Communication as Intervention:
Contextualizing the Alt-right Discourse of ‘Women as Wombs’

by
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Abstract

The paper serves as a foundation for a future podcast responding to alt-right online discourse surrounding the status of women. Through a virtual ethnography, alt-right discourse and narratives are examined and better understood in the context of their virtual environments, noting the ability of the online realm to facilitate the spread of information and ideologies. As a focal point of alt-right discourse, traditionalism and the pivotal role of white women as bearers of white children is examined with respect to the history of control and subordination of women and their bodies for the benefit of the state. The research illustrates how trends within alt-right narratives establish a foundation for misogynistic ideals in which racism and sexism become intertwined. The paper further outlines how the internet provides a platform for alt-right discourse to grow, but also notes the ability of the internet to serve as a platform to intervene with such discourse.

Keywords: Alt-right; virtual ethnography; women in racism; traditionalism; white supremacy
Dedication

To my friends who have silently battled the repercussions of sexual and/or racial violence, and to those who have come out swingin'.
Acknowledgements

Thank you to Adel for throwing me down the rabbit hole, and to Kirsten for supporting my haphazard writing process. An immeasurable thank you to Rachel for listening to my rants and raves ‘till all hours of the night, and instilling a (perhaps false) sense of confidence in myself and my capabilities. Thank you, Lucas for (albeit unwillingly) joining me in my online adventures and for always reigning me back in when my writing turns to ranting. Last but not least, thank you to my mum for teaching me that you should never apologize for being compassionate.
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<td>Ku Klux Klan</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPLC</td>
<td>Southern Poverty Law Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>WCOTC</td>
<td>World Church of the Creator</td>
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<td>WKKK</td>
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Chapter 1.

Introduction

Soon after the arbiters of social fashion determined that miscegenation was a virtue, our women went for it in a big way. Such behaviour tells us a great deal about women. By their depraved actions they are proclaiming the degeneracy of the West. Their miscegenation, if it continues, could well mean the end of our race. You, the Nordic male, are responsible for this. You have allowed this to happen. Only you can reverse the trend. (Instauration, 1991, p.113)

The growth of alternative news platforms and user-generated content has created an online realm prime for the facilitation of alt-right discourse with its potential for facilitating the mass spread of misinformation. As individuals are given more avenues to communicate with members within and outside their own community, the range and societal impact of their messages continues to grow. The audience and the participants within alt-right discourse are growing and changing as the Internet creates a more accessible and open environment, an online world of “unmanageable flow[s] of mediated information,” (Andrejevic, 2013, p.1).

Noted by Blee (2017), there are several alarming tactics used by white supremacy groups that are being overlooked by political experts and ordinary citizens, including:

Apocalyptic images of a global race war; alliances between KKK, Neo-Nazi, and Christian Identity groups; sophisticated use of new technologies, including the Internet; and recruitment strategies focused on so-called vulnerable populations, especially prisoners, teenagers, and women. (in Love, 2017, p. 264)

In current environments, the alt-right, consisting of “far-right ideologies, groups and individuals whose core belief is that “white identity” is under attack by multicultural forces using “political correctness” and “social justice” to undermine white people and “their civilization,” (SPLC, n.d.) are a notable force circulating the online world.
If we compare modern day alt-right discourse with the discourse of extreme right groups in Europe and North America throughout the 1900s, it becomes evident that though the rhetoric largely remains the same, the voices propagating it have become more diverse. Women in particular have a growing role within alt-right groups, and their voices as women are highlighted to combat feminist approaches that criticize the misogynistic foundations of alt-right narratives. Noted by Rivers (2007), “one of the great successes of the right has been to demonize feminism for young women” (p. 7). The prevalence of traditionalist narratives used by alt-right groups reflects anti-feminist approaches that frame gender equality as a detriment to marriage, the family, and society as a whole—and for white supremacists, a threat to the white population. Recognizing the role of women and anti-feminist discourse prevalent in alt-right narratives is crucial in a time when studies suggest women make up 25% - 50% of new recruits to racist groups (Blee, 2004; Rogers & Litt, 2004).

As previously expressed by Blee, the alt-right of the 2000s have access to incredibly wide-reaching communicative platforms such as social media, online forums, alternative news websites, and radio. These communication forms have established a more accessible and open arena for alt-right discourse to exist within and expand. To examine the alt-right’s tactics using these platforms and examine the concerns outlined above, the methodology I use is exploratory virtual ethnography (Domínguez et al, 2007; Steinmetz, 2012; Shumar & Madison, 2013). The use of this methodology to research current alt-right online discourse allows an understanding of the online social dynamics that appeal to audiences and users. An understanding of how the alt-right discourses feed into these dynamics is essential for creating a critical counter narrative, which is one of the objectives of my study. How do alt-right members communicate with one another, alt-right groups outside of the country, and with society at large? What forms do they use to express their opinions? Does the role of traditionalist women within the alt-right ideal society influence the projected narratives prevalent online?

This project aims to examine white nationalist online discourse within a contemporary framework with a focus on alt-right discourse surrounding women, to not only understand the context, but to later develop a response through a podcast. The research examines white nationalist discourse as a whole, examining how founding narratives within the movement are used to propagate misogynistic discourses. The narrative of the podcast will be situated in a Canadian context, cognisant of the colonial
foundation of the country, the racial injustices that have established a white-dominant nation, and the structural injustices that remain prevalent today in the ongoing process of colonization.
Chapter 2. Information in an Online World

Communication worldwide and within the borders of different nations has changed drastically with the growth of online platforms. The forms we use to share opinions and information are constantly undergoing change in the dynamic online environment, and the ways in which people reach others is also changing. Online platforms allow individuals to find community and likeminded people anywhere in the world. This is no different for racists and extremists. Noted by Scrivens and Perry (2017), alt-right online platforms establish a sense of community, while providing a "collective vision of shared fear, values, and ideologies" (p. 541).

With the dynamic growth of the Internet and online platforms, the consumption of online media and online news continues to increase. In Canada, 36% of people age 55 and over, 63% of people age 35 – 54, and 77% of people age 15 – 34 use the Internet to access news (Statistics Canada, 2016). Online information and news platforms are incredibly beneficial in terms of ease of access (for those with online access) to the news itself, and further to other sources of news which enables a simplified process when one wants to compare stories and perspectives. Unfortunately, online users too often fail to compare stories released by different platforms and fact check and thus fall victim to an online world of information abundance and what I will call 'selective surfing’ or reading only the information that appeals to an individual’s pre-existing beliefs and values.

The recognition of what is fact and what is fiction is a serious issue in a time when anyone, anywhere (with internet access) can write and publish as they please. As noted by Andrejevic (2013), information overload in the digital era “undermines the distinction between conspiracy and critique,” (chapter 7, para. 10). On personal blogs, in YouTube rants, on social media, opinion can easily disguise itself as fact under the cover of statistical data taken out of context and appeals to emotion rooted in political and social anxieties.

In an USA-based study of online users, a correlation was discovered between high political awareness, digital competency, and high levels of trust in media and the ability to distinguish news-related statements as factual or opinion:
36% of Americans with high levels of political awareness (those who are knowledgeable about politics and regularly get political news) correctly identified all five factual news statements, compared with about half as many (17%) of those with low political awareness. Similarly, 44% of the very digitally savvy (those who are highly confident in using digital devices and regularly use the internet) identified all five opinion statements correctly versus 21% of those who are not as technologically savvy. (Mitchell et al., 2018)

It remains alarming that the ability to distinguish fact from opinion in news articles was below 50% in all categories.

