of the two – Critical Discourse Analysis.

Since Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is concerned with power dynamics, dominance, and inequality in society, it cannot be an impartial form of analysis because the analyst highlights these differences and often speaks for social, political, or cultural change.

Users of CDA usually take the side of the dominated by targeting systems and people who create or reproduce these inequalities, thus making CDA a normative and political form of analysis (van Dijk, 1993). This subjectivity initiates an analysis that differs from other traditional methods in that it views language in a social, political, and historical context, and the people studying the language insert themselves into the developing dialogue (Cameron & Panović, 2014). Besides, CDA looks at a wide variety of texts, and because topics and texts vary so much across the field of study within CDA, there is not just one specific method of conducting research and describing. Instead, researchers first look at the problem at hand and then choose the appropriate techniques and theories to best study and analyze that particular text in light of the text type and context, making CDA a very flexible and adaptive tool for studying language use (Fairclough et al., 2011).

Critical Discourse Analysis and its focus on social critique can be traced to the Frankfurt School and Marxist theories before that. This analytical approach examines social and political issues, ideology, and power relations; while also actively commenting on uncovered discrimination and injustices that characterize the Marxist influence. The Frankfurt School, inspired by philosophers such as Marx and Hegel, created a critical theory that would critically view discourse by using a variety of approaches and disciplines as part of analyzing. The belief that texts are not independent entities is the reason for examining them in relation to their social and historical context (Finlayson, 2005). Evolving from these traditions, CDA continues not to be just an objective observation of discourse. Still, it is active in the critique of discursive forms and often includes discursive interventions as part of analyzing (Fairclough et al., 2011).

Because CDA is applicable in a wide range of fields and topics, there is no one set method of analysis. However, there are some more prominent theoretical approaches to the research where renowned analysts such as Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk, and Ruth Wodak have set their mark (Weiss & Wodak, 2003). Wodak has been a vital part of shaping the discourse-historical approach, which looks at discourse and prejudice in light of history, while van Dijk has been crucial in linking discourse with ideology and racism within socio-cognitive studies (Fairclough et al., 2011). Fairclough developed his theory and method to discourse analysis, while also being at the forefront of creating the term “Critical Discourse Analysis” and developing more concrete guidelines for conducting analyses within the field (Weiss & Wodak, 2003). Other renowned approaches are critical linguistics and social semiotics, focused on analyzing grammar concerning context as a way to uncover ideology in texts, corpus-based approaches, which incorporates computer-based data into the analysis as a

way to study keywords used in discourse, and argumentation and rhetoric, which concentrates on the subtle and latent justification of ideology as a way to influence others (Fairclough et al., 2011).

Fairclough (1992) created a three-dimensional framework for analysis that looks at everything from the linguistic features to connections between discourse and social structures. In this manner, discourse is viewed in a social context as both influencing the society and being influenced by the social structures. Simultaneously, the resources of those producing and decoding discourse are examined to explore how this background impacts an analysis. The first dimension within Fairclough's approach has a linguistic focus where the text itself is analyzed, the second looks at the production and process of discourse in society, and the third dimension examines speech and writing to study the reproduction of ideological effects on people (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000). The second of these dimensions contains the connection between discourse and the context surrounding it, and it includes a focus on intertextuality, how a text draws upon elements of other written works (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000). When discussing intertextuality, Fairclough separates between "manifest intertextuality" and "constitutive intertextuality" (1992, p. 85). Manifest intertextuality includes writing based on other specific texts for considerable parts of its content. In contrast, the focus of constitutive intertextuality is on how documents draw upon elements of other texts such as style, form, or type of discourse.

It is essential to look at paraphrasing to examine whether or not the content is retold in the context of the original work (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000). Another focal point in Fairclough's approach is "naturalization," which is an understanding of unusual ideological thoughts as common sense or *natural*. This notion of naturalization is a point where the critical and descriptive approaches differ because the descriptive is not concerned with naturalizations. In contrast, the critical approach looks at the structural and contextual connections to understand how it can result in a belief that certain limited thoughts are shared among many people (Fairclough, 2010). Within CDA, there is a focus on how this naturalization can partake in creating and continuing systems of oppression by making divisive ideas and relations seem legitimate (van Dijk, 1993).

### **Benefits of Critical Discourse Analysis**

The many benefits of conducting a Critical Discourse Analysis along these lines include the fact that one can operate on different levels of analysis, from the strictly grammatical and linguistic to the socio-cultural and historical background surrounding the



discourse. The fact that CDA aims to be normative and interventionist implies that the analyst can create change within the social system encircling their studies. The notion of power imbalance and inequality, possibly naturalized and imbedded in people's minds, is vital to analyze and look into critically. It is possible to do this with CDA because political and social commentary is part of the analysis, which would not be as natural in the form of an analysis that asserts its objectivity. CDA does not start from the idea that science is value-free and is thus able to critique not only the object of study but also the method used in the examination.

This thesis will look at political manifestos that were written and published by mass shooters in the United States. CDA will be an appropriate tool for this analysis because the mixture of structural analysis and context-based social critique can help illuminate the psychological, social, and cultural motivations for the attacks. Using CDA will be an intriguing way of looking at texts that convey ideologies, legitimatization of actions, and thoughts about society and people. Using the authors' words and writing serves as an entryway into their ideas, in addition to the literal presentation of themselves they wish to portray publicly. Following Fairclough's dimensions, the documents will be analyzed on a linguistic level where word choice and surrounding context is examined. This level of study will bring forward the prime focal points within the texts, which reflects the authors' ideologies. Further, the analysis will include connections between the perpetrators' manifestos and the circumstances surrounding the writing as well as the attacks. Here, it is possible to look for influencing factors in the creation of their ideologies and the push to go through with violent attacks.

### **Studies Based on Critical Discourse Analysis**

Pearce (2014) used corpus assisted critical discourse analysis to analyze election manifestos published between 1900 and 2010 from three central political parties in the United Kingdom. The focus in this article is on the use of four specific function words, namely *will*, *we*, *our*, and *to*, within these manifestos as a way of analyzing party ideology over time and compared to each other. Pearce chose these words because they occurred within the twenty most used terms of all the manifestos and were the only function words among the top twenty in all three texts. In the article, Pearce points out that many CDA analysts tend to ignore function words as part of their analysis because these words carry no meaning, and 'only' serve to define relationships between function words. Pearce disagrees about the importance of function words in discursive analysis, arguing that these words are a valid basis for

analysis. Pearce thus examined the frequency of the words and the surrounding context to examine ideological motivations across all three documents.

By using CDA, Pearce managed to show how the most used function words can express party ideology by looking at their linguistic environment and context to discern the political implications in the different manifestos. These four function words often make up part of phrases that indicate party goals, party self-identifications, and core beliefs not explicitly stated in the general statements in the manifestos themselves.

The success of Pearce's CDA analysis of election manifestos as a way to look at party ideology supports the assumption that CDA will be appropriate for this thesis. His method of analyzing ideology through the use of essential function words is similar to how this thesis will conduct its analysis through the use of specific personal pronouns and identity terms. While this thesis will not look at the same function words as Pearce, it will use a similar protocol and, like Pearce, will examine contextual clues to tease out the underlying thoughts of those writing the document. One difference between the manifestos in this thesis and those in Pearce's study is that the lone wolf manifestos are not official party documents but the thoughts of single individuals. Pearce's research focuses on only four key words, so there is also a difference concerning the scope of analysis as this thesis will look at a more significant number of terms, both pronouns and specific terms, in addition to studying the use of metaphors. This study of function words in party manifestos shows that there is much additional information about an ideology possible to find through linguistic and contextual analysis of documents.

Another study that is useful as a basis for analyzing lone wolf manifestos is that of Kaati et al. (2016), which researches these types of documents with the use of Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC). This tool looks at specific words used in texts and sorts them into categories based on psychological connotations related to the terms and the usage. In their study, Kaati et al. focus on ten lone offenders and analyze the manifestos they left behind in light of these six categories; use of big words, use of personal pronouns, expressions of emotions, social processes, cognitive processes, and drives. This study looked for indicators of ideology in writing that preceded the violent actions of perpetrators. By looking at word choice and the attendant psychological, Kaati et al. indicate which drives and motivations influenced the perpetrators as well as point towards the emotional state the perpetrators were in when writing their manifestos. Kaati et al. used other writing samples such as blogs, twitter, and articles that were collected through the LIWC database as baselines

to compare the manifestos with as a means to see whether or not the discourse of these perpetrators showed significant differences to the general public.

### **Criticism of Critical Discourse Analysis**

Criticism directed at CDA often points to the subjectivity of this way of conducting an analysis, with the added focus on power dynamics, exploitation, and intervention not being part of 'typical' objective studies. The response to this could be that no form of analysis is truly neutral, as people cannot leave behind their background and biases altogether. In contrast, with CDA this lack of objectivity and political agenda is presented upfront instead of hiding behind ideological assumptions of neutrality (Cameron & Panović, 2014). Some problems with the use of CDA as a means of uncovering ideology is the possibility of overinterpreting and misrepresenting the intended meaning. Even though the use of CDA may give evidence to hypotheses regarding ideology, perceived threats, and mindsets, they might also put more emphasis on connotations and word choice than what was present in the mind of the author. When studying lone wolf manifestos possible plagiarism, rushed writing, and inaccurate statements can play a part in the overall presentation of the document. Additionally, any thoughts posted on other platforms will be excluded from this analysis when focusing solely on the manifestos of the assailants, which can lead to an examination that only reflects a fraction of their mindset.

Another ethical concern for this thesis is that by writing about and describing these manifestos, the thesis is contributing to the further dissemination of these documents and the thoughts and ideologies of the perpetrators. However, it is also necessary to look into the formation and spreading of these violent ideologies as a means to map out how these lone perpetrators influence each other and become further radicalized.

## **About Manifestos and Lone Wolf Terrorists**

### **Manifestos**

In its common usage, a manifesto is "a written statement declaring publicly the intentions, motives, or views of its user" ("Manifesto", Merriam-Webster). Generally, manifestos are common within the political field, especially as a structured way to express ideology, standpoints, and plans of action of a group to the public. Typical components of political manifestos are that they showcase party positions, while also consolidating the views of its members through these shared aims, and express proclamations of change that will come hand in hand with their movement and leadership. Another crucial element to political

manifestos is that they are published to the public and are often directly distributed by the party to the voters (Eder et al., 2017). These components of political party manifestos correspond to those of other political manifestos, such as those of lone wolf offenders. Similarly, these manifestos detail the authors' ideology, aims, and motivations in a written format that is subsequently published online or sent directly to specific recipients. Posting these ideological manifestos online, in addition to interacting on online platforms to discuss ideology, can be viewed as attempts by the perpetrators to try to reach susceptible people to further promote their views. The manifestos this thesis will examine, those of Elliot Rodger, Dylann Roof, Christopher Harper-Mercer, and Patrick Crusius, exhibit these qualities of manifestos. They are statements of political ideology, advocating for social and political change, and generally represent their views as being more widely held than they are in reality.

The manifestos that are the focus of this thesis are political and address political and social issues, as well as declaring action plans and reasons behind these actions. However, these manifestos are different from other political manifestos in that they are single-authored, generally outside of established channels. Despite gestures to the contrary, the lone actors are not explicitly linked to organized political movements. The ideologies of lone wolves often consist of their own political and social discontent and frustrations mixed with vengeance or resentment towards groups of people based on personal experiences (Spaaij, 2010). The authors of these manifestos often include criticism towards society, comments on the perceived threats to society as they see it, as well as plans of action to deal with these perceived wrongs happening around them.

### **Lone Wolf Terrorists**

In order to separate lone wolf terrorists from other types of terrorists or lone aggressors, there is a need to look at these perpetrators through a narrower lens. One point of differentiation is that lone wolves are not part of any organized groups, even though they might identify with their ideologies or actions, and that they act based on their initiative and not that of such a group (Spaaij, 2010). A second point that separates them from other offenders is the motive behind their actions; lone wolves are, like other terrorists, mainly driven by ideology, politics, or religious beliefs (Leenars & Reed, 2016; Spaaij, 2010). This question of motivation presents a differentiation point between lone wolf terrorists and general lone aggressors, who might act alone but more often due to financial or vindictive reasons (Spaaij, 2010). Lone wolf terrorists consistently show a mixture of personal *and*

political affliction and resentment as motives for their actions, with approximately 80 percent of the cases between 1940 and 2013 showing signs of both (Hamm & Spaaij, 2015).

