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The Buffalo Terrorist Attack: Situating Lone Actor Violence into the Militant Accelerationism Landscape

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Executive Summary

On May 14, 2022, 18-year-old Payton Gendron conducted a racially motivated mass shooting at a Tops Friendly Supermarket in Buffalo, NY. This attack, which resulted in the death of ten Black Americans, stands as one among dozens that have been motivated by the militant accelerationism movement. The Accelerationism Research Consortium (ARC) defines militant accelerationism as “a set of tactics and strategies designed to put pressure on and exacerbate latent social divisions, often through violence, thus hastening social collapse.” Using Gendron’s self-published manifesto and Discord “diary” as sources, this report intends to contextualize Gendron’s position within the militant accelerationism landscape and analyze how it influenced this deadly attack.

Key Findings:

- Gendron was motivated to violence by the **Great Replacement conspiracy theory**, which posits that Jewish elites are orchestrating the mass immigration of non-whites into Western countries with the ultimate goal of eliminating the white race.
- The Great Replacement Theory has served as a mobilization to violence factor for **several mass shootings** (e.g., Robert Bowers’ attack in Pittsburgh, United States and Brenton Tarrant’s attack in Christchurch, New Zealand).
- Brenton Tarrant’s Christchurch attack served as the main **tactical inspiration** for Gendron’s attack and Tarrant’s manifesto deeply informed Gendron’s manifesto style and ideological content.
- Gendron is ideologically best understood as a **consumer** of militant accelerationist content and narratives that encourage lone actor violence.
- Gendron is an example of a lone actor that adhered to militant accelerationism tactics and who’s mobilization to violence is best understood as a **product** of digital militant accelerationism ecosystems.

Analyzing Gendron's Pathway to Violence

As with many other militant accelerationism attackers, Gendron is a young white male who mobilized quickly to violence, and was motivated by a collection of ideological concepts rather than one single notion. Gendron expresses interest and association with multiple ideological outlooks, but is predominantly fixated with the Great Replacement Theory. In a demonstration of the potent nature of the Great Replacement narrative as a concept that can mobilize individuals to violence, it took Gendron approximately two years from initial exposure to the Great Replacement Theory to execute a violent attack in its name.

Gendron's course of radicalization began in earnest during "lockdowns" associated with COVID-19 pandemic public health measures in 2020. According to Gendron, he turned to the internet for stimulation while confined at home and his interest in firearms led the then-17-year-old to 4chan's weapons forums¹ in May of 2020. It was on this site that Gendron was first exposed to the Great Replacement Theory,² a conspiracy theory alleging that Jewish elites are orchestrating the mass immigration of non-whites into Western countries with the ultimate goal of eliminating the white race, otherwise known as "white genocide."³ As he researched more, Gendron was overtaken by a sense of despair, admitting in his manifesto that: "I was going to kill myself to escape this fate. My race was doomed and there was nothing I could do about it."⁴ It was during this time that Gendron stumbled upon the livestream of Brenton Tarrant's 2019 attack on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand.

The Christchurch shooter who attacked nearly 100 people—killing a total of 51 of them—has inspired dozens of individuals with extremist, anti-Semitic, and racist leanings. His 74-page manifesto pointedly titled *The Great Replacement* is regularly cited by "white genocide" believers. Tarrant's actions—and those of other mass murderers, such as Patrick Crusius, Robert Bowers, and Dylann Roof—led young Gendron to believe that he too could address his anxiety over the future of the white race by carrying out a violent attack.

In his own words, Gendron said he dreamed of becoming an engineer to "save lives,"⁵ enrolling in SUNY Broome Community College for Engineering Science before dropping out due to his frequent absences taken in preparation for the attack.⁶ Gendron's altruistic dreams of his own future represent a challenging element of extremist radicalization; individuals who carry out attacks can begin with the desire to

¹ 4chan is an unmoderated, anonymous web forum that is heavily plagued by hate speech and dangerous conspiracy theories. It is also the birthplace of the Boogaloo movement's earliest incarnations and is associated with multiple other conspiratorial extremist movements. See Rob Arthur, "The Man Who Helped Turn 4chan Into the Internet's Racist Engine," VICE, November 2, 2020; and Matthew Kriner and Jon Lewis, "The Evolution of the Boogaloo Movement," CTC Sentinel, February 2021, Volume 14, Issue 2. <https://ctc.usma.edu/the-evolution-of-the-boogaloo-movement/>

² Kriner et al., "Understanding Accelerationist Narratives: The Great Replacement Theory," ARC, May 30, 2022.

³ Kriner et al., "Understanding Accelerationist Narratives: The Great Replacement Theory," ARC. For more on the history of Great Replacement Theory and anti-Semitism see, Michael Broschowitz, "The Violent Impact of Anti-Semitic Conspiracy Theories: Examining the Jewish World Domination Narratives and History," CTEC, May 6, 2022.

⁴ Payton Gendron's manifesto.

⁵ Payton Gendron's Discord server.

⁶ Payton Gendron's Discord server.

peacefully help others to create positive change. However, due to variables and influences including trauma, adoption of harmful conspiracy theories, peer pressure and more, their altruistic notions paradoxically become susceptible points for twisted misanthropic views on humanity and liberal democratic society to take hold. Eventually, these individuals come to believe that the obtainment of positive change necessitates violent action. Instead of saving lives through engineering and science, Gendron rationalized that he could only save lives through violence.

Planning and Tactical Preparation

Gendron’s Discord logs provide an illustrative look into his thought process and the steps he conducted in preparation for this attack. This section explores the near-daily cataloging of Gendron’s thoughts, emotions, and activities related to his radicalization and mobilization to violence drawn from Gendron’s Discord server that he released prior to his attack.

Although he claimed in his manifesto to have been passively preparing for this attack his whole life, it was on January 14, 2022 that he made the decision to carry out an attack, posting “there is no turning back now, I am fully committed to using all my resources and power to commit this attack.” To pay homage to his idol, Brenton Tarrant, and to produce a larger effect, Gendron initially planned to attack on March 15, 2022—exactly three years after Tarrant’s Christchurch massacre. This decision is only the first amongst many that Gendron made to complement Tarrant’s attack, demonstrating not only his devotion to Tarrant but also his dependence on him as an operational example.

First on Gendron’s checklist was to acquire tactical gear and arms. As a gun enthusiast, Gendron consistently pursued knowledge about weaponry and passed along insights and instructions for his intended audience to read—whom he hoped would use the information to follow in his footsteps. In his instructions, Gendron provided visuals of his gear as he modified it and supplied links to YouTube videos that discuss the pros and cons of different body armor, hearing protection, and using “varmint” ammo for self-defense. This discourse accounts for 95 of the 180 pages of Gendron’s manifesto.

In early 2022, Gendron’s posts focused heavily on his fundraising efforts for such gear. Gendron’s operation was primarily financed by selling his own possessions at flea markets and pawn shops. By providing detailed recounts of what he sold, where he sold it, and how much he got in return, Gendron supplies contextualized information for potential use by future attackers of the same stature and economic status. This also illustrates the challenges for detecting concerning activity, such as selling belongings, which can indicate preparations for an attack. By selling gear predominantly offline at local commerce points, digital detection systems proved inadequate for intervening in this attack.