In addition to accessing information online, the manner in which online users interact with troubling content varies as well. In a Canadian media literacy study published by MediaSmarts (2014), youth in Grades 4 to 11 across the country were surveyed on their internet activity and experiences. Many students reported seeing racist or sexual content regularly, 56% of Grade 11 students reporting they see such content on a weekly or daily basis (p. 2). Although 78% of students identify posting racist or sexist content to be wrong, 45% of students report they feel it is not their place to challenge comments. Though students largely agree posting racist or sexist content is wrong, over half (57%) of all students view such posts as innocuous (p. 5-6); however, 47% of students who experience racist or sexist comments directed at them report it as harmful. An interesting trend to be noted is as the age of students increase, the belief that it is not their place to interject increases as well. This is a troubling correlation, as it suggests as students get older they become more apathetic to addressing online bigotry.
2.1. Information Abundance and Echo Chambers

While the community building aspect of the Internet has great potential for bringing people together around a cause and raising awareness about an issue, this does not mean the cause or issue is progressive. It can also allow for the facilitation of hate at a larger scale. The nature of online hate and the mass spread of racist messages—often littered with misinformation—creates online echo chambers of ignorance, fear, and hatred that can leave online users with the impression that the information and the opinions shared by the groups and forums they frequent are known to be true.

Web tracking utilized by online platforms, such as Facebook and YouTube, tracks user activity and history to find information an online user may find relevant or interesting. This tracking system is used to suggest content, groups, or pages reflecting a user’s interests. Web tracking can be useful for bringing relevant information forward and optimizing user experience and accessibility, but these algorithms quickly establish an echo chamber in which individuals are surrounded by an abundance of like-mindedness:

As consumers choose to cut through the commercial media clutter by selecting information and media outlets that reflect their political persuasions and preferences and cater to both a particular understanding of the world and an impassioned reaction to the day’s events, audiences run the danger of insulating
themselves from information and perspectives that might challenge their own. 
(Andrejevic, 2013)

Within an online echo chamber, opinions and perspectives often go unchallenged—for all sides of the political spectrum. We read information from the same people, we listen to news stories from the same media channels, we talk to people with similar opinions and experiences—we exist in an uninterrupted channel of constant and consistent communication. Flaxman, Goel, and Rao (2016) note that online users generally access publications that are “ideologically quite similar”, and users that read partisan articles regularly are “almost exclusively exposed to only one side of the political spectrum,” (Data and Method, para. 25); however, in the same study the researchers found online platforms are associated with “greater exposure to opposing perspectives,” (Results, para. 1).

Based on Habermas’ theories of the public sphere (1991) the potential of arguments to facilitate learning and contest ideals, it would make sense that the internet would establish a wide platform for users with different beliefs to come together and rationally voice, discuss, and debate opinions with the potential for a change in perspective. As speculated by Karlsen et al. (2017), it should not be expected that people are open to changing their beliefs when confronted, and confrontation may even result in a stronger attachment to the belief being questioned (p. 260). While Karlsen et al. express the idea of the internet as an online echo chamber is not an accurate depiction of the internet given the prevalence of users that engage in debates with others of different opinions (p. 269), they state a limitation in the study being the absence of extreme groups, such as those observed within this paper’s study.

While the literature on online echo chambers is extensive, the focus on alt-right and right extremist internet planforms in relation to the echo chamber theory is limited. An important element of alt-right online groups and forums used within this study’s virtual ethnography is the presence of a private section on the platform available only to members who purchase access. These private forums and threads, designed to exist as isolated spaces away from ‘non-members’, are arguably the very definition of online echo chambers in which members of the same perspectives and beliefs can exist in isolation without interference from outsiders.
Chapter 3. The Potential for Digital Narratives

3.1. Digital Storytelling

Digital storytelling refers to a wide range of information sharing techniques, such as but not limited to recorded oral stories and podcasts. Digital storytelling creates and archives not only individual memory, but also collective or public memory (McWilliam & Bickle, 2017, p. 78) and can serve as spoken evidence about the events, attitudes, and feelings of a time or experience. For marginalized groups, this open and accessible form of knowledge sharing can be incredibly powerful:

Digital storytelling developed in a milieu of arts practitioners committed to the democratization of culture: to empowering and giving voice to individuals and groups traditionally silenced, marginalized, or ignored by the mainstream culture. (Clarke & Adam, 2010, p. 159)

Information sharing including the sharing of news articles, academic studies, and think pieces though digital media has become increasingly popular, and this is no exception for alt-right online discourse. Noted by Clark (2010), we are living in a “narrative saturated world,” and stories are all around us (p. 4). Online radio shows, video logs, YouTube channels, and cartoons are utilized by alt-right groups to share information and spread their beliefs. Though this can be viewed as a negative outcome of digital storytelling, the ability to respond directly to a digital narrative with one’s own establishes an opportunity to acknowledge, discuss, and critique the discourses broadcasted by the alt-right online.

As expressed by Clarke and Adam (2010), digital narratives have the potential to submerge listeners in a topic more deeply as they create a story that can be related to and engaged with. Moreover, creating one’s own narrative can facilitate a deeper understanding of an issue and a reflection on the self in relation to it (p. 4). This concept will be further explained in the next section examining narrative learning.
3.2. Narrative Learning

Noted by Clark (2010) within Hatfield’s article (2017), there are three levels of narrative learning. These levels include: 1) bringing the listener into the story through listening; 2) telling stories ourselves; and finally, 3) understanding where we are situated within narratives and how our own stories fit within the narratives of others (p. 1). Through hearing stories, recipients become receivers of information and emotional knowledge (Clark, 2010, p. 5-6). A well told story draws listeners “into an experience at more than a cognitive level; they engage our spirit, our imagination, our heart, and this engagement is complex and holistic,” (Clark & Rossiter, 2008, p. 65). When we tell stories ourselves, we become the teachers and narrators of an event, putting together information and details to create a coherent narrative understood by ourselves and listeners (p. 6). This process results in narrators understanding what a story means to themselves (p. 6). Finally, by recognizing how we are situated in narratives, we can be critical of social contexts and even our own roles and presumptions, experiencing a “critical and even emancipatory” form of learning (p. 6).

Narratives can be powerful tools not only when sharing stories, but also when sharing information and complex concepts. Storytelling has the ability to engage listeners and facilitate deeper learning outcomes and understanding (Hatfield, 2017), bringing a “kind of coherence to the chaos of experience that bombards us daily,” (Clark, 2010, p. 3). Using storytelling to share complex and often sensitive information is beneficial as it allows both the narrator and listener to reflect on the narrative and distinguish valuable opportunities for learning:

This process of narrating our evolving understanding of something is how we make our learning visible to ourselves and to others; we can track it and thus be encouraged by its growth and be aware of what help we need to learn further. (Clark, 2010, p. 6).

The aim to create a podcast responding to alt-right discourse is based on the acknowledgement that communication and hate speech are rapidly changing, and as communicators we must adapt to the complexities of information sharing provided by the internet. With a special focus on women within alt-right discourse, the podcast is to be a woman’s voice on subjects that women have historically been silenced including gender
equality, political participation, and sexual violence. Despite the history of silenced female perspectives, an element of alt-right discourse I found particularly intriguing was the increase of female alt-right voices online. Most notably, female YouTubers promoting alt-right values have gained momentum and are commonly highlighted by alt-right platforms as ‘enlightened’ women who understand the alt-right is fighting for their best interest. A strong push for traditionalism is notable in several white female voices, such as Lana Lokteff of Radio 3Fourteen and Lauren Southern, a self-proclaimed anti-feminist and alt-right YouTuber.

In my own podcast I will aim to create a dialogue that is based on a combination of narratives from my own experience as a white, female Canadian growing up in a dominantly white city, and critiques of alt-right discourse found online. As a white woman who grew up in an environment that cultivated alt-right narratives, the podcast will further present a learning opportunity for myself as the narrator, helping me position my experiences and acknowledge my own role within this discourse.

A significant element of the podcast will include the inclusion of the process of fact-checking alt-right articles and discussion, noting arguments and statistics that have been skewed or are blatantly false. The podcast will utilize narrative storytelling alongside factual data gathered from government and scholarly data bases to establish an approachable form of educational communication (Hatfield, 2017).