There has been a rise in the amount of lone wolf terrorism in the United States over the last decades. Politically motivated lone wolf-crime has changed, and today more perpetrators are carrying out single attacks. By contrast, there used to be fewer lone wolves before the turn of the century, but almost half of these carried out multiple attacks over time (Hamm & Spaaij, 2015). Another change for lone wolves in this period has been the place of radicalization. Previously, gatherings of extremist groups radicalized lone wolves, who then influenced each other further into extreme beliefs. The internet has created new pathways for radicalization by making it easier to publish thoughts online, communicate with likeminded people, and absorb ideological discourse from others. Lone wolves often use the internet as a platform to announce their plans of action during the time before actually going through with it (Hamm & Spaaij, 2015).

### **Lone Wolves and the Internet**

With only a glance at the life stories of the perpetrators in this thesis, it is easy to see the importance of the internet in the buildup to the attacks and the aftermath of them. The assailants posted and viewed content on multiple online platforms, varying from personal websites to unmoderated online imageboards and forums (e.g., Mezzofiore and O'Sullivan, 2019; Robles, 2015; Staff, 2014). Lone wolf offenders often copy the attacks of other perpetrators with a similar modus operandi (Ham and Spaaij, 2017). Many of these assailants have announced their plans of going through with a targeted violent act beforehand, by for example, posting about it online or talking to other people about it (Ham and Spaaij, 2017; Kaati et al., 2016). The internet often allows an initial sense of anonymity through usernames, the manipulation of IP-addresses, or by complete dark web anonymity and the presence of sites not requiring a log-in. The possibility of hiding one's identity makes the internet an exceptional place for people to air their thoughts without the fear of being confronted about it in real life.

The online forum 4chan, where some of the perpetrators in this analysis were active users, is such a site where the users do not have to log in at all to post or comment (Schmidt & Bromwich, 2015). A similar message board called 8chan also features anonymous postings that are generally only moderated by the person who made the imageboard and not by the owners of the forum (Brennan, 2018; Chen, 2012). This site sprung up as a reaction to 4chan having some rules and guidelines as to what was allowed to post, meaning some of the most

harassing posts were banned or taken down, and 8chan's creator wanted a forum where users could publish *anything* without it being taken down (Glaser, 2019). 8chan, 4chan, and forums similar to them are infamous for the anonymity of their users and the increasingly hostile postings and responses, which might be because it is hard to trace posters, resulting in more people publishing offensive comments and those who find the posts offensive quitting the site (Chen, 2012). Both *8chan* and *4chan* have been the location of multiple postings of manifestos and attack threats and are also known as breeding grounds for conspiracies and malicious theories regarding such shootings (Mezzofiore and O'Sullivan, 2019; Murphy & Mezzofiore, 2018). The creator of 8chan has stated that the current site administrators are not doing enough to stop this negative development by not closing the pages related to these incidents for at least a period after an attack. By not trying to change the negative culture, the administration is not taking a stand against the violence but rather inciting it (Mezzofiore & O'Sullivan, 2019). These sites, and many like them, are known to change names and domains to evade legal repercussions and negative associations connected to users carrying out violence after being active on their platforms.

The site *8chan* was taken offline and later went through a domain change after Crusius' mass shooting following his posting on their message board in 2019. The site reemerged with an almost identical interface under the new name *8kun*, and this platform is only available through the dark web, meaning users have to download specific software to gain access to these unlisted websites and anonymous browsing (Glaser, 2019). On these forums, where communities of people with hateful and violent thoughts against others have emerged, it is easy to find likeminded people and share ideas as well as push others to take violent action. This community might be why many lone wolf offenders tend to be active on these sites and also chose them as the platform to post their manifestos; they might feel that they are likely to find those who share their ideology and views. It is possible to see such a connection between content on these forums and new attacks happening even just by looking at the perpetrators used in this thesis. Crusius and Harper-Mercer both directly state their support of other lone shooters in their manifestos, with Harper-Mercer also referring to Elliot Rodger explicitly as an influence (Crusius, 2019; Harper-Mercer, 2015). The connection between these two perpetrators highlights how these lone actors affect others to conduct similar attacks even though they are considered single actors without ties to larger organizations. The references to other lone wolves expressed in these manifestos further exemplifies how the internet serves as a place for radicalization by forums letting these hate-

filled utterances stay unchecked and unchallenged while they possibly influence other impressionable minds.

### **Gun Culture**

The United States has a long history of eminent gun ownership and it is estimated to be the country with the most civilian-owned guns in the world (“America’s gun culture in charts”, 2019). This estimation echoes statistics in which the United States outranks other high-income countries with an almost 25 times higher rate of gun-related homicides (Grinshteyn & Hemenway, 2019), with 73 percent of homicides in 2017 being gun related (“America’s gun culture in charts”, 2019). The relationship between Americans and their firearms is noteworthy and dates back to the country’s infancy. The American Constitution was written in 1787 and has had several amendments added to it over the following centuries. The Bill of Rights is the collection of the first ten amendments added, and came to be after pressure for more civil rights and freedoms and a reduction in federal control over the people (Kraśnicka, 2014). Within the Bill of Rights is the Second Amendment, which is widely known even outside of the borders of the country. It reads that a “well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to bear Arms, shall not be infringed” (U.S. Const. amend. II). The phrase including a *right to bear arms* is especially well-known, and it is a right many Americans hold dear and continuously defend. The numbers previously mentioned concerning the high number of American gun owners, both in general and compared to other countries, reflects the importance of this amendment for the people.

Many Americans own multiple guns as well, and data from 2017 presents a rate of 120,5 civilian-owned guns per 100 American citizens (Karp, 2018). Considering that also many Americans do not own any guns, this data signifies that a large number of American gun owners own multiple firearms. This indicates that many citizens have easy access to firearms, either owned by themselves or someone in their home, and that there are likely to be numerous households with multiple residents owning at least one gun each. Based on the data from the *Mother Jones* database, all four assailants acquired the weapons they used legally, either by purchasing them for themselves or by taking them from a family member (Follman et al., 2020). Situations where perpetrators used their access to legally obtained weapons as a means to commit mass shootings often increase the focus on gun control discussions and whether or not the *right to bear arms* was intended for the situation in today’s United States regarding legislation and gun ownership.

## About the Manifestos and Perpetrators

### Criteria for Choosing the Manifestos

Because of the broad scope of incidents related to homicide, there had to be some clear criteria in place to select which cases to analyze. The manifestos were selected based on geography and chronology; only manifestos from shooter events that occurred in the United States during the ten-year-period 2010 through 2019 were included as possible material. Out of these, the focus was put on the incidents that were mass killings, with the definition used in this thesis being four or more people, excluding the perpetrator, killed in a single event (“General Methodology”; “Mass shootings”, 2018). A high percentage of all homicides in the United States are gun-related, and this thesis will focus on mass shootings as a specific type of mass killings with gun use as a common denominator. The distinctions between a perpetrator carrying out a mass killing and a person labeled a serial killer relies on the time, duration, and location of the events. On this basis, the killings have to have happened within 24 hours and in a relatively confined geographical area to be admitted in the analysis under the definition of mass killing (“General methodology”). In order to make sure that the study is of lone wolf perpetrators, one criterion is that there is a single culprit with no official ties to any larger group or organization on whose behalf they are conducting the assault. The final criterion is that the perpetrator had to leave behind writing related to their attack that fit the definition of a political manifesto, as stated above.

To find cases suitable for this thesis, data from *Mother Jones*’ investigation of mass shootings in the United States were used as a starting point (Follman et al., 2020). Their collection of data is from the years 1982 to 2020, although their definition of a mass killing event changed after 2012 – when they reduced the required number killed from 4 to 3 – and this reduction is reflected in their post-2012 data selection. Other criteria for incidents to be included are that they transpired in a public place, were carried out by one person, and the weapon used was a type of gun. The database excludes shootings that are related to gang violence and robbery, seeing as the motivation in these types of events is different than in the cases they showcase or if the shooter has not been identified following their attack (Follman et al., 2019).

For this thesis, the cases in the *Mother Jones* database dating back to the start of 2010 were examined to see if they fit the criteria to be a part of the analysis. Out of the 67 possible



cases, 2 cases were excluded for having more than one perpetrator, and 34 were excluded because the killer did not leave a manifesto. Due to *Mother Jones* changing their definition of mass shooter within those ten years, 19 cases were excluded since there were less than four fatalities, which is the criterion based on the definition used for this analysis. The remaining 11 cases were considered for the study because all perpetrators left behind a form of writing or videos regarding their attacks, but seven were excluded because they were not substantial enough, or they did not attempt to address the motivations for the attack. This resulted in four cases that fit all the criteria, making them qualified for this analysis, and those were the cases of Elliot Rodger, Dylann Roof, Chris Harper-Mercer, and Patrick Crusius. These men have also posted their opinions through videos, journals, letters, and on online forums, but this analysis will only be of their actual manifestos related to their attacks.

This thesis uses an analysis of lone wolf terrorism as a starting point to examine the language, beliefs, and actions of lone wolves and how these relate to the society in which they live. By analyzing their manifestos, the idea is to look at their writing as an entryway to their ideology and justification of their actions. Additionally, this thesis will investigate possible connections and similarities between these sole actors to see if there is evidence of a network between them contradicting the ‘lone wolf’ label.

### **About the Chosen Manifestos**

The most extensive of the manifestos is that of Elliot Rodger, written in 2014 and consists of 105,693 words. In *My Twisted World*, he details his life from birth to the final days before going through with his attack, and he is seemingly forthcoming with details of his personal life and that of his plans of carrying out a massacre. The document seems to be something Rodger worked on over some time, both based on the amount of writing and due to his mentioning that he was pressed to complete the document before the day of the planned attack. The untitled manifesto Dylann Roof left behind in 2015 has 2444 words and is divided into sections based on topics including the different groups of people he has issues with and some of the rational motivating his attack. In all, this document seems more hastily put together than that of Rodgers, and it is shorter, written, according to Roof, quickly without time to check for errors. The manifesto left by Christopher Harper-Mercer in 2015 is the shortest of the four with only 1588 words, where only the first half has most of the writing while the other includes lists of his likes and a question and answer segment. The first part contains sections entitled *My Story*, *Blackness and its effect on men*, and *Other Mass Shooters*. Patrick Crusius’ manifesto *The Inconvenient Truth* was sent out before his attack in

2019, consists of 2360 words. In it, he lists political, economic, and personal reasons for the attack, as well as describing his weapons of choice. As with Roof, he explains that he did not spend much time writing the actual manifesto because he generally had not been preparing for the massacre far in advance. The word counts in this thesis will be based on that in *Microsoft Word* to create an even baseline for the numbers, as software and tools used to look at written discourse have variations in the criteria used to decide word count.

## **About the Perpetrators**

### ***Elliot Rodger***

The attack carried out by Rodger happened on the evening of May 23<sup>rd</sup> of 2014 in Isla Vista, California, with his first victims assumed killed some hours before his shooting spree began (Duke, 2014). The investigative summary published by the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office describes these first victims as three men, Rodger's two roommates and their friend. They were found deceased in the apartment they shared with Rodgers with excessive stab wounds, having been killed one by one upon arrival to the apartment (Brown, 2015). Shortly after 9 in the evening, he published a video to Youtube titled *Retribution* before sending his manifesto to numerous people, including family members and his therapist (Lovett and Nagourney, 2014; Staff, 2014). Shortly after publishing his manifesto, Rodger drove to the Alpha Phi sorority house, where he knocked on the door for some minutes without being let in. As a result of not being able to enter the residence, he shot three females who were close to the building, killing two and injuring one of them (Brown, 2015). After this, the perpetrator left in his car and drove to a store where he fired at and killed a male victim, before continuing the rampage by shooting at pedestrians while driving down the street. In addition to this, Rodger also used his vehicle as a weapon by striking people he passed by, leaving multiple wounded from both gunshots and impacts with the car. The chase ended after Rodger committed suicide by gunshot while still in the vehicle, ending in a collision with another vehicle (Duke, 2014; Brown, 2015).

### ***Dylann Roof***

On June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015, Dylann Roof went through with a massacre in Charleston, South Carolina. He entered a church during bible study, and around 9 p.m., Roof opened fire on the congregation after having spent one hour there (Francis and Bruce, 2015; Shapiro, 2017). The church, Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, has been of great importance to African American history and the African American community in Charleston through two

centuries, including revolts against slavery (Weisman, 2015). Nine African American parishioners were killed during the attack that lasted mere minutes, before Roof fled the church to evade the police. The next morning Roof was identified following the release of surveillance tapes, and he was arrested in North Carolina and taken into custody later that day (Shapiro, 2015; Shapiro, 2017). In the aftermath of the shooting and capture of the perpetrator, a blog linked to Roof was found with pictures and text with evident racist and white-supremacist imagery. This blog was also where his manifesto was published and edited for the last time, only a few hours before the massacre took place (Robles, 2015).