Livestreaming the attack was also vital for Gendron, stating that it “makes 1000x greater impact.”⁷ Gendron even shared in his Discord that “If Brenton Tarrant didn’t livestream his actions that day, then I don’t think I would be writing this as I do currently.”⁸ In anticipation of the attack, Gendron analyzed different streaming options (Facebook Live versus Twitch), devices (GoPro versus iPhone), and possible internet service upgrades to avoid video lagging.

⁷ Payton Gendron’s Discord server.

⁸ Payton Gendron’s Discord server.

Alongside this, Gendron also believed it paramount to be in peak physical condition to carry out an attack. He cataloged his diet, caloric intake, and weight early in January 2022 before falling out of the habit as his depressive thoughts and lack of sleep caused him to lose focus on such details. Gendron emphasized the importance of weight loss for the success of his upcoming attack, noting that “I should stop eating so much,” “I should be eating less calories and exercising,” and “yeah I know its alot [*sic*] of calories I’ll try to be better.”⁹ Tarrant similarly engaged in substantial physical preparation for his attack in Christchurch. As a teenager, Tarrant began a strict exercise regimen after putting on weight, and later worked as a personal trainer for three years.¹⁰ As the time of his attack neared, Tarrant was reportedly injecting himself with testosterone and illicit steroids multiple times a week.¹¹

Physical fitness preparations for an attack carries a practical functionality to it—one would not want to fail in an attack due to poor fitness. However, with respect to militant accelerationism, extensive physical fitness training prior to an attack can also serve as a separate ideological indicator that stems from the esoteric fascism of Order of Nine Angles (O9A). In O9A instruction manuals, physical preparation for violence carries a spiritual component associated with the purity of self and the destruction of internal barriers—both mental and physical. By first pushing the self to its physical and mental limits (and ideally beyond), the attack thus gains an elevated spiritual component. It is unlikely that Gendron was an adherent to the O9A pathways described above, as there is no mention of O9A in his Discord content or in his manifesto. However, both Tarrant and Gendron frequented the same forums and digital ecosystems where O9A tenets and practices have become commonplace—particularly the physical fitness regimen.

Lastly, one habit that Gendron remained consistent with was shooting practice. The young gun enthusiast often visited the “state lands” to practice shooting drills and test out his guns which he had been modifying to accommodate illegal ammunition. He even practiced shooting left-handed so that he would be a more adept shooter while driving in a car, as he intended to do after striking his first of many locations.

The Target

According to Gendron, when picking a location, he sought a place with the highest density of “replacers”—a term used by adherents of the Great Replacement Theory for non-whites. He looked into towns across New York state, such as Mount Vernon, Hempstead, and Rochester, before settling on Buffalo in February 2022. The Buffalo ZIP code where Gendron attacked was 78% Black according to the 2020 census—the highest Black population in upstate New York.¹² From there, he considered different

⁹ Payton Gendron’s Discord server.

¹⁰ Perry, Nick. “Report Shows How New Zealand Mosque Shooter Eluded Detection.” ABC News. ABC News Network, December 7, 2020.

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/report-shows-zealand-mosque-shooter-eluded-detection-74596676>.

¹¹ Lourens, Marine. “Christchurch Terrorist Could Only Have Been Stopped 'by Chance'.” 9News Breaking News. 9News, December 8, 2020.

<https://www.9news.com.au/world/royal-commission-of-inquiry-into-terror-attack-christchurch-mosques/f96c6b58-5e75-4bf5-bec6-5a513ae5c750>.

¹² Shimon Prokupez et al., “What We Know about Buffalo Supermarket Shooting Suspect Payton Gendron,” CNN (Cable News Network, June 2, 2022),

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/15/us/payton-gendron-buffalo-shooting-suspect-what-we-know/index.html>.

types of venues. Gendron's targeted locale, a Tops grocery store, was a soft target.¹³ Tactically, the targeting of soft targets serves to further the militant accelerationist desire for societal collapse. Soft targets are an outsized feature of accelerationist attacks for a variety of reasons, ranging from the tactical value of executing an attack on their symbolic representation to the ideological value attached to that same symbolic representation. As militant accelerationism is aimed at generating chaos, and ultimately collapse, within socio-political systems, destabilizing social fabrics by upping the fear and risk of attending places of worship, grocery stores, and others such mundane features of daily life is a crucial component of the terroristic essence of militant accelerationism. This partially explains the glorification within militant accelerationist propaganda of violent acts perpetrated against targets which represent "the system" or critical elements of society's operation (e.g., electrical relay infrastructure) regardless of their association with militant accelerationism. For example, many militant accelerationists will promote Stephen Paddock's 2017 shooting rampage in Las Vegas, NV wherein he fired from a hotel room into a crowded music festival, killing 58 and wounding hundreds more.¹⁴

Soft targets also serve ideological purposes to militant accelerationists as much as non-white, non-Christian centers of worship. Because the dominant strain of militant accelerationism today is neofascist and because most ideological strains of militant accelerationism consider the Jewish people as an enemy, synagogues are highly prized targets of violence. Good examples of such targeting choices are the attacks on the Tree of Life Synagogue, the Halle Synagogue attack in Germany, the Poway Synagogue, and more. The Halle, Germany attack provides strong evidence for how hardening soft targets against unauthorized entry can save lives.¹⁵

Outside of purely anti-Semitic motivations is the heavy influence of white supremacist narratives that ascribe malicious influence within society to non-white minorities. Examples of this narrative include the Christchurch mosque massacres, El Paso Wal-Mart attack, Dylan Roof's massacre of black churchgoers in South Carolina, and now the Buffalo Tops grocery shooting.¹⁶ Gendron falls into the latter category of choosing his target along anti-minority lines. By his own admission, he modeled his targeting and attack tactics after Patrick Crusius's attack on a Walmart Supercenter in El Paso, TX, and Brenton Tarrant's attacks on mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. Both chose their targets due to the minority representation at those physical locations.

¹³ According to the US Department of Homeland Security, soft targets are defined as "locations that are easily accessible to large numbers of people and that have limited security or protective measures in place making them vulnerable to attack." See, DHS Soft Target and Crowded Place Security Enhancement and Coordination Plan, May 2018, https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/DHS-Soft-Target-Crowded-Place-Security-Plan-Overview-052018-508_0.pdf

¹⁴ Joseph Lombardo, "LVMPD Criminal Investigative Report of the 1 October Mass Casualty Shooting," Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, August 3, 2018, https://www.lvmpd.com/en-us/Documents/1-October-FIT-Criminal-Investigative-Report-FINAL_080318.pdf

¹⁵ <https://ctc.usma.edu/halle-germany-synagogue-attack-evolution-far-right-terror-threat/>

¹⁶ It is important to note that shootings at non-hardened locations are not exclusive to, or likely even dominated by, militant accelerationism due to the overwhelming numbers of mass shooting events in the US. As such these observations should be understood as analysis conducted within the context of how militant accelerationist adherents choose targets for attacks tactically and ideologically.