Through the podcast I will be joining in this alt-right dialogue by intervening in their discourse from a critical angle, responding to alt-right counterparts. The alt-right has latched on to traditionalist, anti-feminist white women as female online crusaders for the alt-right cause, women whose discontent with modern feminism and globalist agendas is propagated as a symbol of how white women everywhere should feel. Why women would feel strongly about promoting alt-right and traditionalist values is a question that prods at my own research and understanding of alt-right narratives, and is one explored throughout my review of the literature (see below) and as I conducted my virtual ethnography.
Chapter 4. Situating Canadian White Nationalism

The motivation to ground the project within a Canadian context comes from a notable prevalence of denial when it comes to speaking about racism in Canada. As a country colonized by predominantly white settlers and riddled with a history of white dominance, Canada has and continues to have racist undertones that reinforce social inequalities (Mignolo, 2007; Million, 2018; Razack, 2002). Within the colonial state, there are several different levels of white nationalism at play, ranging from the settler that rejects the existence of white privilege (Regan, 2010) to the extreme-right activist targeting racial minorities through acts of violence such as the Quebec City mosque shooting in 2017 that took the lives of six worshippers (Perreaux, 2018). As Canada continues to become more ethnically diverse as a result of various influences such as immigration and refugee intake, animosity toward visible minorities grows in tandem (Leber, 2017; Angus Reid, 2017; Statistics Canada, 2017). Pockets of alt-right sentiments can be seen gaining momentum as political leaders such as United Conservative Party (UCP) leader Jason Kenney in Alberta, recently elected Conservative leader Doug Ford in Ontario, and Republican President Donald Trump to the south feed into anti-immigrant and anti-diversity discourse.

Though white nationalists can be viewed as an outlier group within Canada, the messages and actions of individuals promoting hate-fuelled ideals cannot be ignored in a time when alt-right extremist groups are developing and communicating in new ways. In response to the recent intake of Syrian refugees—a large proportion being Muslim—outspoken white nationalism within the country has heightened, fuelled by xenophobia and a fear of ‘Islam’. Crimes directly related to Islamophobia have steadily risen (Leber, 2017) and violent acts against Muslims shake the mediascape, threatening the supposed ‘peaceful Canadian’ image.

From 2014 to 2015, eight provinces showed an increase in the number of police-reported hate crimes. The increase was most pronounced in Alberta with a 39% increase province-wide:

This increase was primarily driven by an increase in police-reported hate crimes motivated by hatred against the Muslim population (+12 incidents), Arab or West
Asian populations (+10 incidents), Black populations (+9 incidents) and the Jewish population (+8 incidents). (Leber, 2017)

Overall, 48% of all police-reported hate crimes in 2015 were “motivated by hatred of a race or ethnicity,” and police-reported crimes motivated by hate against the Muslim population rose by 61% in 2015 (2017).

While mainstream Canadian Liberal narratives in mainstream media such as The Globe and Mail, Toronto Star, National Post, Huffington Post, CBC, and CTV (Tyyskä et al., 2017) pose an environment of welcoming and multicultural celebration, the acceptance of diversity is not—both in the current environment and in the past—a widespread phenomenon in the country. In an Angus Reid (2017) survey on refugees specifically points out that 54% of respondents agreed with a statement claiming refugees do not make enough of an effort to fit into “mainstream Canadian society” (para. 23). In the same study, 38% claimed their neighborhood would not be accepting of refugees settling in their community (the highest percentages being 46% in Quebec, 43% in Saskatchewan, and 42% in Alberta) (para. 22). Perhaps one of the most notable findings of the study is the alarming 25% of people who identified Donald Trump’s temporary religious-specific travel ban—a policy that would apply to those seeking asylum—as a policy Canada should also implement, the highest percentage belonging to Albertan respondents at 37% (para. 4).

After reading the findings of AR’s report, the claim that the alt-right community within Canada is the only source of racist dogma is arguable, to say the least; moreover, some argue that like other settler states, Canada’s national identity is founded on racism (Regan, 2010; Razack, 2002). A journey into Canadian nationalism often leads to a complex, confusing, and even frustrating (mis)adventure for scholars, policy makers, and anyone attempting to put forward what a Canadian identity entails. While the liberal version of Canada lays claims to accepting cultural diversity, can a universal definition of a Canadian exist? Further, does there need to be such a definition? Canadian nationalism is often characterized in terms of less political images, such as hockey fans crowding into a local pub at 5AM to watch a World Junior hockey game and having beer for breakfast as provincial governments temporarily amended drinking laws during the gold medal game, or a video of a moose slipping on ice while running alongside a vehicle sporting a seasonal Tim Horton’s cup on the dashboard. As one alt-right

Despite these harmless takes on Canadian nationalism that many residents would lightheartedly embrace, there also exists a deep-rooted sense of nationality tied to Eurocentrism and white-settler dominance. Historically, this conception of nationalism idealizes Anglo-Saxons and has resulted in immigration laws (Huot et al., 2015; Essas et al., 2013) legislation and programs, and public opinion in a civil society that sees non-Anglo Saxons as threats, epitomized perhaps most profoundly in the inhuman treatment of Indigenous peoples and early non-European immigrants such as Sikhs, Chinese, and Japanese Canadians (Roy, 2016; Stanley, 2014; Day, 2010).

The recognition of Canada’s racist foundation is far from being imbedded within dominant discourse, and Canadians pride themselves on their image as global humanitarians accepting of all peoples. Noted by Canadian scholar Sherene H. Razack (2007), Canadians take pleasure in seeing themselves “as sensitive humanitarians who feel the pain of others deeply,” (pp. 381). This imagery of Canadians as not only heroes to those suffering, but further as innocent agents who carry the burden of empathy for those who suffer juxtaposes Canada’s history of colonialism and racial discrimination:

…we continue to maintain a willful blindness about our collective history… anything that might show us how we are implicated in the West’s power over the non-West… our national mythology is that we are completely innocent, as a middle power and as nice Canadians. (pp. 391)

The perpetuation of this mythology hinders the recognition of injustice within Canada, inhibiting structural changes that would dismantle white-settler dominance within the nation. Additionally, the reluctance to acknowledge racism within Canada allows for alt-right groups and discourse to remain imbedded within dominant society. The unease white Canadians feel and the resistance to confronting the racial injustices that founded and continue to maintain the hegemonic whiteness of the nation, paired with increasing anxiety over losing dominant status to non-white immigrants, has established room for white supremist discourse to thrive.
Throughout Canada's history of immigration, there are those who claim newcomers pose a threat to social cohesion, threatening the country’s economy, the culture and “traditional ways of life”, and “religious integrity” (Frost, 2017, p. 111). More recently, anti-refugee sentiments have become loaded with accusations suggesting Muslim newcomers are here to ‘enforce Sharia Law’ and ‘Canadian identity’ is ‘under attack’. The anxiety surrounding the increase of Muslims in Canada is extorted to push an anti-immigrant narrative. Books like ‘Canada in Decay’ by Richard Duchesne (2017) propagate the idea of Canada, a ‘white-European’ nation, in dire need of reviving its nationalism and defending itself from the influence of those not deemed part of the white-Anglo hegemony; ideals pooling over the North American border from Trump’s ‘America First’ are bringing rise to civil unrest and animosity toward the influx of non-European or non-white newcomers within Canada.
Chapter 5.

Women’s History in White Nationalism

Women’s involvement within white nationalist movements is not new to the digital era. Throughout history, white women have been involved, engaged, and imbedded within white supremacist discourse and activity. Sarnoff (2012) explains the politicization of domesticity using the case of French fascist leagues, Le Faisceau and La Solidarité Francais, in the 1920s and 1930s:

The connection of familial happiness, cooking, and fashion to the politics of fascism helped create and reinforce the idea that the domestic was political. In this way, the leagues reframed the concepts of public and private and used them for political gain. The recasting of gender ideology and the reframing of separate spheres ideology enabled extreme right and fascist groups to support female suffrage... while at the same time advocating “traditional” female roles. (Sarnoff, 2012, p. 167)

In her book, “Inside Organized Racism: Women in the Hate Movement,” Kathleen M. Blee (2003) explores the role of women in white supremacist movements in the 1990s. She identifies the characteristic of racist movements throughout history to “[trumpet] the idea that white men are in imminent danger of losing their proper economic, political, and social place to undeserving white women and to non-white men and women,” (p. 113). As masculinity is the perceived foundation of white politics and white society, femininity is a passive force that is defended by the masculine (p.113).