### ***Christopher Harper-Mercer***

Within months of the massacre in Charleston came the fatal attack carried out by 26-year-old Christopher Harper-Mercer on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015. This shooting happened in Roseburg, Oregon, at the Umpqua Community College, where the perpetrator was enrolled in classes himself (Carroll, 2015; Sidner et al., 2015). Harper-Mercer began the attack in an English class, in which he was a registered student, right before 10:40 a.m., and moved into another building before law enforcement arrived at the scene minutes later. A shootout between the perpetrator and the police ensued, which ended with the attacker being struck by a bullet before stepping back into the room and then taking his own life through a self-inflicted shot (Ford and Payne, 2015; Levine et al., 2015; Sidner et al., 2015; Turkewitz, 2015). The shooting left nine victims dead, ranging in age from 18 to 67, and seven injured at the college where the average age of students was closer to 40 years old (Ford and Payne, 2015; Sidner et al., 2015). Surviving witnesses described the perpetrator entering the classroom and ordering the students to gather in the center of it before beginning to shoot at them, asking some about their religious beliefs before killing them. Harper-Mercer gave one male student an envelope, evidently containing a thumb drive and writing, and told him that he would spare him if he would give it to the police after the attack (Almaguer and Helsel, 2015; Levine et al., 2015; Sidner et al., 2015; Turkewitz, 2015). There were also blogposts and online writing connected to Harper-Mercer based on the username he mentions in his manifesto where he wrote about other shooters and how they receive notoriety after carrying out an attack (Sidner et al., 2015).

### ***Patrick Crusius***

The deadliest of these four attacks was that of Patrick Crusius that occurred on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019, in El Paso, Texas. After traveling over 10 hours from his home in Dallas, Crusius opened fire at a Walmart shortly after 10:30 in the morning. The store had between 1000 and

3000 people inside at the time (Law and Bates, 2019). There is evidence suggesting that Crusius went to this Walmart before attacking to examine the customers, as he expressed a wish to target Mexicans, and then later returned with weapons in hand and began his spree in the parking lot (Hutchinson et al., 2019). The police responded to the shooting within six minutes, and Crusius was apprehended in his car close to the store following the attack (Todd et al., 2019; Law and Bates, 2019). Crusius' manifesto, which expressed hatred of Hispanics and Mexicans, had been published on the online forum 8chan only 20 minutes before he went through with the attack (Todd et al., 2019; Romero et al., 2019).

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Methodology**

The basis for the framework of analysis stems from the CDA approaches presented previously with a joint focus on linguistic analysis and contextual analysis, as well as inspiration from Teun van Dijk's work on discourse. The overarching topics that will be the focus of this analysis are the perpetrators' representations of themselves, their victims, and the perceived threat against which they believe they are fighting. In order to conduct an in-depth analysis of these representations, the thesis will focus on specific function words and identity terms as well as the expanded connotations of the language used and the textual environment surrounding these words. Inspired by the work done by Kaati et al. (2016) using LIWC, a portion of this analysis will focus on the choice of words and the frequency of specific terms within the manifestos and investigate what the use-context of these words implies about the mindset and ideology of the different authors.

A triangulation framework is presented by van Dijk (2006) as a way to look at manipulation and its ties to society, cognition, and discourse. In the triangulation model of manipulation, there is a societal level with real power relations expressed in terms of differentials and inequalities between groups in society and being reinforced through manipulation. There is the cognitive level, consisting of the mental creation of bias and group representations. Lastly, there is a discursive level which provides the vehicle to disseminate and amplify manipulative ideologies (van Dijk, 2006). In the manifestos analyzed in this thesis, it is a discourse through writing and reading (rather than through speech) which will be investigated. By basing part of the analysis on the triangulation framework, the thesis will highlight how the authors try to manipulate the reader's beliefs so that they map their biases

and group representations onto existing and real power differentials, and thus make the shooters' actions seem justified.

## **Framework**

The framework of the analysis will look at the following concepts:

### ***1. Use of Pronouns***

By using the concordance program AntConc as a search tool, the first step of the analysis will be to look at the perpetrators' use of pronouns in their writing. As a means to focus the search, the personal pronouns indexed to individual and group identity *I, me, us, we, you, they, and them* have been selected. These pronouns offer a clue as to how the perpetrators view themselves and their "in-group" and how they view others. This will also give information as to whom the authors identify as 'us' and 'them' by looking at the pronoun reference patterns. By looking at personal pronouns, it is possible to get an insight into the focus and state of mind of an author. Those who are more focused on themselves, perhaps due to emotional pain, often have higher use of first-person singular pronouns (Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010). Also, mainly referring to others through the use of third-person plural, such as *they* and *them*, indicates that the author views themselves in opposition with another group, with this usage functioning as a great predictor of extremism in online groups (Kaati et al., 2016).

Personal pronouns will be examined as a part of analyzing a potential polarization between "us" and "them," typically done by presenting themselves and their group in a positive light while presenting the Other negatively (Cohen et al., 2014; van Dijk, 2006). The use of personal pronouns can be revealing in terms of attention and emotions. As presented by Cohen et al. (2014), by analyzing first-person plural pronouns, such as *we* and *us*, it is possible to detect references to the in-group in a document. Likewise, references to the out-group can be found by examining the use of third-person plural pronouns such as *they* and *them*. The main reason behind choosing these pronouns is that it will offer insight into how the perpetrators view themselves, how they believe others perceive them, and how they describe the people they see as the Other, seeing as pronouns "reveal how and individual is referencing those in the interaction and outside of it" (Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010, p. 32).

### ***2. Description of Intended Victims***

In addition to the AntConc pronoun identification, there will be an analysis of frequency and manner of referring to specific groups of people. Here, the terms *Black,*

*Hispanic, White, Asian, Jewish, Muslim, Christian, woman, man, and immigrant* will be screened in each manifesto by using *AntConc* in order to study the connotations and descriptions relating to the words. These terms were chosen to look at the perpetrators' views of people of different ethnicities, religions, and genders through their portrayal in the manifestos. As stated by Cohen et al., "frequent combinations of certain key terms... can reveal a fixation with a certain idea" (2014, p.253). Cohen et al. further states that examining the frequency of such key terms in documents can reveal the authors' fixations and main focus (2014). Some of the assailants include their thoughts on people from most of the categories for gender, ethnic, religious, or racial identifications. In contrast, others only focus on a few, so all terms will be screened in each manifesto as a way to determine which groups were their targets and how the lone wolves characterize those who identify with these groups. Categories of content words and their usage are part of disclosing the primary focus of a piece of writing by presenting the words that have the highest frequency (Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010).

To include the most instances of usage within the categories, the document screenings will be done with wordlists that include synonyms, plural and singular forms of the words, as well as terms used to represent these groups. An example of this is that for the term *woman*, the plural version *women* and synonyms such as *girl(s)* and *female(s)* will also be included in the manifesto screenings. A complete list of all words used in the screening is found in the Appendix named Search Terms, along with the number of times each perpetrator used the specific terms. During the screening, the terms *Black* and *White* will also be looked at to exclude color descriptions of things so that the data collected only reflect references to people based on skin color.

The next step of the analysis will be to view the findings in light of the surrounding context. Here, each manifesto will be looked at in detail to see how the pronouns and identity terms are used and with what implications. As a way to give substance to the data collected, it is necessary to look at the usage to see the bigger picture painted by the authors' words because the data only reflects the specific use of the terms without taking the rest of the document into account. Conducting a manual analysis of the context of these terms is the only way to get a glimpse of the connotations and statements connected to the words, which ultimately is the revealing factor when discussing the perpetrators' ideologies. In this manner, the data presented in the tables will be the starting point of the analysis by giving an indication of primary focus as well as functioning as the baseline for an in-depth examination of term usage.

## Analysis

### Analysis data

**Table 1**

*Information about the perpetrators and their attacks*

	<b>Rodger</b>	<b>Roof</b>	<b>Harper-Mercer</b>	<b>Crusius</b>
Age at the time of the attack	22	21	26	21
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Male
Race	White/Asian	White	White/Black	White
Year of attack	2014	2015	2015	2019
Location	Isla Vista, CA	Charleston, SC	Roseburg, OR	El Paso, TX
Fatalities	6	9	9	22
Injured	14	1	8	24
Word count	105,693	2444	1588	2360

*Note.* Word count is based on word count in *Microsoft Word*.

**Table 2**

*The number of times personal pronouns were used and their percentage of the total word count*

	<b>Rodger</b>		<b>Roof</b>		<b>Harper-Mercer</b>		<b>Crusius</b>	
I	5936	5.62%	55	2.25%	50	3.15%	32	1.36%
Me	1522	1.44%	8	0.33%	15	0.94%	6	0.25%
Us	148	0.14%	7	0.29%	3	0.19%	2	0.08%
We	449	0.42%	28	1.15%	5	0.31%	3	0.13%
You	11	0.01%	5	0.20%	18	1.13%	3	0.13%
They	505	0.48%	31	1.27%	18	1.13%	24	1.02%
Them	430	0.41%	9	0.37%	5	0.31%	2	0.08%

*Note.* Percentages are rounded to the closest number at two decimal places.

**Table 3**

*The number of times identity terms were used and their percentage of the total word count*

	Rodger		Roof		Harper-Mercer		Crusius	
Black	9	0.01%	32	1.31%	36	2.27%	0	0%
Hispanic	7	0.01%	8	0.33%	1	0.06%	11	0.47%
White	17	0.02%	53	2.17%	2	0.13%	3	0.13%
Asian	10	0.01%	3	0.12%	2	0.13%	0	0%
Jewish	0	0%	12	0.50%	0	0%	0	0%
Muslim	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Christian	1	0.00%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Woman	1157	1.09%	2	0.08%	13	0.82%	0	0%
Man	1046	0.99%	7	0.29%	28	1.76%	1	0.04%
Immigrant	0	0%	1	0.04%	0	0%	11	0.47%

*Note.* Percentages are rounded to the closest number at two decimal places.

*Note.* Other ethnic and religious groups were screened but did not have any mentions.

**Table 4**

*Top ten most used words and their percentage of the total word count*

Rodger			Roof			Harper-Mercer			Crusius		
I	5936	5.62%	The	115	4.71%	The	73	4.60%	The	129	5.47%
The	4291	4.06%	To	74	3.03%	I	50	3.15%	Of	84	3.56%
To	3782	3.58%	And	61	2.50%	Black	30	1.89%	To	67	2.84%
And	2891	2.74%	Of	56	2.30%	To	28	1.76%	And	54	2.29%
A	2668	2.52%	I	55	2.26%	Is	26	1.64%	Is	47	1.10%
Was	2607	2.47%	A	53	2.17%	A	25	1.57%	This	41	1.74%
Of	2572	2.43%	Is	51	2.09%	And	25	1.57%	A	40	1.69%
My	2456	2.32%	That	47	1.92%	In	24	1.51%	Will	35	1.48%
That	1609	1.52%	White	47	1.92%	My	24	1.51%	I	32	1.36%
In	1582	1.50%	In	45	1.84%	Of	22	1.39%	For	30	1.27%

*Note.* Percentages are rounded to the closest number at two decimal places.



### *Clarification of the Data*

Although the percentages in the data selection are quite low, it is essential to keep in mind that this data only reflects the specific use of the words in the search. These percentages do not reflect the surrounding words or sentences referencing back to these terms, even though they are likely to be linked to the personal pronoun or the identity term used. An analysis based on percentages of whole sentences related to the different terms would be highly subjective based on what analysts would deem as parts of a referencing clause. By gathering data based on the use of terms alone, with a supporting in-depth analysis of the surrounding context, the tables should yield the same percentages regardless of the analyst. It is noteworthy to mention that within language, it is natural to use many ‘filler’-words, which are needed for coherence and creating meaning in sentences but do not carry meaning themselves. Within written and spoken discourse, approximately 55 percent of the words used are style words, commonly referred to as function words (Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010). This percentage indicates that a large portion of language, be it written or spoken, will be style words and ‘fillers’, resulting in generally low percentage scores in the tables still equaling meaningful data. The data in Table 4 supports this notion seeing as only two words, *Black* and *White*, show up among the most used words whereas the rest are function words. However, in this type of analysis, a greater use of these ‘filler’ words, general descriptions, or lengthy sentences will cause the percentages relating to the specific terms to decrease. This could indicate why, for example, Rodger’s manifesto, which is significantly longer than the three others, generally have low percentages in all tables, seeing as his longer text requires even more “fillers”.