In preparation for his attack, Gendron used Google’s “Popular Times” graph to determine the store’s busiest hours, and therefore the most opportune time to strike. Gendron also journeyed the three-and-a-half-hour drive three times to conduct reconnaissance of the location.¹⁷ Gendron scouted the area to determine the best place to park his car, determine secondary targets, and note the layout of the store. Below is a screenshot from Gendron’s Discord channel, where he drew the interior arrangement of the store and counted the number and race of the patrons.

-While inside I made the following observation: "Inside: 53 black, 6 white, 2 armed black security with pistols. ~8 black on outside", and made a rough map on the inside. I also ordered a crunch bar at 12:27



Before deciding on Tops Friendly Supermarket, Gendron considered assaulting a place of religious worship, as Brenton Tarrant, John Earnest, and Robert Bowers did in their mass shooting attacks. However, Gendron struggled with the moral complications of targeting a church or place of worship:

¹⁷ Steven Vago and Emily Crane, “Store Manager Says Buffalo Suspect Payton Gendron Called Her 'n-R Lover' on Recon Trip,” New York Post (New York Post, May 17, 2022), <https://nypost.com/2022/05/17/store-manager-says-buffalo-shooter-payton-gendron-called-her-nr-lover/>.

Jimboboiiii — 02/12/2022

Brenton Tarrant did his attack in a synagogue and he was quite successful
Dylann Roof did his attack in a church,

Jimboboiiii — 02/16/2022

Zion Hill is most definitely a black church but I have some problems with that

- 1.) It's a church
- 2.) Most of the people seen on video are old of age, most likely 40 or more, my most optimal age group are teens and young adults
3. The people are most likely not evil people, they probably don't rape or assault others, and are most likely respectful to all

Jimboboiiii — 02/12/2022

attacking in their place of worship feels different

In addition to a place of worship, Gendron also considered attacking an elementary school. Like he had done with churches, Gendron researched various schools located in Buffalo, NY. Similarly, Gendron confessed that this target gave him reservations, stating that although the children are “replacers,” they are still just children. The security of such locations was also a major factor in Gendron shifting his attention towards Tops and similar stores. Gendron presumed that attacks such as Dylann Roof’s assault on a Charlestown church and Adam Lanza’s attack on Sandy Hook Elementary School meant that these locations would be heavily guarded, therefore decreasing his odds of a smooth operation. Tops, on the other hand, contained very little security, which Gendron prepared to circumvent by investing in body armor. Despite determining a location he felt more comfortable with, Gendron still experienced guilt and reluctance. The next section explores additional indicators of the emotional turmoil that appear during Gendron’s planning and justification for his attack.

Gendron’s Inner Turmoil

Emotions and identity can provide a window into individuals’ radicalization processes and the specific mechanisms that push them further away from normative engagement with society.¹⁸ Gendron’s Discord content highlighted the role of the mundane troublesome features of life in his pathway to violent extremist worldviews. Across the 589 pages of the 18-year-old’s online Discord diary, there are numerous entries that point to a history of suicidal ideation, mental health struggles, and profound emotional turmoil. He conveyed multiple instances of bullying—and the shame he felt from those experiences—as well as a persistent toothache for which he struggled to get proper medical treatment. These hang ups, or “pot holes” as Christian Picciolini describes them, can contribute to the overall susceptibility to extremist narratives that seek to exploit personal grievances in order to encourage greater attachment to an extremist identity and to out-group denigration.¹⁹ For Gendron, these emotional struggles and uncertainties about

¹⁸ Matthew Kriner, “Tackling Terrorism’s Taboo: Shame,” *Perspectives on Terrorism*, April 2018, <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/binaries/content/assets/customsites/perspectives-on-terrorism/2018/2018-02/02-tackling-terrorisms-taboo-shame---matthew-kriner.pdf>.

¹⁹ Picciolini, Christian. “Insights: Filling the Potholes.” *World Scientific*, 2020. https://www.worldscientific.com/doi/10.1142/9789811220593_0016.

his own identity and place in society likely made him susceptible to violent anti-Semitic conspiracy theories which ultimately served as the justification for his act of domestic terrorism in Buffalo, NY.

Gendron displays a considerable range of emotions within his Discord channel that span from anecdotes of shame and humiliation, anger and rage, to pride and elation. He even provides an explicit emotional journey of his own moral dilemmas surrounding targeting selection for his attack and a detailed description of the physical response he experiences after an initial surveillance run of the Buffalo area. This description is laden with tumultuous emotional reactions and paints a scenario that presents itself closely with an individual experiencing a panic attack. It also clearly illustrates how uncertainty in one's life can make them more vulnerable to the compelling and twisted narratives rife within extremist ecosystems.²⁰ When doubt crept in, Gendron typically resorted to rebuilding his confidence through sharing extremely racist memes and narratives within his Discord.

Gendron grapples with these emotionally charged moments and concepts through a reliance on the concept of destiny that allows him to remove personal responsibility for the violent actions he has chosen to perpetrate. In an almost navel gazing manner, he insisted throughout his Discord logs that various events in his life had guided him towards this event, later articulating it as an inescapable outcome.

Jimboboiiii — 12/13/2021

It's funny how things just magically work together. It seems all my life has been building up to this attack. Everyone I met, everything I did, every place I went, it all had some kind of influence. It doesn't seem statistically possible but yet here it stands. For example, playing Apocalypse Rising on Roblox gave me interests in survival and guns, which led to me hunting and shooting, which gave me tinnitus and deeper interests in firearms. Every single thing that happened influenced this attack, it was like this was what I was meant to do in life.

In some respects, this can be interpreted as a function of Gendron externalizing his locus of control. Logically, if he was chosen for a greater purpose then his personal culpability would be lessened as that would insinuate he is a tool doing a thing for the collective good. This sense of compulsion to act on behalf of a collective in-group identity is a regularly occurring feature in militant accelerationists that adhere to neofascist views—particularly among individuals that espouse the Great Replacement ideology's tenets or suggest their actions are meant to precipitate a cascading reaction within their audience to act against evil forces undermining the white population.²¹

Conspiracy theories, such as the Great Replacement Theory, awaken a deep anxiety and fear amongst adherents based on a perceived existential threat against their in-group. Gendron's own admission of suicidal ideation in relation to his unearthing and acceptance of the Great Replacement Theory demonstrates the vulnerability of these adherents. In response, those who wish to take advantage of vulnerable believers (such as accelerationist actors) amplify this anxiety and then assuage those experiencing anxiety by providing an answer to their plight: violent action.

²⁰ Hogg, M. A., & Adelman, J. (2013). Uncertainty–identity theory: Extreme groups, radical behavior, and authoritarian leadership. *Journal of Social Issues*, 69(3), 436-454.

²¹ Like the tactical targeting in attacks, this is not unique to militant accelerationism. However, it is a noted strategy espoused by some neofascist accelerationism ideologues and as such deserves more empirical assessment in future research.