Blee identifies four general archetypes utilized by white supremacists in their portrayal of white women: 1) as “ethereal Nordic goddesses and racial victims”; 2) as “potential “race traitors”; 3) as “wifely supporters of male racial warriors and bearers of the next generation of Aryans”; and finally, 4) as “racist activists in their own right” (p. 115). Historically (most strongly prevalent in USA-based white supremacy), the narrative of white women needing protection from brutal black men has been exploited to justify the persecution of the non-white male. The utilization of the white woman as a potential victim brings women into the political conversation as tools to be used in bigotry, all the
while maintaining traditionalist gender roles (p. 116). The role of white women within the white supremacist movement is to be an object white men need to protect, and to be a mother who will raise white children with white supremacist beliefs.

In Home-Grown Hate: Gender and Organized Racism edited by Abby L. Ferber (2004), the relationship between gender and racism is explored within white supremacist organizations such as white separatists, the Christian right, and the militia/patriot movements/ skinheads. In the first chapter written by Chip Berlet (2004), gender and race oppression within right-wing movements are examined. Berlet identifies control over reproduction a key feature in extreme right groups, such as the White Aryan Resistance (WAR) that strongly opposes abortion for white women while supporting abortion rights for non-white women; however, white women who have ‘interbred’ are categorized on the same level as non-white women (p. 29).

Kathleen M. Blee contributes the following chapter of the book with a focus on women within organized racist groups. Blee notes the increasing recruitment of women into racist groups, her study interviewing women within the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) having a wide range of age groups with a median of age twenty-four (p. 47). She categories women’s roles within racist groups into familiar (most common), social, and operative (p. 48). Within interviews with Klan members and Nazis, a recurring theme of “family-like” qualities being used to describe racist groups was reported. While this familial environment is positive for many members, some members—especially women—find their experience within racist groups “[do] not measure up to idealized portraits of family life,” (p. 49) and some members find group dynamics overly male-dominated and patronizing. The family is also a tool for indoctrination and modern neo-Nazi and Klan groups enlist women and adolescent girls in hopes of enlisting their entire family (p. 49). Maternal roles are heavily emphasized, and the responsibility of having a large number of white children is stressed on female members. In their role as mothers, white women serve as the teachers of what researchers have identified as racial and religious bigotry:

The children are ushered into a world of racial and religious hatred at a very early age. Homes are strewn with drawings, photos, flyers, videos, and pamphlets filled with vicious lies and threats against racial and religious enemies. In one house, a child’s high chair featured a hand-scrawled swastika on the back. In another, children’s crayons lay on flyers denouncing Jews as inhuman. (p. 51)
Interestingly, very few of the women Blee interviewed reported coming from racist families.

The social role of female members is vital in establishing feelings of belonging to a group and accumulating a “collective identity” (p. 54). Several Klan women reported 85 – 90 percent of their total socialization time was spent within their racist groups (p. 54). As members become more engaged within their community, they feel a closer bond to their fellow racists and to the cause itself. The continuous involvement in group-related activities and heightened interaction amongst members works to reinforce racist ideas.

In a study on the World Church of the Creator (WCOTC), a right-wing white-separatist group, Rogers and Litt (2004) examine the role of gender and motherhood within an alt-right framework. Rogers and Litt note that within the WCOTC, white men are portrayed as “having created, molded, and civilized almost every continent in the world,” (p. 93). The WCOTC supports the creation and maintenance of all-white communities extending to all-white nations, reflecting a belief of white superiority. Women’s roles within white supremacist groups are largely geared toward family and social roles that “uphold white separatism and teach white supremacy in everyday life,” (p. 96). The research finds two roles of white women within the white supremacist movement:

First, mothers’ everyday practices and attitudes play a central role in the production of white supremacy. Second, women should be given a more public and visible role in the movement, which would bring them, if not into leadership, at least into public forms of activism. Both approaches hold an ideology that constructs women as purposefully oriented toward and responsible for securing white racial superiority. (p. 96)

Rogers and Litt claim the utilization of motherhood establishes maternalism as a vehicle for normalizing white supremacy and attracting female support by creating the image of women having a powerful role within the movement (p. 97-98). Reflective of dominant white supremacist discourse, “good mothering” is correlated with what it means to be a good white woman.

Literature surrounding women within organized racist groups of the right discourse identify the role of women as good wives and ‘fertile’ mothers as dominant,
recurring themes. In the digital era today, the women of the alt-right are arguably even louder than they have been in the past, utilizing the accessibility and in some cases the anonymity of the Internet to engage with the discourse both directly and indirectly.
Chapter 6.

Methodology

In order to study and understand alt-right discourse, it is vital that researchers gain an understanding of the transnationalism of hate speech in the age of rapid information sharing and instant communication across borders. While my research is rooted in a Canadian context, I have included several sources from the USA and countries within Europe that also experience growing alt-right movements. My reasoning for using sources outside of the Canadian context is reflective of the nature of the internet and international platforms: the alt-right is an international community that does not exist in isolation, and thus no nation-based alt-right group prevalent online must be treated as though it does. Rather than just studying alt-right groups, I wanted to contribute by experimenting with producing a counter-discourse. Thus, my contribution here with respect to the issue of growing alt-right discourse is to produce a self-reflective, exploratory, and critical podcast that serves to breach the online echo chamber of hatred established by alt-right online personalities through responding to prominent public voices and members of online racist communities.

6.1. Enter the Echo Chamber: Virtual Ethnography

I decided to use virtual ethnographic research methods (Domínguez et al, 2007; Steinmetz, 2012; Shumar & Madison, 2013) to gain an understanding of the exchange and expressions of alt-right ideas and discourse taking place online. Traditional ethnographies have been “commonly understood as (a) a long-term, face-to-face, social scientific approach to fieldwork that includes researching and analyzing social formations, people, and cultural practices through participant observation in a central geographic site and (b) a genre of writing generated from this process of qualitative data collection that uses field notes, interview excerpts, and life narratives to explain and represent cultural beliefs and practices,” (Williams, 2015). An expansion of traditional ethnographic practices, a virtual ethnography then “examines how computer-mediated-communications and digital technologies are used to shape, transform, and produce culture” and is a “form of research that may cross spatial and temporal boundaries”
(Williams, 2015). As noted by Williams, the application of ethnographic practices to online communities allows researchers to engage in research that extends physical and temporal boundaries (2015). In my circumstance, utilizing virtual ethnography allowed me to examine a community that could potentially be hostile to critical examination of anti-feminist discourse.

Given the nature of the alt-right existing largely online, a virtual ethnography allowed for the group to be examined at the level of their interactions with online alt-right media, user-generated content, and with one another in forums and threads. My selection of platform was guided by an aim to understand online environments where alt-right communities interact, including where conversations are taking place, whom are the prominent figureheads in the online community, and identifying the main symbols and themes common amongst alt-right discourse.

Noted by Steinmetz (2012) the “entire phenomenon of the Internet is based on connections… When a group of people are in a chatroom together, they are all joined by signals in what can be called a ‘node’ (Wittel, 2000). A node is a “place” where these connections meet” (p. 28). These ‘nodes’ within alt-right platforms are where my virtual ethnography took place. Moving from node to node and acknowledging trends within narratives and discourse, I was able to immerse myself within the alt-right online community while I prepared my own critical response to the discourse through the podcast.