Additionally, creating a more extensive work opens up for more writing on other subjects in addition to the killing events, and differences in writing style will result in some authors using more descriptions. By contrast, other manifestos are quite to the point in their writing. Even though such individualistic traits might influence the percentages, especially when comparing the perpetrators directly with each other, the data in Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4 is still proportionate when looking at one document. This data will give great insight into the author’s focus by looking at the frequencies of words compared to the percentages of the most used words in that document, as well as being as a baseline to find further examples including and referencing these words.

### ***Rodger Analysis***

**Use of pronouns.** As presented in Table 2, it is clear that Rodger has a considerably extensive use of the personal pronoun *I*, both compared to other words used within his manifesto and compared to the other perpetrators use of *I*. A total of 5.62 percent of his entire word count is just *I*, which indicates a strong focus on himself in his narrative. The data in Table 4 showing that *I* is the most frequently used word in Rodger's text further supports the impression of a person with an obsession with self. In Table 4, not only is *I* the individual word most used in the entire manifesto, but additional self-focus is provided by the term *my* at number eight with 2.32 percent of all word usages. In addition, the data presented in Table 2 shows that the use of the personal pronoun *me* totals 1.44 percent of the manifesto, which contributes to the combined percentages of these three self-focused words accounting for 9.38 percent of the total word count. This means that through the retelling of his story and explaining his rationale for carrying out the attack, almost ten percent of all words used in the document refer directly to Rodger himself.

Rodger's writing is very personal. His manifesto is divided into six parts, with additional chapters within each, focused on his life stages and the emotional state he associates with the period. These parts include titles such as "A Blissful Beginning Age 0-5", "The Last Period of Contentment Age 9-13", and "Hope and Hopelessness Age 17-19". The fact that he wrote the document after turning 20 makes this level of detailed retelling of his life an interesting choice, as it would be quite impossible for his memories not to change over time and therefore render his account questionable. The decision to go in such biographical detail might stem from a need to create sympathy for his situation and to make the reader understand and agree with his reasoning and actions. However, his manner of reciting events in his life on both a large and a small scale creates a situation where there is an abundance of *I*-statements in every paragraph, many of which function mainly to tell a story rather than state opinions about himself or others.

Based on the *I*-statements relating to himself, Rodger expresses a belief that he is better than other people and destined for greatness. However, he also presents many negative thoughts about himself based on his interactions with others. Multiple times throughout the manifesto he calls himself "superior" and "a superior gentleman" ("20 Years Old") and he refers to himself as being a "God" nine times:

Humanity has never accepted me among them, and now I know why. I am more than human. I am superior to them all. I am Elliot Rodger... Magnificent, glorious, supreme, eminent... Divine! I am the closest thing there is to a living god... On the Day

of Retribution, I will truly be a powerful god, punishing everyone I deem to be impure and depraved. (“22 Years Old”).

Rodger creates distance between his sense of self and his vision of society, stating that he is better than *them* and *more than human* because he does not fit in with other people. By going through with his attack, he will be able to feel powerful because he will be in charge and have control over life and death like a God. These thoughts of himself being *magnificent, glorious, supreme, eminent, and divine* showcase his self-obsession and serves as part of an explanation as to why he expects women to desire him, and subsequently leaves him more distraught when they do not. Rodger becomes obsessed with becoming rich because he believes that wealth is his only possibility of getting a girlfriend. He began buying tickets to the Powerball Jackpot because once “I won it, I’d be able to have my beautiful blonde girlfriend, I’d be able to show the world that girls consider me worthy, I’d be able to show the world how superior I am” (“21 Years Old”). His sense of self-worth is seemingly strongly connected to his popularity and success with women, seeing as he repeatedly links having a girlfriend to being of worth. Rodger’s sentiments are shared with other men who also feel that women’s rejection of them is the cause of their unhappy life. This group often identify through the term ‘involuntary celibate’, or ‘incel’, as a reflection of their stymied wish to be sexually active, and the fact that they blame women for their continued state of virginity. Following his attack and manifesto publication, Rodger received notoriety within the ‘incel’ community online, and also directly influenced others within the community to go through with attacks of their own with references to Rodger as an ‘incel’-leader (Scaptura & Boyle, 2019).

In contrast to these expressions of superiority and delusions of riches, are Rodger’s negative and insecure feelings about himself. He describes himself as “shy, short, and physically weak” (“21 Years Old”) and continuously describes himself as shy and apprehensive when it came to initiating friendships or romantic connections. His wish to be popular started early, but “[he] realized, with some horror, that [he] wasn’t ‘cool’ at all” but he “had a dorky hairstyle, [he] wore plain and uncool clothing, and [he] was shy and unpopular” (“Part 2”, “9 years old”). These feelings of not being good enough to fit in are mirrored in his use of the phrase “inferior mouse” to describe himself in relation to others (“21 Years Old”). It is his lack of success with women that seems to be the main issue impacting his lack of self-worth, and his obsession with finding a girlfriend might be a way to try and end the negative thoughts about himself by finding acceptance through an outside

source. By creating a link between sexual and romantic success and the value of a person, Rodger sets himself up to fail because he ties his self-worth to other's acceptance of him. He fixates on his status as an "unwanted virgin" who still had not kissed anyone and kept setting new goals of losing his virginity, seeing as this would get him on the path of the life he wanted ("21 Years Old").

Rodger's thoughts about himself are quite polarized, as exemplified by the switching between excessive self-obsession and negative feelings about himself. On the one hand, he feels superior to all else, but on the other, the reactions of women, and society, does not support these thoughts. He expresses an entitlement of having a girlfriend and experiencing the joys he believes he deserves, while also lacking the confidence to approach or befriend women or the people he deems to be popular. Instead, when seeing pretty girls, he "imagine[s] that they secretly adored and wanted [him]" because "that was how it was meant to be" ("20 Years Old"). The data in Table 3 presents Rodger's percentages as generally much lower than the other three, most likely as a result of his manifesto being considerably longer with a higher amount of words used. With this in mind, it is interesting to look at how his percentage for the use of female identity terms is the highest of all four documents and his use of male terms are the second highest, contrasting the other data presenting where his percentages at the lower end of the scale. This exemplifies his extensive focus on women, both in relation to the other perpetrators and compared to other terms within his document.

As previously stated, the second most used pronoun in Rodger's manifesto is another self-focused one, namely *me*. However, many of these usages serve as referents for himself in his narration of ordinary life events. The same is true for his relatively high-frequency use of *we* (0.42%). Rodger's *we*-statements primarily function as part of the storytelling rather than signifying an in-group. Still, there are plenty of *me*-statements that further support the implications made through the *I*-statements and which occur in the context of discussions of his lack of sexual prowess and the role that female rejection has allegedly played in the motivation for his attacks:

If only one pretty girl had shown some form of attraction to me, the Day of Retribution would never happen. I'd never even consider it. The Day of Retribution is mainly my war against women for rejecting me and depriving me of sex and love. If only one girl had given me a chance, tried to get to know me, let me take her out on a date... None of this would have to happen. (Rodger, "21 Years Old").

Rodger continuously narrates as if he is the victim in the story and that the suffering endured is something done *to* him by women and the victimization is signaled by his use of *me* – the me who is rejected, deprived, not given a chance and so on. Like the *I* usages, the *me* usage patterns place Rodger in focus, but unlike the *I* usages, the *me* usages often position Rodger as a victim (of rejection, deprivation, and so on) of female agency rather than the magnificent God of the *I* usages.

Regarding Rodger's use of *they* and *them*, he has the lowest score of *they* usages, with this pronoun accounting for 0.48 percent of his word count. The relatively low frequency of *they* contrasts with his use of *them* - the highest use ratio of the manifestos at 0.41 percent. Both terms include usage only intended for narrating his story, while also painting a picture of the groups Rodger views as the enemy. Many *they/them* usages further the victimization sentiments found in many of the *me* sentences. The girls in the sorority Rodger targeted in his attack are described as the most beautiful on campus, "the kind of girls [he has] always desired but was never able to have because they all look down on [him]" and that they "are all spoiled, heartless, wicked bitches" ("22 Years Old"). These statements reflect Rodger's main opinion of women - he desires beautiful ones and hates all women because he has been rejected by them. This rage toward women spreads to include men who are successful with the opposite gender, and results in Rodger expressing an angered belief of it being 'him against the world':

The human species had rejected me all my life, despite the fact that I am the ideal, magnificent gentleman. Life itself is twisted and disgusting, I mused. Humans are brutal animals. If I cannot thrive among them, then I will destroy them all. I didn't want things to turn out this way. I wanted a happy, healthy life of love and sex ("21 Years Old").

The last sentence of this paragraph underlines the main goal for Rodger, *love and sex*, and that he will *destroy* those he views as the villains in his life, namely all women for simply being women, and the men he believes to be more successful than him.

Rodger rarely uses *you*, which only accounts for 0.01 percent of total words used. Generally, he does not address the reader, except for stating things like "My life, if you can call it a life, was living hell" ("17 Years Old"), which might be more of a stylistic choice than a narrator speaking to an audience, and "I ask all of you" ("Epilogue") when wondering why his life had been miserable. In Rodger's world, other people do not seem to exist as interlocutors, but are there to aid him. When Rodger gets along with his new roommates, he

“had no desire to be friends with them because they had absolutely nothing to offer” because they were not popular and did not get him in to any parties so being “friends with them wasn’t benefitting [him] at all” (“21 Years Old”). Further, he states that it was “very selfish of [his] mother to not consider” getting married to a wealthy man so that Rodger would become part of his rich family, and that he “will always resent [his] mother for refusing to do this” (“21 Years Old”). Here, he argues that his mother should have married a man she did not wish to marry because that would help Rodger get girls by being associated to this man’s wealth. These examples show how self-centered Rodger’s thoughts are and how the people in his life are just pawns to attain the life he desires and that he sees no use for them if they cannot ‘offer’ him anything.

**Description of Victims.** Although his manifesto is quite extensive, Rodger does not have any references to religion, except mentioning attending a *catholic* school, nor a focus on immigration status. Because his overall focus is on himself and his lack of success with women, as well as the men who are living the life he wants, he seemingly does not focus on racial, ethnic, or religious issues. Rodger does use the identity terms *Black*, *Hispanic*, *White*, and *Asian*. Although these words account for a minimal percentage of the manifesto, their use and the surrounding context is not unrevealing. *Black*, *Hispanic*, and *Asian* all end up at a 0.01 percentage of the total word count each, while *white* counts for 0.02 percent, bearing in mind that these percentages only reflect the use of words within the categories.

By looking at these racial identity terms, an image of how Rodger views people based on skin color emerges. Within Rodger’s hierarchy he places ‘whiteness’ as a factor that makes people better than others and believes himself to be better than others because he is half white, as presented in the following paragraph regarding an African American boy:

How could an inferior, ugly black boy be able to get a white girl and not me? I am beautiful, and I am half white myself. I am descended from British aristocracy. He is descended from slaves. I deserve more... if this ugly black filth was able to have sex with a blonde white girl at the age of thirteen while I’ve had to suffer virginity all my life, then this just proves how ridiculous the female gender is. They would give themselves to this filthy scum, but they reject ME? The injustice! (Rodger, “Part 6”)

The loaded use of *inferior*, *ugly*, *filth*, and *scum* to describe this boy are racist and indicate that Rodger has racist views. He quickly changes the focus, however, to condemn the boy’s girlfriend and, by extension, all of the ‘female gender.’ In this same paragraph, he also belittles women by stating that they are *ridiculous* for rejecting Rodger but instead *giving*

*themselves* to people he views as lower standing than him. Although also a racist, Rodger's focus is on women and is most willing to convert discussion of race into discussions of gender. Rodger only considers women interesting in relation to sexuality and believes that white women are the natural property of (half) white men.

The sentiments presented about African Americans here mirrors Rodger's thoughts on Hispanics. He questions how "an inferior Mexican guy [can] be able to date a white blonde girl," especially considering "it was a dark-skinned Mexican guy dating a hot blonde girl" ("Part 6"). The continued use of *inferior* to describe both these ethnicities further supports the idea that Rodger has a racial hierarchy in mind where especially dark-skinned people are put lower than him because he is part white.

Even though Rodger is half Asian, he harbors negative views about Asian people and feels superior because he is part white. When seeing a "full-blooded Asian" get the attention of a white girl at a party, Rodger questions how "an ugly Asian attract the attention of a white girl, while a beautiful Eurasian like myself never had any attention from them?" ("21 years old"). Here, the only deciding factor that makes him *beautiful* and the Asian man *ugly* is the fact that he is of *Eurasian* heritage. Another example of his presentation of white superiority is when discussing his mixed racial background stating that "I am half White, half Asian, and this made me different from the normal fully-white kids that I was trying to fit in with" ("Part 2", "9 years old" section). His use of *normal* to describe the white kids suggests that he views them almost as a blueprint to the perfect specimen he wishes to be.