The decision to act originally gave Gendron comfort, appearing to give purpose and meaning to his life. However, despite claiming to be steadfast in his justification of violent action, as March 15th approaches, Gendron's perception of the attack as his destiny spoils. Rather than feeling like a hero called to action, Gendron laments being "cursed to this fate" and having no other choice but to carry it out. Overtaking Gendron's positive posts were cries of anguish, pleading for a new fate. Comments such as "I had so much more I want to do," "I don't want to kill these people but I have to," and "Part of me wants to kill myself instead of doing this attack" overwhelm his Discord diary as he approaches the day of attack.²² His hateful comments on minorities are contrasted by his torment over the pain he will cause his victims and their families. His apprehension and resistance towards the attack triggers depressive episodes and anxiety attacks. Such revelations and lamentations throughout his Discord highlight the numerous emotional crisis points that could have served as a disengagement opportunity for Gendron.

Jimboiii — 03/16/2022

I can't tell you how much I don't want to do this attack

My only other choice is suicide I can't go back

Gendron's panic, in addition to a positive case of the coronavirus, causes him to delay the date of the attack, much to his embarrassment. Speaking directly to his intended audience for his Discord diary, Gendron repeatedly apologizes for failing them and wanting to do more before he dies. In the end, using the words of Tarrant for inspiration, Gendron regrettably moves forward with his attack.

May 14th: The Day of the Attack

On the morning of May 14, 2022, Gendron left a goodbye note for his parents on his bed before driving to Buffalo, NY. In the handwritten note, Gendron tells his parents that he "had to commit this attack ... for the future of the White race."²³ From there, it took Gendron about three-and-a-half hours to reach Tops Friendly Supermarket, where he conducted a final surveillance check inside the store to count the number of Black individuals.²⁴ Afterwards, Gendron donned his camouflage clothing, body armor, and a tactical helmet with a GoPro video camera.²⁵ Next, he set up a livestream on Twitch—a popular live-streaming site usually intended for video game coverage—and, in the same manner that militant accelerationists he lionized had before him,²⁶ Gendron made his Discord diary and manifesto public. Then, with weapons in hand, Gendron exited the car shooting at innocents in the parking lot, killing three and injuring a fourth.²⁷

²² Payton Gendron's Discord server.

²³ Pilar Melendez, "Feds Reveal Chilling Note Buffalo Mass Shooter Left for His Parents," The Daily Beast, June 15, 2022,

<https://www.thedailybeast.com/buffalo-shooter-payton-gendron-left-chilling-note-for-parents-after-tops-friendly-market-massacre-feds-say>.

²⁴ "Accused Tops Shooter Charged with Federal Hate Crimes and Using a Firearm to Commit Murder," The United States Department of Justice, June 15, 2022,

<https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/accused-tops-shooter-charged-federal-hate-crimes-and-using-firearm-commit-murder>

²⁵ "Accused Tops Shooter Charged with Federal Hate Crimes and Using a Firearm to Commit Murder," The United States Department of Justice, June 15, 2022.

²⁶ See Page 20.

²⁷ "Accused Tops Shooter Charged with Federal Hate Crimes and Using a Firearm to Commit Murder," The United States Department of Justice.

Continuing to fire as he entered the store, Gendron killed the security guard—a 55-year-old retired police officer²⁸—before fatally shooting customers trapped in the aisles. During this time, Gendron intentionally avoided harming white individuals, even apologizing to a white employee whom he accidentally shot in the leg.²⁹ As he returned to the front of the store, the police had arrived and taken him into custody. By the end, Gendron had fatally shot Roberta A. Drury, 32; Margus Morrison, 52; Andre Mackneil, 53; Aaron Salter, 55; Geraldine Talley, 62; Celestine Chaney, 65; Heyward Patterson, 67; Katherine Massey, 72; Pearl Young, 77; and Ruth Whitfield, 86.³⁰

Gendron’s Militant Accelerationism

The Accelerationism Research Consortium (ARC) defines militant accelerationism as “a set of tactics and strategies designed to put pressure on and exacerbate latent social divisions, often through violence, thus hastening societal collapse.”³¹ As a tactic, militant accelerationism appeals to a multitude of ideologies; however, neofascism represents its primary audience and followership. This section will focus on Gendron’s ideological views and influences as it pertains to his classification as a consumer of militant accelerationism within the neofascist strain.

Gendron as an Accelerationist Actor

Although Gendron’s tactics remain consistent with militant accelerationism, his manifesto and Discord communications indicate that he does not strongly self-identify as a militant accelerationist in a manner familiar to entities like the Atomwaffen Division, The Base, or other such networks which are considered the most explicit forms of militant accelerationism. Analysis of his Discord content and manifesto show that Gendron did not self-identify as an adherent of the skullmask network,³² offer any new or unique perspectives on accelerationist action, or justify his violence based on concepts of spiritual rebirth via apocalyptic destruction, as militant Traditionalists who promote accelerationism do.³³

Instead, Gendron appears to have invoked militant accelerationism opportunistically, claiming its most egregious tactic—becoming a mass shooter—to be the sole solution to his perceived societal ails. Gendron only utilizes militant accelerationism to the extent that it was present in his main inspiration,

²⁸ John Bacon, Adria R. Walker, and Jorge L. Ortiz, “Buffalo Suspected Gunman Was Kicked out of Tops Store the Night before Rampage: What We Know about Shooting,” USA Today (Gannett Satellite Information Network, May 16, 2022), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2022/05/16/buffalo-shooting-victims-suspect-live-updates/9790311002/>.

²⁹ “Accused Tops Shooter Charged with Federal Hate Crimes and Using a Firearm to Commit Murder,” The United States Department of Justice.

³⁰ Pilar Melendez, “Feds Reveal Chilling Note Buffalo Mass Shooter Left for His Parents,” The Daily Beast, June 15, 2022.

³¹ Kriner, Matt. “An Introduction to Militant Accelerationism.” ARC. ARC, June 22, 2022. <https://www.accresearch.org/shortanalysis/an-introduction-to-militant-accelerationism>.

³² H.E. Upchurch, “The Iron March Forum and the Evolution of the ‘Skull Mask’ Neo-Fascist Network,” Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, December 2021, <https://ctc.usma.edu/the-iron-march-forum-and-the-evolution-of-the-skull-mask-neo-fascist-network/>.

³³ Matthew Kriner, H.E. Upchurch, and W. Aaron, “Examining the Denver Shooter’s Ideological Views,” ARC, January 2022, [https://www.accresearch.org/shortanalysis/examining-the-denver-shooters-ideological-views.](https://www.accresearch.org/shortanalysis/examining-the-denver-shooters-ideological-views;); Matthew Kriner, “An Introduction to Militant Accelerationism,” ARC, June 22, 2022, <https://www.accresearch.org/shortanalysis/an-introduction-to-militant-accelerationism>.