In my case, my engagement with the material can be classified as passive ethnography, or as identified by Steinmetz (2012), I was a “lurker” (p. 34) as I did not contribute to the content or interact with the communities firsthand; however, the podcast portion of the research is where my active status as a researcher is to be anchored. My activity with the material and the navigation of the online realm was reflective of how other online users might navigate the online alt-right world as they search for communities and platforms—though my motivation was grounded in critical examination. This process allowed for me as a researcher to understand how online users experience the immersion into alt-right platforms and online social environments.

The ethnography occurred in public domains that did not constitute private discussions as they were publicly accessible sites and were not restricted to
membership (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2014, p. 16). It should be noted that the majority of the sites visited and studied had private forums that were only accessible for paid members.

The choice to remain a passive observer within the alt-right online world was one informed by a concern for my safety as a researcher given the sensitivity of the topic being observed. Moreover, as there is a fear of ‘doxing’—publicly releasing the personal information of an online user often to “humiliate, intimidate, threaten, or punish the identified individual,” (Douglas, 2016, p. 1)—within the alt-right community, especially amongst extreme right members, the risk of isolating myself from the community or impacting how the community would continue to communicate was heavily considered and weighed greater than the limitation of not engaging with the community directly.

6.1.1. Mapping the Alt-right Online World & Defining Boundaries

To understand alt-right discourse online I first had to become emerged within it. What are the dominant platforms? Where are the big conversations happening? This entailed frequenting alt-right online forums such as Stormfront, 4Chan’s /pol forum, Red Ice TV, and multiple alt-right Facebook groups and YouTube channels on a daily basis to monitor activity consistently.

My immersion into the online alt-right world was notably organic and began on the Facebook page Soldiers of Odin Canada, an anti-immigrant group from Sweden now within Canada known for sweeping the streets and patrolling non-white bodies. Through reading posts and comments and watching shared videos, I was led to alternative media platforms frequented by the alt-right such as Rebel Media, Free Speech Time, and Breitbart. From there, I was guided to Red Ice TV, a radio show known for ‘defending white heritage’ and presenting anti-immigrant sentiments. From Red Ice TV’s main server, I found their YouTube channel covering similar issues as their main radio show. Users of YouTube will be familiar with their web tracking ‘Suggestions’ tab that suggests videos for users based on their viewing history. Through this function, I found other prominent alt-right YouTubers such a Lauren Southern and The White Rabbit. This process continued until I had a wide range of websites, Facebook pages, and YouTube channels to navigate.
As previously described, my research process was organic given the nature of online communities and responsive to the patterns I found. From one website or username, I would be led to another site with new members; with each new article, I was led to other alt-right platforms that were referenced (as many of the online articles written by alt-right platforms conveniently use information from other alt-right sources). In some cases, I followed digital footprints of alt-right online users across platforms to better understand their contribution to the discourse and the platforms they utilized. This entailed following links posted by users which would lead to other forums and online platforms where they were active and visiting user’s publicly accessible profiles on large forums to examine their activity (many users share links to their other online social media accounts such as blogs). Several users were well established across multiple forums and further linked their accounts together, allowing others to find them across online environments. While this method was not always dependable (many users had since had their accounts removed or deleted from more monitored social media sites such as Twitter), it did give insight on how wide individual alt-right online user’s activities are spread in terms of presence across platforms.

Ironically, the internet algorithm I critique for creating insular self-enclosed virtual echo chambers assisted with my research through suggesting YouTube channels and ‘Groups’ on social media. By browsing alt-right groups on Facebook, the social media platform’s tracking algorithm suggested relevant groups to my recent activity. Quite rapidly, my Facebook suggestions morphed into a narrow range of alt-right Groups and Pages, mirroring the online experience of those inhabiting alt-right spaces. As I remained a passive observer, my presence was not known to other users within these platforms. Additionally, this recognition of my ability to examine the materials from an outside view suggests the population of users on these sites could be in fact larger than they seem as without access to the websites audience analytics, I have no way to measure the traffic of non-registered users to each platform.

As mentioned above, the boundaries I used for my research kept me within public online areas such as Facebook Groups and Pages and open forums such as Stormfront and /Pol. No personal accounts were assessed or examined, and any users I quoted in the study have had their usernames omitted.
6.1.2. Identifying the ‘Big Players’

Several months spent on various platforms allowed me to recognize prominent speakers and influencers within the alt-right online community. In particular, female voices appeared to have growing staying power and were often highlighted as ‘ideal’ women who had been strong enough to resist the manipulation of Liberal (or Jewish for extremists) media, videos from Lana Lokteff and Lauren Southern often shared within alt-right and extreme right threads and forums. Given that white supremacist and nationalist groups have historically been viewed a masculine-centred domains, the prevalence of female voices was striking.

Female online personalities such as Lana Lokteff of Red Ice TV’s Radio 3Fourteen, Lauren Southern, and Mormon blogger Ayla Stewart (well known for her “white baby challenge” that calls for white couples to ‘repopulate’ the white race) have gained notable momentum and recognition within the alt-right. A common practice used by Lokteff and Southern is a panel-like YouTube or radio discussion involving other alt-right women that creates a unified image of women within the movement. An example of this is a YouTube video posted by Red Ice TV titled “Is A Traditional Woman the Ideal Woman” in which three alt-right women discuss their traditionalist lifestyles and comment on how feminism has destroyed female integrity:

All [feminism] gave us was an unhappy and unfulfilled generation of women… it put our children at risk… it gave us immorality disguised as freedom. (Red Ice TV, 2018).

6.1.3. Recognizing Alt-right Cultural Codes & Discourse Themes

Reminiscent of the literature, the themes within alt-right online discourse were relatively similar to the narratives found in pre-2000s racist discourse. While my virtual ethnography was quite broad and explorative in the sense that I accessed a variety of websites as I was made aware of them, the main sources I focused on where Stormfront, Red Ice TV, Rebel Media, and Breitbart. The key themes I identified throughout online platforms were:

1) White genocide
2) Race traitors

3) The white wife and mother

These thematic trends in the discourse will be explored and explained more thoroughly in the following chapter. Additionally, the linear relationship between the four trends will be explored, and the imperative of discourse surrounding white women will be highlighted as an outcome of the previous trends that establish a foundation for the enforcement of ‘women as wombs’ narratives.
Chapter 7.

White Nationalist Narratives

7.1. White Genocide

A common term throughout alt-right and extreme right groups online, ‘white genocide’ refers to the believed ongoing process of ‘interbreeding’ between whites and non-whites that results in the decline of ‘white features’. The term can be traced back to early neo-Nazi publications post WWII, such as White Power, the official newspaper of the National Socialist White People’s Party (Feshami, 2017). The idea is also known as ‘The Great Replacement’, coined by French writer Renaud Camus in speculation about immigration into France (Williams, 2017).

This process is understood as an intentional attack of the white European in an effort to erase white people from existence:

This genocide is being carried out by means of mass non-white immigration and forced assimilation in ALL and ONLY white countries the goal of which is to force blend ONLY white people out of existence. Anyone who objects to this crime is subject to harassment, intimidation, violent acts and threats of violence, psychological terrorism, job loss, and prison terms. (Fight White Genocide, 2017)

The White Genocide process primarily targets white women and non-white men—there is very little focus on non-white women and white men (same-sex relationships are omitted completely).
7.1.1. The Creation of the White Victim

Alongside the idea that immigration and diversity are being used to conquer white nations, some alt-right groups have blamed ‘forced diversity’ as the cause of their radical responses. In a cartoon video released by Red Ice TV (2017) titled “Forced Multiculturalism Makes Nazis,” the story of how a “nice White guy who used to enjoy the diversity of the world until they all came to live in his country,” (2017) is told. The cartoon portrays a blonde-haired, blue eyed European travelling to Africa (no country is listed), India, and China. Upon arriving at each destination, stereotypical images and music are shown. The non-white characters in the cartoon are portrayed in heavily stereotypical fashions reminiscent of WWI and WWII propaganda posters, such as the ‘African men’ dressed in tribal wear dancing around a fire in front of a straw hut, their faces in the ‘selfie’ taken by the character drawn with stern expressions paired with small eyes, large mouths, and large noses. This style of approach to the representation of non-white individuals can be traced back to eugenics-supportive photographic pursuits in the 1920s and further to Nazi Germany and the creation of the “good race” (Maxwell, 2008, p. 147).