The identity term *white* is mainly used in reference to *white girls*. White is linked with girls 12 out of the 16 times the specific word was used in Rodger's manifesto. The other incidents refer back to Rodger and others being half white and to the "normal fully white kids" discussed previously. This connection between these two identity terms portray his focus on white women, and the importance of 'whiteness' is mainly in reference to girls' beauty or the pecking order for their attention. Additionally, Rodger states that "white girls are the only girls I'm attracted to, especially the blondes" ("21 Years old"). The identity terms relating to women are used most in Rodger's manifesto, making up 1.09 percent of the word count and serving as a primary focus with a vast majority of paragraphs relating to these words. As the document *Search Terms* in the Appendix demonstrates, Rodger has a more substantial use of the female pronouns *she* and *her* than the other perpetrators, which does hike up his percentages within this category a little due to some examples being purely narratively in nature. However, including these terms within the female gender category does

serve as a further indication of his vast focus on women and his need for detailing the women surrounding him.

While Rodger represents women as beautiful and desired, they are also portrayed as “vicious, stupid, cruel animals who take delight in [his] suffering and starvation” who have “deprived [him] of an enjoyable youth, while giving their love and sex to other boys” (“21 Years Old”). These descriptions paint women as malicious beings that are out to get him, while simultaneously dehumanizing them to the level of animals. The use of *deprived* also implies that women have taken his deserved enjoyment from him, and by *giving* sex and love, it is implicit that these are things to possess. Towards the end of the manifesto, Rodger begins to explicitly express his thoughts on womankind and their place in the world:

I concluded that women are flawed. There is something mentally wrong with the way their brains are wired, as if they haven't evolved from animal-like thinking. They are incapable of reason or thinking rationally. They are like animals, completely controlled by their primal, depraved emotions and impulses. That is why they are attracted to barbaric, wild, beast-like men. They are beasts themselves. Beasts should not be able to have any rights in a civilized society. (Rodger, “21 Years Old”).

Once again, Rodger dehumanizes women by expressing that they are unevolved animalistic beasts without the ability to think rationally. Furthering this notion of dehumanization is the use of the simile *Women are like a plague that must be quarantined*, which compares the entire gender to a disease that can threaten humanity. This paragraph also highlights the group of men Rodger despises, which are the men he believes women are choosing over him with regard to sex and relationships. These men are described as *barbaric*, *wild*, *beast-like*, *stupid*, and *degenerate*, which separates them from the few people Rodger views as intellectuals like himself. This implies that the men women would be forced to mate with, if Rodger's plans were set in motion, would be intelligent people like himself instead of the *beasts* they choose by themselves.

Rodger repeatedly blames women, as well as the men they are involved with, by stating that he gave them and society second chances to give him what he deserved, and by not doing so, he was forced to go through with his attack. He writes that “I wanted to give women and humanity one more chance to accept me and give me a chance to have a pleasurable youth” by going out one more time, but if it resulted in “going back to my room as a lonely virgin, I will have no choice but to plan my Retribution” (“21 Years Old”). Further, he states that he “was giving the female gender one last chance to provide [him] with



the pleasures [he] deserved from them” (“21 Years Old”) and that “women’s rejection of [him] was a declaration of war” (“22 Years Old”). Through statements like these, Rodger puts the accountability of his actions over on women by presenting it as a ‘chance’ for them to stop him from having to go through with his plan if they were to give him attention and love. The use of *declaration of war* suggests that women are the aggressors forcing him to respond with violence to their attack, while in reality, Rodger decides to harm others because of his insecurities and lack of success. When describing his plan of action, he declares his second phase as his “War on Women,” where the mission is to “punish all females for the crime of depriving [him] of sex” (“22 Years Old”). Here, *depriving* is once again used to portray sex with women as something Rodger is entitled to, and by not giving it to him, women are seen as villains. This notion of women being the aggressors and Rodger a blameless victim is further supported in his statements deeming himself “the true victim in all of this” and that he is “the good guy” who “wasn’t the one who struck first” (“Epilogue”).

The motivation behind Rodger’s attack can be summed up as misogyny and sexual jealousy. Multiple times throughout the last part of his manifesto, Rodger expresses how he wished to hurt women, who did not acknowledge him, and couples that acted romantically around him. At one point, Rodger told a friend that he wanted revenge on the popular guys who had girlfriends and that he wished to “flay them alive, to strip the skin off their flesh and make them scream in agony as punishment for living a better life” (“20 Years Old”). Rodger’s racism is also prevalent, but the context of identity-term usages shows a tendency to convert race-talk to gender-talk and move discussions of race into the larger and more consuming misogyny of the narrative.

### ***Roof Analysis***

**Use of Pronouns.** As in Rodger’s manifesto, Roof’s text uses the pronoun *I* most frequently, with the word totaling 2.25 percent of the total word count, as presented in Table 2. This indicates a high level of self-interest and a wish to narrate from his point of view. By looking at the results yielded from screening these *I*-statements, Roof paints a picture of how his ideology developed. He starts by stating that he “was not raised in a racist home or environment” however, being a white person in a Southern state, he had a “racial awareness, simply because of the numbers of negroes in this part of the country” (Roof, first paragraph). By stating this in the very first line, Roof might be trying to avoid people saying that his upbringing is the only reason for his ideology and the sole motivation behind his attack. A focal point in his narrative is the death of African American teenager Trayvon Martin in 2012.

Roof “kept hearing and seeing his name,” and after looking up the case, he “was unable to understand what the big deal was” because it “was obvious that Zimmerman [the shooter] was in the right” (second paragraph).

Further, Roof states that this sparked his interest in “Black on White crime,” which promptly took him to far-right websites that included “pages upon pages of these brutal black on White murders” (second paragraph). His statements here serve as an intriguing testimony to how easy it is to practically stumble upon sites and forums that present distorted facts and presentations of events. Roof’s manifesto argues that the easy accessibility of distorted and racist web sites contributes to the users’ radicalization. In addition, he includes both the name of the site, *the Council of Conservative Citizens*, and the search terms he used in his manifesto, thus enabling readers of his work to access these sites, furthering their spread.

Through the *I*-statements, it is possible to see Roof’s motives for carrying out his attack. He states that “I have no choice” and “I am not in the position to, alone, go into the ghetto and fight” (Roof, “An Explanation”), presenting his actions as a necessity while also giving some insight into his choice of targets in the attack. Seemingly, this statement implies that he decided on the church as a target because he would have the possibility to do more harm there than in the ‘ghetto.’ He claims to have chosen Charleston as the location “because it is [the] most historic city in [his] state, and at one time had the highest ratio of blacks to Whites in the country” (Roof, “An Explanation”). This assertion indicates that his choice is symbolic because it targeted a place of historical importance for African Americans, and it seems crucial for Roof to ‘take back’ this area where white people were not the majority.

Roof also uses *we* often, and it accounts for a total of 1.15 percent of the word count, which indicates a strong sense of connection to his in-group. The referents of the *we*-statements are white Americans who are used as a contrast to other groups in the country that he does not view as equal such as African Americans and Jewish people. Roof directly states that “I dont (sic) deny that we are in fact superior” and argues that “we dominated other peoples” in the past (“Blacks” section). Roof also includes white Southerners in his *we*-statements, arguing that “the South is beyond saving, that we have too many blacks here” (“Blacks” section). Here, *we* refers to white Americans from states in the South, while African Americans are portrayed as the Other and as an invading force due to the use of *beyond saving*. Roof seems to indicate that the South has suffered a hostile takeover by the African American population. Further, he creates a separation between white Americans and the Jewish community when stating “How about we protect the White race and stop fighting for the jews(sic)” (Roof, “Patriotism”). Here *we* is exclusively white Christians.

As a contrast to these two high-frequency pronouns, indicating a focus on himself and his group, the second most used pronoun in Roof's manifesto is *they*, which is used to signal those he views as the out-groups. The data in Table 2 displays the frequency of *they* as 1.27 percent of the manifesto's word count, making this the document with the highest rate of this pronoun out of the four analyzed. The groups that are the referents in Roof's *they*-statements are African Americans, Jews, Hispanics, East Asians, and white people. The first two groups are viewed as problematic because they continuously think of the fact that they are their race or religion, with Roof stating that "Just like niggers, most jews (sic) are always thinking about the fact that they are jewish (sic)" ("Jews" section). Further, Roof states that another problem with Jewish people "is that they network" and that "They are enigma(sic)" ("Jews" section), creating a narrative that portrays them as scheming and calculating, which he sees as a threat to the white population. Hispanics are seemingly a bit better than these groups because "They have respect for White beauty" and that it is the 'whiteness' seen in some of these people that makes up for the slightly positive attitude towards them, however "they are still our enemies" (Roof, "Hispanics"). The situations where white people are referred to as *they* mainly revolve around cases where Roof seemingly does not agree with the actions of white Americans. For instance, when addressing the popularity of moving to the suburbs, Roof expresses that he views this as white people "Running [away] because they are too weak, scared, and brainwashed to fight" to keep the cities that they built ("Blacks" section). These white *brainwashed* Americans seem to represent those who share his race and citizenship, but not his ideology or political stance.

Although the pronoun *us* is used at the low rate of 0.29 percent in Roof's manifesto, every *us*-statement in the document refers to white people, which serves as an affirmation of his sense of community within his race. In these statements, the implied Other that the grouping *us* separates from is African Americans, as illustrated clearly in the segregation paragraph where most of the *us*-statements occur:

Segregation was not a bad thing. It was a defensive measure. Segregation did not exist to hold back negroes. It existed to protect us from them. And I mean that in multiple ways. Not only did it protect us from having to interact with them, and from being physically harmed by them, but it protected us from being brought down to their level. Integration has done nothing but bring Whites down to level of brute animals. (Roof, "Blacks" section).

This paragraph places white people as Roof's preferred in-group by the use of *us* and African Americans as the out-group through the use of *them*. The use of words such as *defensive measure*, *protect*, and being *harmed by them* shifts the viewpoint from white people being the aggressors, with regards to the history of slavery and later segregation, onto the African Americans as being the hostile part, and white people needed protection from them. In addition to this, Roof further dehumanizes African Americans by comparing them to *brute animals*, which also adds to the narrative presentation of them as terrifying antagonists who needs to be controlled.

**Description of Victims.** By looking at the identity term data presented in Table 3, it is clear that the main focus of Roof's manifesto is on race and ethnicity, specifically on white and black people, as these terms account for 2.17 and 1.31 percent of the total word count respectively. He is the only perpetrator who uses the category *white* with any real frequency with *white* being his most frequently used identity category and the ninth most used word in his entire manifesto, as seen in Table 4. Roof presents white people as victims being forced out of places they are entitled to and being treated like lower standing than they are. Slavery is described as hurting the descendants of white people more than the African American community by stating that the adverse reactions towards white people are "based on historical lies, exaggerations and myths," that the lives of slaves were not as bad as it has been presented, "Yet every White person is treated as if they had a slave owning ancestor" (Roof, "Blacks"). He further paints a picture of white accomplishments being ignored while "anything important done by a black person in history, it is always pointed out that they were black" (Roof, "Blacks"). The image of white people as innocent victims is portrayed further in the suburbs paragraph describing how white people are running away from the cities, leaving behind "White people forced by economic circumstances to live among negroes" (Roof, "blacks"). Among this population, Roof argues, white children will be bullied for being white. This notion is an interesting angle to this situation, rather than looking at it as white people affording to move to the suburbs and minorities not having the economic standing to do the same, Roof's focus is only on the unfortunate white people forced to live like African Americans. The extensive use of the term *white* showcases this same belief that 'whiteness' is superior, which also is made clear through Roof's focus on how 'white' other ethnic and religious groups are throughout the manifesto and values these people according to how white they are.

One thing to note in Roof's manifesto is that he consequently capitalizes *white* while not doing the same for *Black*, *Hispanic*, and *Jews* when referencing these groups of people.

This formatting choice can be seen as a way of putting white people higher than the other groups of people, consequently making the Other less important by not using a capital letter.

Compared to the others that write about African Americans, Roof uses especially derogatory terms when referring to them as “niggers” and “negroes,” which are terms that carry negative connotations related to the history of slavery and abuse of African Americans (“Black” section). Throughout the manifesto, Roof describes African Americans as a lower standing race of aggressive and unintelligent people. He claims that “Niggers are stupid and violent,” “have lower Iqs (sic), lower impulse control” and also states that it is not true “that niggers were treated terribly throughout history by Whites” and “that segregation was an evil and oppressive institution” (“Blacks” section). The segregation paragraph above further exemplifies how African Americans are portrayed as harmful and animalistic beings that white people need to be protected from as well as stating that they are of lower standing.