Brenton Tarrant’s manifesto and attack—content which ultimately finds its way in limited fashion into his final attack (e.g., the silver writing on his black guns and the GoPro livestream). In this respect, we can assess Gendron’s emulation of Tarrant as a limited desire to be considered by his peers as acting like, or be seen as, a “Saint” of neofascist accelerationism³⁴, rather than as a desire to trigger a broader social cataclysm from his attack.

Gendron bolsters his justifications for mass violence with sources steeped in race science and conspiracy theories. While crude racialism and hate speech is common within neofascist accelerationist spaces, its invocation does not automatically place an individual within a militant accelerationist category. Instead, racist hate speech serves as a touch point between different milieus, allowing individuals to transgress between the networks and organizations with ease based on shared tactical and ideological features. After all, racist far-right violence is hardly a new phenomenon, nor is it exclusive to militant accelerationism. White supremacists and fascists have long utilized crude scientific racism for propaganda and recruitment purposes, as well as to mobilize individuals to violence.³⁵ These racist views directly led to atrocities such as the Holocaust, intolerant governments like the Rhodesian apartheid regime, and more. In recent decades, the Great Replacement Theory has taken on a central focus for much of the “material”-focused Far Right—those that are concerned with the perceived existential threats which stem from physical entities. Perhaps the most poignant example of this preoccupation is the fear of immigrants diluting white, Western society by displacing or statistically overwhelming white populaces in their homelands. Following the 2015 refugee crisis that saw unparalleled immigration to Europe,³⁶ fascist and white supremacist-driven violence surged. Within that surge of violence, actors associated with militant accelerationism networks have carried out anti-immigrant violence and terrorist attacks.

Critically, Gendron’s discourse on scientific racism illustrated an individual still seeking out justifications for his own anger rather than someone seeking to assign their act of violence to a positive feedback loop which would collapse society. Thus, Gendron does not appear to be an ideologue with a strong spiritual or philosophical foundation in militant accelerationism; rather, he appears to be a consumer of accelerationist content and ultimately a product of the violent mobilization concepts that pervade its digital communities.

Ideological Views and Influences

Anti-Semitic Sentiments in Gendron’s Worldview

The central point of Gendron’s ideological views and that of the influences on his perceptions of society is the anti-Semitic notion that the Jewish people serve as a degenerative influence on white, Western culture. This manifests in multiple forms throughout Gendron’s radicalization pathway, as laid out in his Discord diatribes. Principally, he perpetuates the conspiratorial narrative of the Great Replacement Theory: that a secret cabal of the Jewish people control and manipulate non-white minorities with the goal of

³⁴ Ari Ben Am and Gabriel Weimann, “Fabricated Martyrs: The Warrior-Saint Icons of Far-Right Terrorism,” *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Volume 14, Issue 5, October 2020.

³⁵ “Scientific Racism.” Harvard Library. Accessed July 1, 2022.

[https://library.harvard.edu/confronting-anti-black-racism/scientific-racism.](https://library.harvard.edu/confronting-anti-black-racism/scientific-racism); Macklin, Graham. *Failed Führers: A History of Britain's Extreme Right*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2020.

³⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. “2015: The Year of Europe's Refugee Crisis.” UNHCR. Accessed July 1, 2022.

<https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2015/12/56ec1ebde/2015-year-europes-refugee-crisis.html>.

undermining white cultural supremacy and socio-political stability. As a cornerstone in his thoughts, Gendron dedicated 30 consecutive pages of his manifesto to the promotion of deeply anti-Semitic narratives, with special attention given to the Great Replacement Theory and the white genocide conspiracy theory.³⁷

As the 2018 Tree of Life Synagogue shooter Robert Bowers did before him, Gendron fixated on the notion that Jewish elites are orchestrating a white genocide via the mass immigration of non-whites into Western countries with the ultimate goal of eliminating the white race. To counteract this perceived threat, adherents of white supremacist narratives and conspiracy theories like the Great Replacement Theory seek to establish a rigid racial hierarchy, often in the manner of a white ethnostate or the supremacy of the white race over non-white ethnicities in an apartheid system, premised on junk science arguments.³⁸ For example, Patrick Crusius—who invoked the Great Replacement Theory to shoot and kill 23 individuals in El Paso, TX in 2019—expressed a course of action to divide the U.S. into separate territories for each race. In his mind, this would bring an end to race mixing and cultural genocide whilst avoiding the horrific bloodshed of non-whites that would undeniably come from forced deportations.³⁹ Gendron, on the other hand, stands as a firm believer in the forceful relocation of “replacers” as a necessity for the survival of the white race. In relation to Jews, he states that at best they should be exiled from white nations, and at worst executed.⁴⁰

Regardless, in order to enact a mass exodus of non-whites from the United States or other “white” nations, adherents believe that violence is a necessary evil. Since adherents of the Great Replacement Theory and similar anti-Semitic conspiracy theories believe that Jews, despite representing a minority demographic compared to supposed “ethnic” whites, dominate key societal institutions, they believe that mainstream political actions would be in vain.⁴¹ In his manifesto, Gendron utilizes anti-Semitic memes and infographics popularly found on 4chan to demonstrate his worldview of Jews as a powerful organization that manipulates the world through the hands of government and media. The idea of there being no political solution is an essential element in militant accelerationism, thus aligning Gendron as a figure within the accelerationist ecosystem. Thus, the Great Replacement Theory not only has a pattern of leading adherents towards violence, but also towards accelerationist violence.

Anti-Black Sentiments in Gendron’s Worldview

The second manner in which Gendron’s hateful ideology manifests is through crude scientific racism and the use of racist memes about Black individuals. Throughout his manifesto, Gendron strongly emphasized ideas central to scientific racism to justify his worldview and subsequent attack. This rhetoric was predominantly targeted towards the Black population in America, with frequent claims that Black people are genetically inferior to the white population and are demographically displacing white Americans, thus

³⁷ Payton Gendron’s manifesto.

³⁸ Flanagan, Jason Wilson and Aaron. “The Racist ‘Great Replacement’ Conspiracy Theory Explained.” Southern Poverty Law Center, May 17, 2022.
<https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2022/05/17/racist-great-replacement-conspiracy-theory-explained>.

³⁹ Patrick Crusius’ manifesto.

⁴⁰ Payton Gendron’s manifesto.

⁴¹ Kriner, Matthew, Meghan Conroy, and Yasmine Ashwal. “Understanding Accelerationist Narratives: ‘There Is No Political Solution’.” ARC. Accelerationism Research Consortium, May 13, 2022.
<https://www.accresearch.org/shortanalysis/understanding-accelerationist-narratives-there-is-no-political-solution>.

making them unfit to live in the Western world. His manifesto dedicated ten consecutive pages to such rhetoric,⁴² justifying his claims via the inclusion of discredited sources, the purposeful distortion of otherwise-credible research, and the addition of misleading, incorrect, or blatantly racist graphics and memes.