Upon returning home to Europe, the man is met by a black man characterized by narrow eyes, an exaggerated nose, and large lips accented with a mouthful of missing and crooked teeth. The black character reaches toward the white man asking for money through a series of mumbles. The train taken by the white man is crowded with non-
white characters, the white man drawn with an angry look on his face as he is pushed by an obese man wearing a turban and a woman in a burka.

![Image](image_url)

**Figure 3**  Red Ice TV, Forced Multiculturalism Makes Nazis [video file], 2017

At work, the office is filled with Chinese workers, their heads down as they type furiously on computers lined up in a long row. The video ends with the white character dressed in a KKK robe putting up Nazi memorabilia on his shelf. A message flashes across the screen to the sound of 'It's Not Unusual' by Tom Jones: “with forced diversity, instead of loving other cultures, we grow to hate them. Multiculturalism creates conflict. “Diversity” sucks,” (2017). The video hosted on YouTube has garnered 558,030 views with 22,000 ‘upvotes’ and 9,800 ‘downvotes’.

### 7.2. Race Traitors

A common term amongst white nationalist forums is “race traitors” –white people who are in mixed relationships and give birth to ‘mixed’ children. In a thread on Stormfront Canada, one user lists a four-step solution to dealing with race traitors:

1. Arrest all known race traitors and have them serve a long prison sentence, after which they will be thoroughly re-educated to align themselves with the race.
2. Deport race traitors to non-white nations. Ban them from white civilization, they can have as many bastardized children as they want in some African "country”.
3. Immediate sterilization, though this will prevent them from also having white
children it will also prevent them from having anymore mixed raced children. This should be done prior to their prison sentence.

4. The most radical of all solutions and the final solution if I may use that phrase, well I think we all know where this one goes. These are just my ideas, feel free to present your own and what you think should be done about these traitors. (2015)

In response to the suggestion, another user suggests to instead “sterilise the white who have committed the sin of race-mixing,” and “Deport the non-whites back to their country of origin,” (2015). Another user states: “The penalty for race mixing is death,” (2018).

The concept of ‘race traitors’ is not unique to the Stormfront community, and as noted earlier is a recurring identity given to whites who enter into relationships with non-whites. In an interview with Tim Murdock (The White Rabbit) on Red Ice TV’s Radio 3Fourteen, Murdock refers to race traitors as people who “suffer from a pathological mental disease,” (Murdock, 2014). Another recurring theme throughout the history of alt-right discourse, the explanation of mixed relationships including a white person is claimed to be a result of a mental deficiency. Within online discourse, the mental illness of women who seek out interracial partners is propagated by both white men and white women within the movement:

If a white woman doesn’t want a white man then she is suffering from a mental disorder and should be treated… This is why we need to spread Aryan culture as much as possible. No Aryan woman will submit herself to anything less than an Aryan man. For your daughters it begins in the home. You must model our values as well as speak them in all things. (Stormfront User, 2016)

7.3. Women as Wombs

As a linear process, alt-right narratives lead to an ‘aha’ moment of realizing a key player in the reproduction of white children: white women. The ‘woman as mother’ narrative is emphasized in today’s alt-right movements as it has been in history, heightened in an online community that allows users to post their beliefs and interact with likeminded people feeding off commonality. The emphasis placed on white women as bearers of white children can be found throughout white nationalist forums like
Stormfront and YouTube channels such as Red Ice TV and Lauren Southern’s channel, and even within nationalist political parties.

The Canadian Nationalist Party (CNP)—currently an unregistered federal party—has an interesting policy within their platform called the “Introduce Newlywed Marriage Loan”. At first glance, the loan appears as an assistance to newly married couples who are struggling to purchase a home; however, upon examination, incentives for couples to have multiple children becomes apparent:

In order to incentivize larger families and increased birth rates, a marriage loan for newlywed couples will be introduced. For each common child of this marriage, 20% of the loan will be forgiven. Therefore, a family of 5 children would have the entirety of the loan forgiven. (CNP, 2018)

One could imagine how, if in place, this policy would place pressure on low income couples to have multiple children in rapid succession—not to mention the complete dismissal of same-sex couples who are legally married under Canadian law. This would also ignore children born in wedlock or born to previous partners. Within the context of the party’s stance on anti-immigration and a call to deport ‘illegals’, the incentive for Canadian families to have, ideally, five children is reminiscent of alt-right groups’ perceived need to birth more white children in the fight against White Genocide. The party’s platform has several other notable policies including disallowing social welfare for those who have not been citizens for more than 5 years, increasing military funding, and ending government funding of Pride parades (2018).

From my virtual ethnography, it is apparent that within online forums and blogs white nationalist movements are beginning to seek women out and make the movement more ‘woman friendly’, while continuing the trend of placing an emphasis on the value of white women as bearers of white children. Within the website Stormfront, a ‘women’s only’ thread titled “Sugar and Spice and Everything Nice” establishes an online area designed for women and facilitates several discussion surrounding womanhood within the alt-right. A common theme is the praising of women who have ‘contributed’ to the white population, and the role of women as child bearers and ‘good wives’ is celebrated:
Having White kids, raising an awakened family, being a good wife to a White man... there are so many things we as women can do to help our White race thrive. (Stormfront User, 2012)

Women without children often portray themselves as individuals not contributing to the cause:

Well, I am 40 and have no kids so contribute nothing.... still, at least I haven't produced any non white kids. (Stormfront User, 2012)

If I fail to have more than a firstborn, or have too many to financially support, I will have failed my life's purpose, and my Race. (Stormfront User, 2017)

Women-focused alt-right narratives are increasingly popular on YouTube. Lana Lokteff of Red Ice TV, her program in specific titled Radio 3Fourteen, and Lauren Southern are two of the leading female voices amongst western alt-right channels. Both Lokteff and Southern dedicate several of their videos (ranging from 20 minutes to an hour) to ‘women related issues’ such as motherhood, relationships, and as one of Lokteff’s videos is titled, ‘how to live a feminine life’.

Though woman have gained momentum within the alt-right online movement, it is important to understand misogyny is alive and well within the alt-right community and their cry to reinstate traditional familial settings. There is a heavy focus on women not as potential political allies, but rather as potential carriers of white children throughout online forums and platforms.

In a post on an alt-right website known as ‘The Right Stuff’ (which has had its domain taken down), user ‘Wolfie James’ (2016) writes a step-by-step guide on ‘How to Red Pill Your Woman’ on his personal blog. James founds the article on his understanding that “women are more emotional than rational” and require a gentle coaxing to embracing alt-right sentiments. Additionally, James suggests that the manipulation of the threat of sexual violence by racialized men is a useful tool:

Bring up interracial relationship crime statistics... home invasion, assault, rape, murder, and sodomy. Nothing triggers like... ahem. (Wolfie James, 2016)

James does not include any reference to statistics of the violence he lays claim to.
In another article titled ‘A Place for Women in the Alt-right’ posted to an alt-right and often right extremist online publishing site, James echoes his previous guide to converting white women in another misogynistic think piece that reinforces the characterization of white men as conquerors and women as caretakers and carriers for children:

It’s no secret that historically, men have harnessed intelligence, drive, pride, and anger to lead and conquer, while women have been empathetic supporting characters who provide vital biological services. (Wolfie James, 2017)

The perception of women as emotional, irrational beings has long been touted within Western sex discourse: “whereas maleness stands for reason, femaleness is characterized by another mood of understanding, in which taste, sensibility, practical sense, and feeling are more important,” (Fischer, 1993, p. 303). The supposed inherent differences between men and women, as noted by Fischer (1993), are a result of each sex designed to fulfill different functions, men being better suited for individual pursuits and women to pursuits that involve caring for others, such as their husbands and children (p. 304). This understanding of emotionality is heavily contested by feminist critiques that call for an understanding of social context and social constructs:

Instead of speaking of emotionality as a kind of sex-specific disposition or personality trait, we should acknowledge that emotions are largely social reactions that are embedded in culture meaning systems… my basic assumption here is that men and women in principle are equally disposed to experience and express a variety of emotions, and that differences in the emotional lives of men and women are largely due to cultural and social factors. (Fischer, 1993, p. 306).