Roof references both Asians and Hispanics in specific paragraphs, however, the only Asians he refers to are East-Asians, and based on his writing, he means *Latinos* rather than *Hispanics*. This latter point is based on him saying that “There is good White blood worth saving in Uruguay, Argentina, Chile and even Brasil (sic).” The term *Hispanic* refers to Spanish heritage and language. In contrast, *Latino* refers to people of Latin American descent, making the general Brazilian population *Latino* but not necessarily *Hispanic* due to the national language being Portuguese and not Spanish. The misuse of terms might be an oversight, or it could serve as an indication of the way many people misuse the term *Hispanic* by not knowing the definitions, and by that mislabeling and misrepresenting people. Nevertheless, with regards to Roof’s presentation of *Hispanics*, he states that “a good portion of hispanics (sic) are White” and that these people “make up the elite of most hispanic (sic) countries” (“Hispanics”) furthering the notion that ‘whiteness’ has a direct correlation to how respectable a person is. When discussing East Asians, Roof asserts that they “are by nature very racist and could be great allies of the White race” (“East Asians”), signifying that what makes these people valuable is that they share the same negative attitudes towards the same groups of people as Roof and other white supremacists.

One clear distinction between Roof and the other three perpetrators is that he is the only one to include any references to religion with a 0.50 percent of the word count in his manifesto being related to Jewish people. As discussed, Roof views Jews as cunning and preoccupied with thinking of themselves as minorities. However, he does state that “Unlike many White naitonalists (sic), I am of the opinion that the majority of American and European jews (sic) are white” (Roof, “Jews”). First of all, Roof aligns himself with white

nationalists as his in-group in this statement, even though his beliefs of this specific subject differ slightly from their typical views. Second, the use of *white* brings up a question of how white supremacists usually categorize who are regarded as *white*, seeing as it is based on their *opinions* rather than only heritage. The following statement that “The problem is that Jews look White, and in many cases are White, yet they see themselves as minorities” (Roof, “Jews”), further signal his assertion that they are sly because they can hide among the white people while not being a part of that group.

Roof does not show any interest in gender or immigration, with most references to the male category being examples using *man* to represent a general person and not as a comment on the gender itself.

### ***Harper-Mercer Analysis***

**Use of Pronouns.** Harper-Mercer follows the pattern typical to all the manifestos in that he uses *I* more than any other personal pronoun, with it taking up 3.15 percent of the entire manifesto. By using the *word list* function of AntConc to view the manifesto’s most frequently used words, its data show that *I* is the word used with the second-highest frequency in the entire document. This reflects the tendencies seen in multiple manifestos of a substantial focus from the author on presenting his views and reasons behind the attack by writing from their perspective. By examining Harper-Mercer’s I-statements, it is clear that he views himself as unsuccessful in life up to this point, that he has “always been the most hated person in the world” and that his “whole life has been a lonely enterprise... And here I am, 26, with no friends, no job, no girlfriend, a virgin” (“My Story”). These statements are similar to many of those made by Rodger in his manifesto, and Harper-Mercer has been influenced by Rodger, in both ideology and writing his manifesto. It is not known if he found Rodger after looking for someone with the same views as he already had, or if reading Rodger’s writing, and others like his, influenced the ideology of Harper-Mercer. Still, he continuously puts himself in the same category as mass killers who went through with attacks before him and identifies with this group of people as his in-group.

When writing about his fruitless love life and general failures in life, Harper-Mercer wrote that “I long ago realized that society likes to deny people like me these things. People who are elite, people who stand with the gods. People like Elliot Rodger, Vester Flanagan, The Columbine kids, Adam Lanza and Sung Cho” (“My Story”). First of all, he creates a direct connection between him and these perpetrators by using *people like me* and continuing with *people like Elliot Rodger*... Second of all, he blames society by stating that these attacks

happen because society *denies* them these triumphs in life, as if something that is rightfully theirs is taken away. And lastly, Harper-Mercer puts these assailants on a pedestal by calling this group *elite* and *Gods*, ultimately calling himself that as well due to his insertion of himself in that group. He further states that these men were “denied everything they deserved” (“My Story”), which created a dichotomy between what these men deserved and what they received from life, as well as between these men as a unified group and those who have taken status from them.

With regards to the frequency of word use, two personal pronouns share the second place, namely *you* and *they*, each accounting for 1.13 percent of the manifesto word count. The statistic indicates that in addition to devoting a large percentage of the document to explaining his views, Harper-Mercer also speaks directly to the reader more than any of the other perpetrators. This use of *I* and *you* signify a more informal tone to the writing and a sense that Harper-Mercer is speaking directly to an audience he wishes to influence. This can also be seen in the structuring of his manifesto where he lists his interests, favorite musicians and movies, and has included questions and answers about himself, which he assumes “the media will love” (Harper-Mercer, “Interests”). In this *Interests* paragraph, he directs the reader to a website called Kat.cr, which is a similar forum to 4chan and 8kun, and includes his username on the site specifically for readers to look at his content. This suggests that Harper-Mercer has a more comprehensive media strategy than the other mass shooters, encouraging readers to actively ‘follow’ his online activity in the manner in which one might ‘follow’ a friend’s Instagram account.

The tone in Harper-Mercer’s writing also signifies a more colloquial language use, through expressions such as “Ah yes dear reader,” “Joy Joy Joy!” (“Blackness”) and “For those wondering, I do not have social media” (section after “FAQ”). The first two examples can give associations to a notebook-style of writing which indicates a friendly relationship between author and reader. At the same time, the latter example presents the notion that Harper-Mercer expects the readers to be of the same mindset as him and that they will be interested in finding more of his thoughts elsewhere after reading the manifesto. This assumption of receiving notoriety and stardom within the community after his attack is supported further by his need to include information about his interests and answer questions that he believed others would like to know. Harper-Mercer further states that he hopes that people have “enjoyed it and find inspiration in it” (section after “FAQ”) and “I hope to inspire the masses with this” (“My Story”), referencing his manifesto. These statements support the notion that he expects to be a source of inspiration following the attack. Additionally, Harper-

Mercer employs quite a direct contact with this implied reader, stating that “I was once like you, a loser, rejected by society” (“My Story”), which discloses that he expects people with similar ideologies and personal struggles to find his manifesto and be the ones that are inspired by it and his actions. This focus on becoming an inspiration to others might be linked to his fascination with previous attacks and that he has “been interested in mass shooters for years” (Harper-Mercer, “Other Mass Shooters”).

The 1.13 percent of the document that makes up for the use of *they* include a division as to whom Harper-Mercer is referring to when using the word. One-third of the usage, six out of eighteen times, *they* refers to his claimed in-group of other mass shooters. A couple of these instances include the remarks made about how this group was denied their desires by the society, while the remaining four are linked to their attacks more directly. These latter instances are presented more like a criticism of a lack of efficiency or success in their attacks, through statements such as “they don’t work fast enough” and that “They shoot wildly instead of targeted blasts” (Harper-Mercer, “Other Mass Shooters”). These statements showcase his interest in other mass shooters. At the same time, it also supports the argument that Harper-Mercer wants his manifesto to be an inspiration to others by including notes on efficient attacks based on previous shootings as a way to learn from their mistakes.

Another third of the *they*-statements are focused on the target group of African Americans, whom Harper-Mercer views as the threat to society. He paints a picture of black women as being “hapless to the dupes of the black mans (sic) conniving machinations” (“Blackness”), making them seem like helpless victims under the black man’s ‘ruse.’ The same portrayal of powerlessness is also made for women in general with the assertion that “Black men have corrupted the women of this planet” (Harper-Mercer, “Blackness”). Further, Harper-Mercer’s *they*-statements regarding African American males say that “they should be executed” and that within the next century “there won’t be any black men, they will all be in jail or dead” (“Blackness”), demonstrating that he wants a world without any black men at all.

Most of the remaining examples of *they*-statements reference the “demonic forces” that Harper-Mercer claims to be influenced by, stating that “They will give me the power that I seek. They have always been there, speaking to me on the sidelines, controlling me” and that “they’ve told me what to do” (“My Story”). This is in reference to his guaranteed “success in Hell” (“My Story”) following his attack, and the *they* referenced here are the demons in hell that is waiting for him to join them after death. These statements follow the comments where he is shifting the blame of the shooters onto others by saying that society has forced them to do as they did. Harper-Mercer states that he was “forced to align... with demonic forces”



("My Story"), where the use of *forced* points back to this notion of society leaving him no way to be a moral citizen but rather pushing him to join these dark forces. By stating that he is aligned with demonic forces, with them speaking to him and controlling him, he is consequently putting the responsibility for his actions on these 'forces' and subsequently blaming the society for the bloodshed that will occur.

Throughout the manifesto, Harper-Mercer does not use the personal pronouns *us* and *we* much, with a frequency of 0.19 and 0.31 percent respectively. The three instances were all about this beforementioned "darker world that welcomes us" ("My Story"), where Harper-Mercer uses *us* to signal that the referents are his in-group. These few examples further showcase his alignment with the dark forces and that he, and the perpetrators he regards as his equals, were forced to be bad because "society left us no recourse, no way to be good" ("My Story"). With regards to the use of *we*, four out of five examples reference his in-group of other mass shooters directly. One of these cases occur after a paragraph enticing others to become serial killers if they do not have access to firearms, Harper-Mercer then states that "Human life means nothing, we are what matters" ("My Story"). This use of *we* suggests a double meaning, firstly to the forces waiting on these killers on the other side, but also as a collective *we*, referencing the group of killers as a group. Another set of *we*-statements relates to a Ted Bundy quote on serial killers, expressing that "we are your sons, your brothers, we are everywhere" (Harper-Mercer, "My Story"). However, this is not a correct reciting of the quote where Harper-Mercer's use of 'brothers' is actually 'husbands' in the Bundy quote, which can be an oversight, paraphrasing, or an intended change in order to not include the men who are able to be in relationships with girls seeing as that is one thing Harper-Mercer repeatedly express as being denied to this group by society.

**Description of Victims.** Data presented in Table 3 makes it is clear that Harper-Mercer's manifesto's main focus is on the identity term *Black*, with it being used the most at a 2.27 percent frequency and the highest of all the manifestos. As seen in Table 4, the word *Black*, without its plural form or synonyms being included, is the third most used word in the entire manifesto accounting for 1.89% of the document alone. This focus is similar to that of Roof, although Harper-Mercer does not use the identity term *White* as a contrast in the same manner as Roof. Four instances in Harper-Mercer's manifesto refers to *blackness*, with one being a reference to himself being mixed race and his mother being a black woman. This specific example sheds more light on his ideology regarding African Americans, seeing as he states that "thankfully my blackness didn't come from a man. If it did my brain would have been fried" ("Blackness"). This further indicates a mindset of seeing black men as inferior

and destructive beings, while portraying black women as harmless and that these dreadful traits of 'blackness' are inherited from men and not women. The African American women are sexualized through Harper-Mercer's statements that they should have "left the beast on the alter and dated a white man" and that the "number of ebony lesbians will increase" ("Blackness") after the eradication of black men, with the latter of these statements being followed by "Joy Joy Joy!". These statements set the tone for black women being viewed as sexual objects, either as possible girlfriends for Harper-Mercer and fellow white men or, as the use of *ebony lesbians* could imply, as a source for their enjoyment. He further states that the "black woman can only be saved by the castration/elimination of the black man" ("Blackness"), which supports the notion that he views women as helpless bystanders in need of saving as well as the men being the dangerous threat.

Although Rodger only used the identity term *Black* at a low 0.01 percent of the total word count in his manifesto, Harper-Mercer's language mirrors Rodger's descriptions of African Americans. Through his use of *Black*, Harper-Mercer portrays African American men as "the most vile creature on the planet," "a beast beyond measure," "wicked," "foolish," and "a wily beast" ("Blackness"), consequently dehumanizing them by comparing them to unintelligent wild animals that are disruptive to society.

Harper-Mercer also uses pronouns linked to the gender category of identity terms, with references to men and women taking up 1.76 and 0.82 percent of the manifesto respectively. This focus is similar to that of Rodger, who is the only other perpetrator with high frequencies within this category. Unlike Rodger, however, the overall data places gender as a secondary focus for Harper-Mercer, as race is his primary obsession. Also like Rodger, however, Harper-Mercer's focus on African Americans is directly connected to their gender. Women are apparently not affected by 'blackness' as men are. In Harper-Mercer's manifesto 'blackness' makes men unintelligent beasts. African American women, however, are handled in much the same way as white women are. Other references in the texts to *girls* and *girlfriends* reinforce the observation that Harper-Mercer views women as sexual objects and that this is based in a sense of entitlement. For example, he writes that "girls would rather go with alpha thug black men" ("My Story") and that "girls just didn't want me" ("FAQ"), indicating that women are only important to the degree that they fail to pay attention to Harper-Mercer.