The anti-Black narratives present in Gendron’s manifesto and online communications are largely predicated on his foundational anti-Semitic worldview and his adherence to the Great Replacement and white genocide conspiracy theories. Gendron frequently refers to the Black population as the “replacers” of the white population, indicating that, in line with these conspiracy theories, he believes the Black population to be unaware pawns of the Jewish agenda.⁴³ This presents one likely justification for Gendron’s targeting of the Black population, despite stating in his manifesto that “the Jews are the biggest problem the Western world has ever had”⁴⁴—he reasoned that an attack on the perceived foot soldiers of the alleged Jewish elite would simultaneously deter the elites’ actualization of global domination *and* deter the “replacers” from committing a perceived genocide against the white race.

Additionally, when considering Gendron’s choice of target, it is hard to overlook his personal experiences of alleged bullying by Black persons in his school relayed in his Discord channel. Gendron claims to have experienced intense shame related to the bullying, that over time, and with the focusing lens of the supremacist views of whites over non-whites latent within the Great Replacement Theory, likely allowed for a metastization of his anger and shame into an easier othering of Black Americans. In tandem with the “replacers” narrative he espouses, it is easier to see why Black people became the primary target of his violence as opposed to Jewish people.

I've had some bad experiences with black people at school, one time this nigress said I called her a nigger in 6th grade and I had to stay in in school suspension the entire day, basically crying the entire time. And the thing was she was held back 2 times

At that time she was learning to be a victim, that she can say things to get other people hurt or in trouble

I think I see her at the McDonalds I go to a lot, working as a drive thru clerk lol Other time another nigress kept clapping her hands over my ears, which gave me intense pain and tinnitus. And she thought it was funny. People saw too btw, and nothing happened. These experiences didn't make me racist against blacks though, maybe uncomfortable around the majority of them, since I only relate them to trouble.

I only really turned racist when 4chan started giving me facts that they were intellectually and emotionally inferior. This behavior is simply due to the lack of development in their brains compared to a white person

Then I saw the crime statistics, and the rape of our women, and how the average black takes 700000 dollars from government support, and how they were able to have unlimited kids without any consequences, since they are dependent on such support

Then I saw how the jews brought them over as slaves, how jews funded leftism and how they teach us to be ashamed of our heritage

⁴² Payton Gendron’s manifesto.

⁴³ Payton Gendron’s manifesto.

⁴⁴ Payton Gendron’s manifesto.

It is within this space that we see the full rationale for why Gendron specifically targeted Black Americans. While intrinsically tied to the first manifestation, the Great Replacement Theory's core views on secret Jewish cabals, Black Americans represent the most attainable and egregious target for reciprocity in Gendron's rants and musings on social decline and the secret war on white culture.

Gendron's Weak Affiliation with Traditional Militant Accelerationism

There are notable omissions from Gendron's extensive ideological commentary that distances him from being labeled as an explicit accelerationist actor. For example, Gendron provides no reference to *Siege* or even to the entities that promoted it most heavily, such as the Atomwaffen Division. *Siege* has long held an outsized role as an ideological and tactical template for collapsing society as it is currently structured for many neofascists, but particularly for militant accelerationists.⁴⁵ Specifically, *Siege* provides a ready-made rhetorical mechanism to justify anti-Black accelerationist violence through its societal collapse framework that centers around a race war. It would be expected to see such an influence in Gendron's Discord logs if accelerationism were more central to his world views, particularly given his racist views and target for attack. Instead, Gendron's expression of scientific racism appears to be most closely associated with crude racism, which primarily justifies violence against minority populations on the basis of *biology*.

Additionally, Gendron's Discord diatribes lack any metaphysical attribution of evil to the Jewish population often found in spiritual fascist strains such as Julius Evola's Traditionalism, Savitri Devi and Miguel Serrano's Esoteric Hitlerism, Christian Identity,⁴⁶ and more.⁴⁷ The absence of such references within Gendron's Great Replacement suggest Gendron's familiarity with and use of the conspiracy theory is born more from his consumption of and engagement with specific contemporary extremist dynamics on forums like 4chan and in emulating Tarrant. Hardened (or explicit) militant accelerationists influenced by Evola tend to justify racial violence on the basis of needing to accelerate the inevitable conclusion of the current time cycle—the Kali Yuga.⁴⁸ Figures such as Julius Evola, Savitri Devi, Miguel Serrano, and other neo-fascist thinkers spent considerable thought framing their views on Western society's cultural changes (e.g., contemporary white genocide concepts) into a metaphysical framework which respectively conflates the Jewish people with metaphysical forces like demons, the root of all social decline (a meta-category of anti-Semitism under which the Great Replacement Theory falls), or other grandiose treatments which effectively provide a convenient target for all types of anti-Semitism.

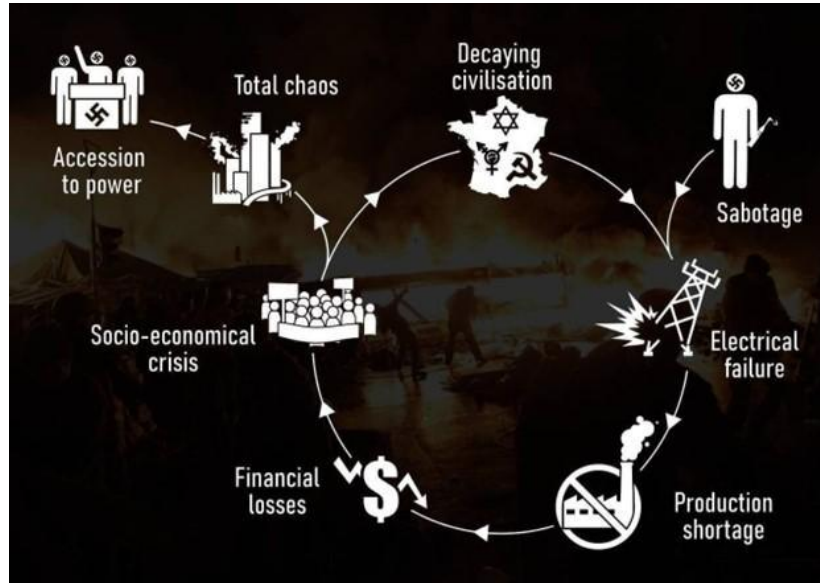
⁴⁵J.M. Berger, "A Paler Shade of White: Identity & in-Group Critique in James Mason's Siege," RESOLVE Network, April 16, 2021, <https://www.resolvenet.org/research/paler-shade-white-identity-group-critique-james-masons-siege.>; Benjamin Lee, "Siege Culture and Accelerationism in the UK," CREST Research, June 7, 2022, <https://crestresearch.ac.uk/resources/siege-culture-and-accelerationism-in-the-uk/>.

⁴⁶CTEC Staff. "Christian Identity's New Role on the Extreme Right." Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, August 6, 2021. <https://www.middlebury.edu/institute/academics/centers-initiatives/ctec/ctec-publications/christian-identity-s-new-role-extreme-right>.

⁴⁷Goodrick-Clarke, Nicholas. "Black Sun." NYU Press, July 2, 2019. <https://nyupress.org/9780814731550/black-sun/>.