The perpetuation of binary gender roles present within alt-right discourse creates restrictive, binary social roles established by one’s sex: if you are a man, you must be strong, powerful, and a leader; if you are a woman, you must be obedient, mindful of the needs of others, and submissive.
Chapter 8. Responding to Women as Wombs

The focal point of the podcast will be to present a response to the ‘women as wombs’ narratives that I discovered while conducting my virtual ethnography of alt-right discourse. Women as carriers of children that support the growth of the white race are vital to the alt-right and white supremacist cause at a biological level. The need for women’s wombs and commitment to raising white children becomes a foundation for traditionalist narratives that adamantly supports traditionalist gender roles, such as the housewife and mother, and present alt-right communities as places where women can thrive.

8.1. The Ideal (White) Woman: Submissive Wife, Dedicated Mother

Rely on your husband to give you what you need… apologize for being disrespectful whenever you contradict, criticize, or dismiss your husband’s thoughts and ideas; make yourself sexually available to your husband (at least once a week); defer to your husband’s thinking when you have conflicting opinions; most of all, practice saying the following line: “Whatever you think, dear.” Say it with a smile. Try it now. Feels good, doesn’t it? (Doyle, 2001).

Alt-right discourse dedicates a great deal of resources towards fabricating the perfect woman who can raise white children. Reflective of traditional gender roles such as the stereotypical 50s housewife—a symbol praised within alt-right discourse—the ‘ideal’ woman is a white obedient, submissive, well-groomed wife, and mother to many children. Though studies have shown that “working women have been found to be healthier and less depressed than homemakers,” (Rivers, 2007, p. 29) and “childlessness [does] not have a significant impact on a woman’s wellbeing,” (p. 34) the narratives pushed by pro-traditionalists highlighted by alt-right communities preach that women are ‘statistically’ happier as housewives.
In a panel hosted by Red Ice TV, three traditionalist women join together to discuss how “not only are most women happier in this traditional role, but that homemaking micro-behaviours are inexorably connected to the establishment of a more natural way of living.” (Red Ice TV, 2018). The three speakers often reminisce about the past (despite all being in their 30s and 20s), citing June Cleaver—a housewife and mother in the sitcom “Leave it to Beaver”—as a role model for women with her abilities to cook from scratch, sew, and maintain the household: “[June Cleaver] wasn’t a nag… she wasn’t a control freak… she was just very calm and in a good mood,” (2018).

The panel all agree that the June Cleaver archetype has been misrepresented by Liberal media that portrays the 50s family as having problematic sexual inequalities. In addressing the role of feminism in the lives of women, one panel member states: “[Feminism] has taken away from us. It’s taken away from the opportunity to embrace traditionalism without criticism, it’s taken away the community of the homemakers, it’s taken away the economy that we could survive on one income,” (Red Ice TV, 2018).

Despite studies of women’s health and wellbeing in the 50s being at an incredible low characterized by high rates of depression and anxiety, “married women in the fifties [having] rates of depression and anxiety that were four times as high as those of men, prompting one expert to call marriage a health hazard for women,” (Rivers, 2007, p. 9), the alt-right discourse surrounding traditionalist roles is adamant that such a strict familial structure is for the benefit of women. Expressed by Beaumont (2017), the reduction of experiences of 1950s women “limits our understandings of women’s past lives, their diverse experiences of domesticity and their ability to enjoy life and to control
their own destinies,” (p. 148). The lives of housewives and homemakers of the past are routinely glamourized to push forward traditionalist rhetoric.

In contrast to the panel’s critiques of Liberal media, Rivers (2007) notes an opposite trend reminiscent in Western media:

The more that women advance in the world of business, academia, medicine, law, economics—the more desperately gloomy the news about women and achievements becomes. As statistics tell us that more women are getting more college degrees... the more intense becomes the message that this is all a terrible mistake, that only by returning to traditional lives can women find happiness. (p. 1)

Rivers further notes that during the suffrage movement, the media was incredibly hysteric, arguing that if women were able to vote they would "cease to be the angels of the heart that men so admired, would become coarse and crass... incapable of being good mothers, and the family would be destroyed," (p. 8). As noted within the literature, female independence and gender equality have historically been characterized as a destruction of the traditional, nuclear family. As expressed within a Red Ice TV segment, when a woman enters the workplace—a perceived male dominated realm—she “take[s] on masculine traits” and this causes “problems” at home (Red Ice TV, 2017).

Traditionalist narratives perpetuated by the alt-right signal a dangerous discourse in which gender equality is a matter of opinion and not of law or fact. As expressed by MacKinnon (2006):

If the equality of the sexes is recognized to be a fact, equalizing socially unequal groups is merely a problem to be solved. But if sex equality is seen as a value, it can be accepted or rejected as one side in a normative discussion. (p. 10)

Within alt-right discourse, it becomes evident that gender equality is watered down to each sex fulfilling their ‘biological role’, men as providers and leaders, women as housekeepers.
8.2. The Exploitation of Violence Against Women for White Men’s Gain

A notable trend amongst alt-right communities is the focus on violence against women by non-white men. Alt-right sites commonly dedicate a page or thread to highlighting violence against women, especially within the Arab world. Female genital mutilation, child marriages, domestic violence, and honour killings are all sensationalized and used as a warning to white women in the West: this is what will become of you if we allow diversity.

Sexual violence has largely existed within the female domain of public and private life. Men are not excluded from this violence, but the victims of sexual violence are proportionately female (Conroy & Cotter, 2017; Black et al., 2010). As argued by Catharine MacKinnon (2006), violence against women is a form of social inequality of the sexes (p. 31). MacKinnon notes that exploitation of women is both systemic and systematic:

Systemic, meaning socially patterned, including sexual harassment, rape, battering of women by intimates, sexual abuse of children, and woman-killing in the context of poverty, imperialism, colonialism, and racism. Systematic, meaning intentionally organized, including prostitution, pornography, sex tours, ritual torture, and official custodial torture in which women are exploited and violated for sex, politics, and profit… (p. 29).

The prevalence of violence against women by male perpetrators can be linked to society’s views on ownership and make rights to female bodies, or what one may feel “socially entitled to,” (MacKinnon, 2006, p. 31).
Between 2012 and 2015 violence against a white victim by a white offender was more often domestic violence and it was higher than the percentage of domestic violence committed by black or Hispanic offenders (Morgan, 2017). When observing domestic violence statistics amongst white, black, and Hispanic Americans, violence committed against a white person by a non-white domestic partner was lower than the rate of violence committed by a white partner.

In the USA, 43.9% of all women will experience sexual violence in their lifetime. 31.5% of women will experience physical violence from a partner and 47.1% will experience psychological aggression (DuMontheir, Childers, & Milli, 2017). Returning to a Canadian context, half of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16 and women make up 87% of sexual violence victims according to Statistics Canada (Conroy & Cotter, 2017). For sexually violent crimes committed against Indigenous people, 94% were against women. There is an elevated risk for women and young individuals, LGBTQ individuals, and people with disabilities. Women are four times more likely than men to be victims of intimate partner homicide, and Indigenous women specifically are six times more likely to be killed than non-Indigenous women. Violence against Indigenous women far exceeds the rate of violence against white women, Indigenous women being nearly three times more likely to experience violence in their lifetime. Between 1980-2012, the RCMP estimates there were 1,181 cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada—grassroots organizations and the Minister of the Status of Women in Canada estimate a much higher number, closer to 4,000 (Women’s Shelters Canada, 2017). Keep in mind, these stats all come from reported cases of violence. According to the 2014 GSS on Victimization, 83% of sexual assault incidents were not reported to the police, and sexual assault within Canada is one of the most underreported crimes. It is further noted that racialized women’s reports of violence are taken less seriously, and perpetrators often receive less harsh punishments (Conroy & Cotter, 2017).