The distinction between African American men and women can also be seen within the male gender category. Twenty-two out of 28 usages relate to negative depictions of black men. Harper-Mercer also includes photos representing "good black and bad black" (section

after “FAQ”). A picture of Stacey Dash is the ‘good’ representation and Gucci Mane as the ‘bad’ representation of blackness. These examples do not come with any other explanation as to what makes these individuals ‘good’ or ‘bad,’ but it could be based on their respective genders and Harper-Mercer’s belief that women are less negatively marked by blackness than men.

Harper-Mercer signals an ideological hierarchy by sorting groups of people and their standing in society. He has placed African American men at the very bottom of the ranking and himself and his fellow mass shooters at the top as *elite* and *Gods*. He does not have any focus on religion or immigration, with none of these categories are being mentioned in the manifesto. Harper-Mercer does include a few mentions of the ethnic categories of *Hispanic*, *White*, and *Asian* people, giving an insight into his hierarchical ranking of racial categories. The Latino population is placed above African American men, as they “can be put into remedial education and be made smart” (“Blackness”), but they are still ranked lower than white people. The use of *made smart* implies that these people are, by nature, less intelligent than others but have the potential of learning through the assistance of ‘smarter’ people. This example follows a section relating to African American men, where he states that “at least the latino (sic)” can be taught, in comparison to the black men who cannot be ‘helped.’

Harper-Mercer places white and Asian people in the same ranking and above both Latinos and African American men, stating that he hopes “all mixed folk have the sense not to touch the black man but to instead find themselves a good white/Asian man” (“Blackness”). The use of a slash here indicates an equal standing, which is further supported by him stating that “Asian and Indian women are traditional and good. So are the men” and that he has “always respected them” (“Blackness”). Once again, his statements regarding women only concern them finding men and choosing ‘good’ men, such as himself. The only reason given for stating that Asian and Indian women are good is that they are *traditional*, a word which could indicate that they simply do as expected and are not disobedient, further supporting the notion that he perceives women as domestic or sexual objects.

### ***Crusius Analysis***

**Use of Pronouns.** As seen in Table 1, Crusius mainly use the personal pronouns *I* and *they* in his writing, which is a pattern common to all the manifestos. The greater use of *I* than any other personal pronouns, totaling 1.36 percent of the word count, reflects the fact that Crusius is writing about himself, and sees his manifesto as an opportunity to create a persona where he is in charge of the narrative, explaining the reasons behind his actions, the activities

he plans to initiate, and his desired outcomes. Still, Crusius is the perpetrator who uses *I* the least of all the shooters with a 0.89 percent difference compared to Roof, who has the second-lowest percentage, and a massive 4.26 percent difference compared to Rodger, who has the highest percentage.

Within these self-focused categories of *I* and *me*, Crusius expresses that he believes himself to be *defending* the country and that he was inspired by the lone wolf manifesto left by Brenton Tarrant, who carried out a mass shooting in Christchurch, New Zealand earlier that same year. The very first sentence of Crusius' manifesto is "I support the Christchurch shooter and his manifesto," and he later states that "the Hispanic community was not my target before I read *The Great Replacement*", which is a reference to Tarrant's manifesto (Crusius, "About me").

Most of Crusius' I-statements reflect his thoughts about his actions rather than his views of himself personally. His intended violence is explained as a necessary evil that has to be done to *save* the country, which is expressed in statements such as "I am honored to head the fight to reclaim my country from destruction" ("Personal Reasons") and "I am simply defending my country from cultural and ethnic replacement brought on by an invasion" ("About me"). The choice of using words such as *honored*, *reclaim*, and *simply defending* to describe his actions paints them out to be highly needed and justified, while using the words *destruction*, *replacement*, and *invasion* as a means to describe the opposition paints a picture of aggressive and cruel invaders. This type of word choice is made in order to put the blame on the group of people the victims represent, making it seem as their *invasion* and subsequent cultural and ethnic *replacement* is forcing him to go through with an attack to save his country. The focus on this replacement appears to be influenced by Tarrant's manifesto, which is titled "The Great Replacement" and is a part of a growing conspiracy theory on the subject that has become increasingly popular within the white supremacist community (Darby, 2019).

When looking at the pronouns that signal the groups Crusius identifies strongly with, one notices both political identifications – with Donald Trump, for example – and geographical allegiances – with Texans and Americans as a whole. Crusius makes specific remarks regarding Trump saying that "some will blame the President" and his rhetoric for the attack, and he expresses that he has not been influenced by him (Crusius, "Personal Reasons"). Even though he asserts that his views are his own and not influenced by the rhetoric of the President, he still uses the term "fake news," which was popularized by Trump, when writing about how the media will portray the attack (Crusius, "Personal Reasons"). This

indicates that he, to some extent, pays attention to the President's choice of words when addressing those with opposing views on his actions or his ideology. Crusius' association to Texans and Americans as a group come to light through his statement such as "my beloved Texas," "our country," and "my fellow Americans" ("Personal Reasons"), as well as him putting these groupings as the only referents for the term *us* and *we* in contrast to the political parties and immigrants he sees as the threat to his in-groups. Though these group-signaling pronouns are quite low in the frequency of use, with a total of 0.21 percent collectively, it is still an interesting indication as to who he sees as his community.

By looking at who Crusius refers to when using the polarizing pronoun *they* it is clear that he has excluded many from being an American or a Texan, even though these terms should technically refer to all American citizens and citizens of Texas respectively. *They*-statements are the second most frequent pronoun in terms of use in Crusius' manifesto making up 1.02 percent of the total word count (Table 2). The vast majority of these statements refer to immigrants and Hispanics, either about these groups of people directly or about the political issues Crusius claims are related to immigration. These claims are often work-related, with Crusius asserting that competition in the job market from immigrants and visa holders "has made a very difficult situation even worse for natives as they compete in the skilled job market" (Crusius, "Economic Reasons"). Here, "natives" do not refer to Native Americans, but rather American citizens whose families have lived in the country long enough for Crusius to not view them in connection to their immigration history like he does with the children of Hispanic immigrants. This separation in "Americanness" also come to light in his claim that although "migrants do the dirty work, their kids typically don't," but instead the children of immigrants "want to live the American Dream which is why they get college degrees and fill higher-paying skilled positions" (Crusius, "Economic Reasons"). Seemingly, there is a division between the children of these immigrants who are not regarded as equal to the "natives," even though most will be born and raised in the country, and are portrayed as taking jobs that are not theirs by going away from the type of jobs their parents had when first entering the country. Further, Crusius states that corporations "lobby for even more illegal immigration" because "they need to keep replenishing the low-skilled labor pool" ("Economic Reasons"), which is why he deems corporations to be a part of the problem by pushing for more immigration resulting in more children of immigrants who seek away from these lower professions. Crusius' political issues also revolve around immigration, and his fears primarily focus on how the Democratic party will take control of the country as a one-party state and that "They have already begun the transition by pandering heavily to the

Hispanic voting bloc” (Crusius, “Political Reasons”). By doing this, they will turn traditionally Republican states Democratic, and this is also why, in Crusius’ opinion, the Democratic party is pro-immigration.

These main antagonists presented in this manifesto are also portrayed in the *them* usages, where one refers to second and third-generation Hispanic immigrants forming “interracial unions at much higher rates than average” and that this is one reason to “send them back” (Crusius, “Personal Reasons”). The second example of using *them* concern the Democratic party being able to win all future presidential elections if Texas and other states with a “heavy Hispanic population” turn away from the Republican party (Crusius, “Political Reasons”). The fear Crusius expresses here also appears in one *they*-statement referring to the Democratic Party saying that “they intend to use open borders, free healthcare for illegals, citizenship and more to enact a political coup by importing and then legalizing millions of new voters” (Crusius, “Political Reasons”). Crusius states that this creates a vicious circle of even more immigration because, as beforementioned, corporations will then push for more immigration because only immigrants will settle with these low-skilled jobs that “Americans can’t survive on anyway” (“Economic Reasons”).

Even though the personal pronoun *you* is used only 0.13 percent of the manifesto, every mention of *you* is used to speak directly to the reader with an implication that this reader is one that shares his mindset and wish to follow in his footsteps. These sentences and the sections they are from read more like a “how-to” guide, advising the reader to choose targets that they have a chance of eliminating rather than targeting people and places where there might, for instance, be security guards with better equipment. Crusius wrote that “our founding fathers have endowed me with the rights needed to save our country,” which implicates the Second Amendment as a reason for him being able to go through with his attack (Crusius, “Personal Reasons”).

**Description of Victims.** By looking at the data presented in Table 3, it is easy to see the focus of Crusius’ writing and ideology. Out of the ten categories of terms examined, he only uses word from four of the categories, and the reference to a “man” was simply a misspelling of “police *man*” (Crusius, “Personal Reasons”) and not a reference to male identity. By excluding this one example of *man*, Crusius only mentions three identity terms in his manifesto - *Hispanics*, *White people*, and *immigrants*. In Crusius’ text, Hispanics and immigrants are the same people, and he does not distinguish between the two. There are eleven direct references to immigrants within the manifesto, totaling 0.47 percent, yet the only

group of people used in connection with the terms is Hispanics. The only time where he implies that immigrants come from all over the world is in the paragraph titled “Reaction”:

Statistically, millions of migrants have returned to their home countries to reunite with the family they lost contact with when they moved to America. They come here as economic immigrants, not for asylum reasons. This is an encouraging sign that the Hispanic population is willing to return to their home countries if given the right incentive. An incentive that myself and many other patriotic Americans will provide. (Crusius, “Reaction”)

Although Crusius here uses the plural noun *countries*, it is only the *Hispanic population* will leave the United States if incentivized. Therefore, this statement in which the plural form could indicate a desire for all immigrants to leave, serves as another example of Crusius conflating the terms immigrant and Hispanic instead. This paragraph also illustrates further how he generally does not view Hispanics as Americans regardless of their immigration status or how long their families have been in the country, seeing as the goal of this “incentive” is to make all citizens of Hispanic heritage leave the United States. The use of the word *incentive* to describe his actions is a way of diminishing the atrocity of what he planned to do by using a positively loaded word making the action sound like encouragement rather than a scare tactic based on targeted shootings.

Crusius also used the term *invaders* as a way of referring to immigrants and Hispanics four times in his manifesto, which links his “mission” to a specifically Christian crusader tradition and also imagines all immigrants and all Hispanics as antagonists to Christendom. In his manifesto, he writes that his shooting will be a reaction to what he calls the “Hispanic invasion of Texas” (Crusius, “About me”). By casting Hispanics as invaders, he legitimizes his actions, making his attack a justified response to an alien threat. When adding together the use of *immigrant*, *Hispanic*, and *invader*, it equals 1.1 percent of the total word count of the manifesto. Taken into consideration that this percentage is only based on using actual words, it leads to a large amount of the manifesto being centered around these terms, and consequently, an extensive part of the document with a focus on this group of people. *The remaining examples of his use of Hispanic* relates to his thoughts that a larger Hispanic population will turn the state, and country, in support of the Democratic party and that immigration politics are a part of the party’s plan to gain control of the country.

Crusius’ use of the term *white* is not directly aimed at white Americans but instead used to compare them to other ethnic groups in the country. The exception to this is the

mention that the media will probably label Crusius as a “white supremacist” (Crusius, “Personal Reasons”). The term *white* is only used two other times, in total adding up to only 0.13 percent of the manifesto. These incidents occur after stating that he does not condone race mixing, referring mainly to Hispanic people who “form interracial unions at much higher rates than average,” alleging that “it destroys genetic diversity and creates identity problems” (Crusius, “Personal Reasons”). Crusius can only see two results, either complete eradication of racial diversity or a geographical separation of people based on ethnicity to keep people from forming interracial relationships. He states that the former of these will either happen if people continue as they are now with racial mixing, resulting in general uniformity, which he does not want, or through eliminating some ethnic groups altogether. However, Crusius finds “the idea of murdering or deporting all non-white Americans” to be “horrific” because many within that category have been occupants of the country for “at least as long as the whites” (Crusius, “Personal Reasons”). Here, he does view people of other races as Americans. However, he does not deem them legitimate citizens seeing as he would rather see them gone. This separation is based purely on the culture and ethnicity of people and not on their immigration status, seeing as his focus is on differentiating between white and non-white Americans instead of legal or illegal citizens.