⁴⁸Kriner, Matt. "An Introduction to Militant Accelerationism." ARC. Accelerationism Research Consortium, June 22, 2022. <https://www.accresearch.org/shortanalysis/an-introduction-to-militant-accelerationism>.

Importantly, the anti-Semitic narratives Gendron discusses are intertwined with militant accelerationism via their inherent white supremacist foundation. Thus further illustrating how Gendron can utilize the same frameworks, but not be labeled as an explicit accelerationist. Explicit militant accelerationists proclaim that the solution to Jewish influence and the path to global white supremacy necessitates total societal collapse via deliberate violence and provocation. Gendron does not seriously grapple with his attack as a precursor to a catalyst to collapsing society.



Social Collapse; Post shared in a militant accelerationist Telegram channel.

Gendron’s manifesto and online presence suggest a consumption of accelerationist narratives rather than strong ideological accelerationist morals; he does not illustrate familiarity with discourse and concepts found in more explicit militant accelerationist communities online. Instead, Gendron appears to have gleaned most of his understanding of militant accelerationism from consuming content on 4chan and from studying Brenton Tarrant, the apparent catalyst of Gendron’s mobilization to violence.

Christchurch as the Catalyst

In his manifesto, Gendron identifies the 2019 Christchurch mosque shootings, carried out by Brenton Tarrant, as the catalyst for his radicalization and mobilization in favor of racial violence.⁴⁹ Across Gendron’s online communications, Tarrant is repeatedly awarded significant praise and admiration for his attack.⁵⁰ Gendron’s admission that Tarrant’s livestreamed footage of the Christchurch shootings was paramount to the creation of Gendron’s own manifesto and planned attack illustrates Gendron’s strong reliance on Tarrant’s propaganda and the fundamental role Tarrant played in his radicalization. This reliance manifests through Gendron’s clear imitation of Tarrant in his own attack. For example, Gendron’s rifle was strikingly adorned with various names, slogans, and symbols written in silver Sharpie in an apparent nod to Brenton Tarrant’s similarly decorated weapon.

⁴⁹ Payton Gendron’s manifesto.

⁵⁰ Payton Gendron’s Discord server.



Brenton Tarrant's weapon featured on the left; The weapon Payton Gendron used featured on the right

The two types of names Gendron wrote were those infamous mass shooters he aspired to be and a list of victims of supposed “Black on white” crime. Gendron also had written Ebba Auferlund—the name of the youngest victim in the 2017 Stockholm truck attack—who was mentioned in Brenton Tarrant’s manifesto as one of his main motivations for the Christchurch attack. Gendron had also written racist sayings and symbols, such as “#BLM mogged,” “White Lives Matter,” and “Here’s your reparations!” Unlike Tarrant, the pioneer of this aesthetic tactic, Gendron’s utilization of these names does not appear to hold a deeper purpose to instigate others, but rather to simply emulate the style.

Moreover, Gendron’s own manifesto adopted large sections of Tarrant’s manifesto,⁵¹ with 28% of Gendron’s manifesto derived from Tarrant’s.⁵² This indicates that Tarrant’s beliefs and manifesto strongly resonated with Gendron, who utilized them in justifying his attack in Buffalo. Gendron’s dependence on and mimicry of Tarrant is similarly demonstrative of Gendron’s incipient interest in grappling with accelerationist concepts as they apply to his own attack. Notably, the sections of Gendron’s manifesto that reference explicit militant accelerationism are also the sections that have been adopted from Tarrant’s manifesto. For instance, the most explicitly accelerationist section of Gendron’s manifesto, which emphasizes the necessity for “destabilization and accelerationism” as a means of achieving perceived global victory, is directly copied from Tarrant’s manifesto. This demonstrates that the accelerationist sections in Gendron’s manifesto are not based in original thought. An important distinction, however, is that Gendron did not necessarily *plagiarize* from Tarrant’s manifesto. Tarrant’s behavior reflects that of an *ideologue* in the vanguard of accelerationist tactical innovation and spiritual violence, who intends to put forth new and original accelerationist approaches for future attackers to adopt. Gendron represents one such future attacker, even explaining that he couldn’t express his own views better than Tarrant could.⁵³ His lack of independent thought on accelerationist narratives reveals his strong reliance on external

⁵¹ “Striking Similarities Between Gendron and Tarrant Manifestos,” ADL, May 24, 2022, <https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/striking-similarities-between-gendron-and-tarrant-manifestos>.

⁵² Ihler, Bjørn. Twitter Post. 15 May 2022, 12:35 AM.

<https://twitter.com/bjornih/status/1525741522326536196?s=20&t=1v3VtULsC66IoHd0uZQoNg>

⁵³ Payton Gendron’s manifesto.

ideologues like the Christchurch shooter to justify his violence, and thus clarifies his status as a *consumer* of accelerationist content rather than an accelerationist ideologue.

Gendron’s Adherence to Ecofascism

In his manifesto, Gendron also self-identifies with ecofascism: the belief that environmental destruction is principally caused by immigration, overpopulation, and over-industrialization, but can be solved by the genocide or forcible removal of immigrants and refugees in Western countries. Ecological purity is considered a central tenet of ecofascism, with adherents proclaiming that “blood and “soil”—race and territory—are intertwined. This can lead to two distinct branches of thought: the endorsement of race science or the proclamation of a metaphysical connection between race and territory. When these narratives become intertwined with the Great Replacement Theory, adherents perceive the existence of a conflict wherein the hidden enemy (e.g., Jewish people) is waging a war to eradicate the spiritual connection between race and territory by leveraging “inferior races” as pawns. Notably, these narratives are also prevalent in militant accelerationist communities and propaganda, as both advocate for mass violence as the preferred method of collapsing the current societal system to instill a more agreeable system.

Yet Gendron does not engage with ecofascism from a deeper ideological standpoint, nor from a militant accelerationism propaganda standpoint. His understanding of it appears to be shallow and reflective of the general themes of ecofascism that are often found in association with discussion of the Great Replacement Theory on racist forums. Instead, he appears again fixated on the crude racialist notions that ecofascism highlights. Through vehement professions of agreement with the Great Replacement Theory and the white genocide theory in his manifesto, Gendron expresses strong concern regarding the declining birth rate of the white population as compared to minority “replacer” populations.⁵⁴ Each of these are key elements of an ecofascist worldview. Gendron explains that “due to the threat of ethnic replacement and our own horribly low birth rates, we do not have 150 years or even 50 years to achieve positions of power...we must be ready to act, and act soon.”⁵⁵ Notably, Tarrant, who also expressed positive views on ecofascist ideology, wrote in a similar fashion about birth rates in his own manifesto.⁵⁶

Given Tarrant’s significant inspiration in Gendron’s radicalization, it is likely that Tarrant’s propaganda informed Gendron’s adherence to ecofascist narratives. It is similarly likely that Gendron’s ecofascism was influenced by his frequent presence on extremist 4chan boards, which promote narratives surrounding the perceived danger of declining white birth rates. Like so many other elements of radicalization and ideology, individuals have varying degrees of adherence to the components of those pathways and views. Gendron’s burgeoning interest in ideological strains of ecofascism likely stem from his youth and limited time to grapple with the deeper concepts.

⁵⁴ Payton Gendron’s manifesto.

⁵⁵ Payton Gendron’s manifesto.

⁵⁶ Payton Gendron’s manifesto.

Situating Gendron within the Saintdom

Individuals not only gravitate towards militant accelerationism as an answer for their grievances, but also because of the allure of its various *cultures*. Like most of the Far Right, accelerationists have their own literature, music, memes, and jargon. Gendron's use of memes in his Discord content demonstrates the draw of such articulation. While accelerationist cultural facets developed organically through the consistent congregation of an online community, they were also further advanced specifically for their success in recruitment and radicalization. Interwoven with ideology, these forms of online expression create an amusing and addictive experience for online users that keep them coming back for more. One key feature of this exclusive online community is the component of idolatry, known as "Saint" culture.

"Saint" is the honorific title that is bestowed upon violent attackers by supporters within extremist communities. In the militant accelerationist space, Saints are glorified for their actions as a necessary and celebrated contribution toward the ultimate goal of societal collapse. This idea of canonizing martyrs and violent attacks is not unique to neofascist accelerationist spaces, and can be found throughout the far-right landscape. For example, sainthood is a predominant feature within the involuntarily celibate (aka incel) narrative with Elliot Rodger—the perpetrator of the 2014 Isla Vista terror attacks—standing as their primary idol and inspiration. Incels have created their own ways to pay tribute to him, such as inserting his face into memes and using his namesake to encourage violent action (i.e. "go ER" is slang incels use to encourage others to go on a murder spree similar to Rodger's).

Whereas Elliot Rodger stars as the pinnacle within the incel community, Brenton Tarrant represents the same within the militant accelerationist community. Despite the existence of preceding attackers within sainthood culture, Tarrant is held further up on the pedestal for his provocative writing and his role as a tactical innovator. The writings from his manifesto *The Great Replacement* and his subsequent attack trigger an emotionally rousing response for some of his readership. For example, Tarrant's expression "WHY WON'T SOMEBODY DO SOMETHING? WHY WON'T SOMEBODY DO SOMETHING? WHY DON'T I DO SOMETHING?" has inspired and motivated subsequent mass shooters. One such example is John Earnest, the Poway Synagogue shooter, who claimed that these words "were the most powerful words in his manifesto." Gendron posted this phrasing twice in his Discord and once in his manifesto, framing its consumption as a pivotal moment in his life and a key influence in his overall decision to take violent action.

Analyzing Tarrant's role as a tactical innovator, CTEC has identified five tactics of note that have been emulated by others. The tactics include: (1) the targeting of a minority-centered soft target, (2) the targeting of multiple locations, (3) the creation and upload of a manifesto, (4) a livestream of the attack, and (5) the use of an AR-15 platform style assault weapon.⁵⁷ Below is a table that displays the five tactics as they relate to the Saints who were specifically mentioned in Gendron's manifesto as his inspiration. These include: Anders Behring Breivik (2011), Dylann Roof (2015), Anton Ludin Pettersson (2015), Darren Osborne (2017), Luca Traini (2018), Robert Bowers (2019), John Earnest (2019), Patrick Crusius (2019), and Philip Manshaus (2019). We also have included Gendron.

⁵⁷ The use of an AR-15 style assault weapon is a tactic of militant accelerationists who hope to spur gun control debates to further exacerbate this social division.

Militant Accelerationist Attack Tactics

x = Attempted and succeeded

x = Attempted but failed

	Minority-focused Soft Target	Attack on Multiple Locations	Creation and Upload of Manifesto	Livestream of Attack	Use of AR-15 Platform Style Firearm
Anders Breivik *	x	x	x		
Dylann Roof	x		x		
Anton Petterson	x				
Darren Osborne	x				
Luca Traini	x				
Robert Bowers	x				x
Brenton Tarrant	x	x	x	x	x
John Earnest	x		x		x
Patrick Crusius	x		x		x
Philip Manshaus	x			x	
Payton Gendron	x	x	x	x	x

** Although Muslims were the primary target of Breivik's manifesto, most of his victims were non-Muslim adolescents. Breivik justified attacking this demographic by claiming that these children represented the future political elite who would continue Europe's "Islamization" and further erode Europe's traditional values.*

These case studies were included in the table because of their frequent presence in Gendron's online communications and for their shared identity as violent adherence to dangerous conspiratorial narratives. Ultimately, Gendron's choice to mimic Tarrant in his own attack, Gendron illustrated that he was not a tactical innovator, but instead a product of the saintdom culture that is prolific across militant accelerationist communities online. This saintdom culture poses a continued risk to society because these violent attackers do not stand alone as individual lone actors, but instead are interconnected through their engagement with saintdom culture on various platforms, but most especially on 4chan and Telegram's Terrorgram. Through these spaces they become familiar with the ideological similarities and repeated tactical patterns exhibited by each of these violent actors. Despite a lack of clear command and control like with the Islamic State and/or al Qaeda, these digital communities continue to stochastically produce violent lone actors.

Many of those represented in the table claimed to have been inspired by other Saints, most of whom pointed to Tarrant as a principal source of inspiration. To become a Saint is akin to becoming a brand within the community, a name to be carried on after the attack regardless of life or death. The act of canonizing within this space elevates a visceral violence to a spiritual level, invoking central ideas such as heroism and the return to ‘true’ masculinity. Whether or not Gendron intended to be ranked amongst the Saints remains unclear; however, shortly after his attack, he was able to gain such a title by users online,⁵⁸ regardless of his lack of individuality and innovation. The support for his replication of Tarrant’s tactics demonstrates that this pattern of attack most likely will not stand as a singular event, but instead will encourage others to act in a similar fashion in the future.

Conclusion

Gendron’s radicalization and attack in Buffalo demonstrates the potency of the Great Replacement Theory and the vitality of saintdom culture found in online extremist communities. Gendron’s position as a product of the militant accelerationism landscape illustrates the effectiveness of both accelerationist narratives and the “saintdom” culture in mobilizing tacit consumers of accelerationist content to engage in acts of mass violence and terrorism. As a consumer rather than an ideologue, Gendron’s plethora of online communications provides a strong example of the manner in which militant accelerationism’s audience can adopt the preparatory tactics, attack strategies, and worldviews of previous attackers in the cultivation of their own attacks. The significant influence of militant accelerationist ideologues on vulnerable adolescent males ensures that Gendron will very likely not be the last perpetrator of mass violence in the name of accelerationism. So long as there are ideological influencers to inspire mass accelerationist violence, more consumers will follow in the footsteps of their predecessors, looking to answer the question “Why won’t somebody do something?”

⁵⁸ Kriner, Matthew, Meghan Conroy, Alex Newhouse, and Jonathan Lewis. “Understanding Accelerationist Narratives: The Great Replacement Theory.” GNET, July 1, 2022. <https://gnet-research.org/2022/05/30/understanding-accelerationist-narratives-the-great-replacement-theory/>.