Crusius sees the United States as a country belonging to white people of European descent, rather than being a melting pot for immigrants and descendants of immigrants from around the world. Within the first paragraph of his manifesto, he declares that Americans have to learn from the “ethnic and cultural destruction brought to the Native Americans by our European ancestors” and take the Hispanic invasion at hand seriously to not end up in the same situation (Crusius, “About me”). One crucial thing to note here is the use of “our European ancestors,” which implies that the in-group are all descendants of European ancestry, and therefore the white population of the United States. This also indicates that he is aware of how imperialism has impacted the native people of the land that makes up the United States today, and the following history of widespread immigration to the country, but still feel like it belongs to the descendants of European immigrants more than other groups of people.

### **General Discussion**

A common trait among all four manifestos is the personal pronoun *I* is prominent and is among the top ten most used words in all the documents, as seen in Table 2 and Table 4. While not unexpected in first-person narrative, the persistent use of *I*-statements shows a



strong self-focus and a desire to be in control of the narratives they present. Within the four manifestos' top ten most used words shown in Table 4, six words occur in all of them – *I, the, to, and, a,* and *of*, with *I* prominent among the other function words. To some extent, this usage pattern is common in personal writing like manifestos. Some authors, however, like Rodger and Crusius, use the pronoun more frequently. This self-focus among lone wolves is also reflected in the findings of Kaati et al. (2016), which discusses Rodger's use of first-person singular pronouns as being quite extensive. The findings of this thesis support Kaati's conclusion that first-person singular pronouns are overused compared to first-person plural or third-person plural in lone wolf manifestos.

Table 3 shows which demographic groups interest the different shooters, and which groups are not in focus. Several of the perpetrators are motivated by misogyny, all by racism, and one by antisemitism. The results yielded from the analysis of the key words reinforce the assertion made by Cohen et al. (2014) that studying key terms will display what fixations the authors have by looking at their frequency. The data in Table 3 presents clear distinctions regarding group hatreds. Both Rodger and Harper-Mercer are concerned with gender and with women. Their sentiments align with those of the 'incel' movement prominent within the online communities they frequented. Both perpetrators viewed their social standing and masculinity as dependent upon their success with women. By portraying females as unintelligent and evil for choosing other men, and by consequently vilifying all women, Rodger and Harper-Mercer feed into the 'incel' movement's notion of being disenfranchised through female rejection (Scaptura & Boyle, 2019). By equating sexual relations with women with self-worth, these men write narratives where their lack of success in love ultimately evolves into deep feelings of rejection. Seemingly, thoughts of sexual insecurity coupled with the evident self-obsession and feeling of superiority, gives rise to the rage against women and others who have success with women.

However, Rodger's primary focus is on women as the antagonists, while Harper-Mercer views men as the main enemy. Connected to Harper-Mercer's focus on men is his predominant focus on race, with a racial war between black and white people taking up much of his narrative. Harper-Mercer states support for Rodger's racist ideas about African Americans. Harper-Mercer often views race through the lens of gender, aligning him with Rodger's misogyny and the racism of Roof and Crusius. Roof is a racist, and race hatred motivates him, although he also expresses antisemitic views. Crusius is concerned with racial and ethnic differences, expressed through anti-immigrant language. The negative portrayals of other people that are shown in all four manifestos mirrors the linguistic indicators of possible

lone wolf offenders as presented by Kaati et al., stating that using more negative words reflecting rage, dominance, and emotions is a common trait among lone wolf offenders (2016).

The only perpetrator to not discuss African Americans at all is Crusius', who has the most specific manifesto thematically speaking with all references to the identity categories related to *Hispanics* and *Immigration*. Crusius is the only perpetrator to have a narrow focus on both of these categories, and the only one interested in *immigration* as a motivating factor for his crimes. Crusius consistently conflates ethnicity with immigration status.

Three of the manifestos make no references to religion, if we exclude Rodger's *catholic* school. Roof, however, mentions Jewish people. His third-highest percentage is found in this category, and he is the only one to link racism to antisemitism. Roof's selection of a church for his crimes might indicate his greater interest in religious motivations.

All manifestos include manipulative methods, mainly by presenting of the perpetrator as a suffering victim and the variously defined Other as the aggressors motivating the attacks. This use of manipulation in discourse supports the notions of van Dijk's (2006) triangulation framework, especially regarding the polarizing representation of different groups. The authors continuously use loaded terms such as *invaders* and *beasts* to describe the others, while stating that they themselves were *rejected* and *forced* to act because of how they were treated or because no one else was standing up against the injustice they see in the world. This is a manipulative way of controlling the narrative, especially when one considers that many manifestos were posted for others in similar situations to see and take as inspiration. By pushing this narrative of themselves, and subsequently, the readers who feel wronged in a similar way, the lone wolves also justify violent ideologies and support the notion that other groups provoke the attacks against themselves.

Additionally, a manifesto is by nature a one-sided account of history and facts, and a common denominator in these manifestos are a habit of stating facts that are not referenced in any way, making it very possible for the perpetrators to present their views as factual. This could lead to impressionable readers taking the accounts for the truth, possibly because they provide a way for people to blame other groups for their real-world problems instead of encouraging legitimate and peaceful action. As presented in van Dijk's (2006) triangulation framework, discourse can be used to intensify ideologies, and that is what these lone wolf manifestos are doing by presenting a narrative in such a one-sided and polarizing manner.

There is evidence that all four perpetrators view themselves as better than others and as part of a superior group, with this superiority often linked to their 'whiteness.' Further, they

all have tendencies to view women as sexual objects for men rather than as individuals of their own. In addition to this, others taking ‘their’ women, in the form of interracial relationships (Harper-Mercer), or simply through women preferring other men (Rodger), is a prominent concern for many of these men. Racism and misogyny form a dangerous mix in many of these narratives.

The analysis of these four manifestos also indicates direct links between lone wolf perpetrators, not in a manner where they have communicated directly, but by the use of similar online forums and reading the manifestos left by others. Harper-Mercer and Crusius might be the best examples of this; they both directly acknowledge that other perpetrators influenced them through online activity. Additionally, Rodger becomes a leading figure in online communities after posting his ideological manifesto online and carrying out an attack. He gains status as a hero within ‘incel’ communities, as well as directly in Harper-Mercer’s manifesto where Harper-Mercer refers to Rodger as a “God” (section after “FAQ”), making Harper-Mercer a representation of the other involuntary virgins inspired by Rodger’s actions. The discourse in these communities exemplifies the notion of naturalization presented by Fairclough (2010). On the online platforms these people frequent, there is often little or no opposition to the divisive, racist, and sexist ideas that are spread and discussed as if they are widespread ideas. This, in turn, makes these mindsets seem legitimate within the group because they are presented as common thoughts shared by many, although they, in reality, represent only a minority. This distortion of the commonality of an idea or a way of thinking is what Fairclough’s approach examines when discussing how naturalization can impact oppressive systems in society.

### **Societal Implications**

After examining the thoughts these perpetrators put to paper, there is a strong indication that they struggle with mental issues that should have been prevented and helped long before they reached the state of mind where mass shootings were seen as solutions. Not only do these perpetrators demonstrate struggles with their self-image and low self-esteem, combined with their self-obsession, but they follow narratives presenting the world as a vicious place out to get them and the groups with which they identify. The presentation of other ethnic groups as *taking over* or *invading* the country share commonalities with conspiracy theories similar to Tarrant’s “Great Replacement” theory that featured in the radicalization of Crusius. This, in addition to the gathering of likeminded men on typical ‘incel’ message boards, demonstrates how they find online communities that support their

vision of the world. Additionally, within these communities and forums, these impressionable men are exposed to many beliefs that further support their struggles and offer up theories about who is to blame for their unhappiness. When looking at discourse produced by men within these groups, it is clear that they should have had mental health interventions long before their ideologies and world views were so radicalized. They were vulnerable men who received ideological guidance from online sites known for extreme views.

The perpetrators chosen for this analysis share many commonalities, such as their similar age, gender, nationality, political views, and race. Harper-Mercer and Rodger were mixed race, however, both men identify as white and spend considerable time explaining how their partial whiteness makes them better than others. Rodger was from a more well-off family, receiving expensive gifts and financial support from both parents, as well as attending movie premieres due to his parents' connections. The other men were from working-class backgrounds. However, whiteness allowed all of them to feel superior to others – women, African Americans, and Hispanics. The shared sense of the threat from other groups who want to take what is rightfully theirs is based on their 'whiteness,' and their belief that they deserve the position of the top of the food chain.

Though they are lone offenders who are not officially part of a group, they are influenced by other perpetrators with similar modus operandi and by online communities. They are connected through their use of the internet as a platform to spread ideas and ideology, as well as directly inform about attacks globally. There are similarities in how they describe their target groups, the online platforms used, and some even directly state whom they were influenced by and in what manner. None of these perpetrators are completely lone offenders, because they are connected through a global network of likeminded people. Members of these communities share the belief that other groups of people are after their power or their place in the social hierarchy. These men learn from each other through posts on message boards, by reading manifestos and watching videos left by perpetrators, at the same time as they can see the response within their online community after such an attack.

By posting their plans for attacking and their reasoning behind it online, it is clear that they want to influence others to do the same. Additionally, it seems as if some assailants also strive for the notoriety other lone wolves have received before them. Harper-Mercer is an excellent example of this as he shows clear signs of being an admirer of mass shooters, leaves instructions for those reading his manifesto, and hopes to be an inspiration. This exemplifies a more significant issue with the online communities surrounding these men, because not only are they used as platforms for influencing others, but they are also creating cults around the

attackers and motivating attacks around the world. The perpetrators used the internet communities to express violent ideologies with indications of wanting to harm others, which adheres to the warning behaviors presented by Kaati et al. (2016), stating that by broadcasting such intentions to others suggests a fixation with the target group and might also indicate the planning of an attack.

Additional studies should be conducted on the use of online platforms as a breeding ground for lone wolf terrorism and the radicalization of impressionable minds. It is crucial to get an understanding of how these individuals use sites like these and in what manner online platforms are supporting the spread of violent ideology. One aspect meriting further research is the difference in forum use patterns by those already radicalized and those who are not yet active in the community, to see if the online communication elicits violent thoughts and behavior, or if they were present in the perpetrators all along. Further analysis should be conducted of the language used in lone wolf manifestos, as well as on online forums with violent ideology, to pick up on 'red flag' behavior and language that is shared by assailants. The role internet platforms play in radicalization and spreading of hateful manifestos requires studying regarding how they are managed and the accountability of those allowing violent rhetoric on their sites. Additionally, there is a need for further study of the use of function words, such as pronouns, and identity terms in lone wolf manifestos, to reveal more of the correlation between word choice and ideology, motivation, and emotional state of the writers.

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## Appendix

### Search Terms

*Complete list of search terms used for the identity terms in Table 3*

	Rodger	Roof	Harper-Mercer	Crusius
Black(s)	8	23	31	0
Blackness	0	0	4	0
African American(s)	1	0	0	0
Negro(es)	0	4	0	0
Nigger(s)	0	5	0	0
Ebony	0	0	1	0
Hispanic(s)	1	8	0	11
Mexican(s)	5	0	0	0
Latino(s)	0	0	1	0
Latina(s)	0	0	0	0
South American(s)	1	0	0	0
White(s)	16	53	2	3
Caucasian(s)	0	0	0	0
Eurasian	1	0	0	0
Asian(s)	10	3	2	0
Oriental(s)	0	0	0	0
Jewish	0	4	0	0
Jew(s)	0	8	0	0
Judaism	0	0	0	0
Muslim(s)	0	0	0	0
Islam	0	0	0	0
Middle Eastern(s)	0	0	0	0
Arab(s)	0	0	0	0
Arabic	0	0	0	0
Christian(s)	0	0	0	0

Christianity	0	0	0	0
Catholic(s)	1	0	0	0
Catholicism	0	0	0	0
Buddhist(s)	0	0	0	0
Buddhism	0	0	0	0
Hindu(s)	0	0	0	0
Hinduism	0	0	0	0
Woman	12	0	3	0
Women	78	2	5	0
Girl(s)	424	0	2	0
Girlfriend(s)	97	0	3	0
Female(s)	30	0	0	0
She	289	0	0	0
Her	226	0	0	0
Man	39	5	12	1
Men	55	1	10	0
Boy(s)	139	1	0	0
Boyfriend(s)	18	0	0	0
Guy(s)	36	0	0	0
Male(s)	11	0	2	0
He	492	2	3	0
Him	245	2	1	0
Jock(s)	11	0	0	0
Immigrant(s)	0	1	0	6
Migrants(s)	0	0	0	5