However, the framing of women as victims of sexual violence is problematic. As noted by Reich (2009), though the depiction of women as victims of sexual violence may generate funding and public awareness in the form of policies attempting to alleviate damages, the long-term effects of this narrative establish an image of women as “helpless and disempowered individuals,” (p. 294).
Women have historically been used as symbols of the nation, their bodies and the violence perpetuated against them seen as political acts of dominance between men, rather than sexually violent acts committed against a human and a gender at large.

Ranchod-Nilsson and Tétreault (2000) identify striking links between assertions of national identity and violence against women, sexually, economically, and structurally: “as biological and social reproducers, women’s bodies are claimed for the nation and, as a result, often become battlegrounds in nationalist conflicts,” (p. 5). As the biological reproducers of a “national collectivities”, the conditions of childbirth “become of national importance (to men) and matters of civil duty or outright oppression (to women),” (p. 6).

What the alt-right has done is taken a complex societal issue such as violence against women and narrowed it tremendously to be used as a narrative about violence against white women existing within a white vacuum. The alt-right narrative claims that white women are in danger from non-white men, when statistically, women of all races in general are at risk of experiencing violence from men they know (husbands, family members), which means white women in relations with white men are more at risk of being attacked by white men than by men of colour or Indigenous men. In other words, white women are not being violated by racial others as an attack on the white race, but rather women as a collective are violated as a result of patriarchal societal structures that inhibit the unequal treatment of women as possessions “to be violated and abused at will,” (MacKinnon, 2006, p. 29).

Alt-right discourses performs a concern for women’s wellbeing and safety. This reflects MacKinnon’s critique of international policies protecting the status of women:
The strongest reality-based argument against discrimination against women here is consequentialist: it interferes with the ability of families in society and countries to use women to grow and prosper. (p. 11)

By focusing on violence against white women in isolation from violence against women as a whole, alt-right discourse is creating a perceived necessity for the rescue of white women from non-white men. This discourse has two benefits for the white supremacist cause: 1) it further establishes non-white men as ruthless, barbaric enemies of the white race, and 2) white women need the protection of white men from non-white men and from their own ‘female weakness’.

8.3. **White Knights and ‘Apolitical’ Damsels**

The establishment of white women as beings that need to be saved by white men allows for the perceived superiority, both physically and mentally, of white men and a reinforcement of women as objects to be controlled and utilized. In my virtual ethnography, I found this discourse is prevalent within alt-right narratives and sentiments, reflecting the misogynistic foundations of the movement.

The trend of gender roles informing how individuals act within a given society establishes binary realms that have been present in western civilization: the public realm of men, “mainly politics, civil society and paid labour,” and the domestic realm of women, mainly “family, household and unpaid labour,” (Valentova, 2015, p. 1-2). This separation based on gender establishes a societal structure designed and maintained by men with women acting as passive members within the society. For the alt-right cause, a woman who is not engaged in civil society (is not politically active and does not participate in paid labour) would be better suited to remain in the home and maintain the domestic realm— and have white children.

The image of the apolitical woman is common throughout alt-right discourse, and women’s perceived lack of political interest, critical engagement, and individualism is often used as a reason why a woman might not support white nationalism:

…Women are almost always going to follow what is socially acceptable. Women do not have the will and desire to go against the grain and right now White Nationalism is against the grain. They want to fit in without trouble and are going
to take the path of least resistance. This is fact. On top of that I will venture to say that women ultimately do what we as men allow them to do. (Stormfront User, 2013)

Even amongst alt-right female voices, such as Lana Lokteff, the narrative of women and girls uninterested in politics and civil society is repeated, Lokteff expressing in one video that “young women don’t care about politics… they don’t even really know what is going on,” (Red Ice TV, 2017). Rather than be engaged with politics, women are more interested in pleasing society and fulfilling their domestic roles and are therefore better suited for traditionalist familial structures. Furthermore, the idea of women being happier when they allow their husbands to make decisions for the household reinforces a dominant male figurehead being in control of a passive female, one panelist from Red Ice TV’s segment on the ideal woman expressing she is comfortable with and believes “submitting to her husband” is something women should practice (Red Ice TV, 2018).

The trend of apolitical women within alt-right discourse is not uncommon to traditionalist environments. In a study on traditionalism and gender roles, Valentova (2015) notes a negative relationship between traditionalist beliefs and political participation, notably amongst traditionalist women: “it appears that being a woman and having traditional gender role views significantly decreases cohesive behaviour, in particular political participation,” (p. 174). Further, Valentova notes the inability of traditional-oriented women existing within a domestic realm to actively participate in the public sphere and benefit from democratic opportunities (p. 175).

The complexities of alt-right women being both political in that they engage in public conversation and debate but also domestic-orientated in their support of women fulfilling traditional roles creates a notable dichotomy. Women such as Lokteff and Southern dedicate a great deal of time into promoting women as mothers and good wives, yet they are doing so through an avenue that would be considered political and therefore ‘masculine’ if we continue with the division of the feminine and masculine in the civil realm. It is interesting to note that in a video posted by Lauren Southern (2017) responding to why she, as a promoter of traditionalism, does not have children and is not married, Southern claims that traditionalist lifestyles are not for every woman, but they make the majority of women happier and that is why she promotes traditionalism. The nature of Southern’s defense points to a notable distinction between how she sees
herself as a woman, and how she sees other women: she thrives and is happier engaging in politics (a non-traditional realm for women), but most women are happier in the home and should remain there. Southern has thus created a barrier between herself and other women, presenting herself as different from the ‘standard’ woman, therefore allowing her character to escape the constraints of traditionalist gender roles. This self-exemption invites skepticism about Southern’s traditionalist ideals and encourages one to reflect on whether she is utilizing this discourse to promote a belief system she believes in, or rather if she is using the alt-right community to establish herself and accumulate political and civil influence and power as an individual what alt-right would consider the role of men, not women.
Chapter 9. Reflections & Recommendations

It was not until I began working on my podcast, speaking out my thoughts and hearing them out loud that I began to realize the importance of responding to alt-right discourse from a woman’s perspective. As Rivers (2007) chides, “If the sound of men’s opinions in the nation’s media is a roar like Niagara, that of women’s is the trickle of a bathroom faucet,” (p. 67). Like any collective, women are not one unified body that experience and interpret their experiences in the same way. The way dominant narratives put forward a single woman or a small group of women as representatives for an entire gender is not only a misrepresentation of women but damaging in that it silences the diverse experiences of women. Alt-right narratives have and will continue to push forward a miniscule presentation of womanhood that exists within male-dominated alt-right environments.

This research project’s initial attempt at untangling alt-right narratives and discourses has identified several concerning trends and makes it evident further research on the topic is required. The need for a diversity of woman-based narratives concerned with pressing issues like equality and safety is paramount in a time when alt-right, traditionalist centred narratives are gaining political and social momentum in a rapidly changing online world. In the alt-right’s echo chamber to advocate women’s social and sexual equality is to be a ‘feminazi’; to bring forward concerns over sexual safety paired with statistically data showing the surmounting amount of sexual violence women experience is to be a man-hating harpy trying to claw away masculinity. The reinforcement of anti-feminist narratives reduces the ability of young women and their perceived legitimacy to effectively address and initiate political action on issues that predominantly impact women such as sexual harassment, domestic violence, wage gaps, and reproductive rights (Rivers, 2007, p.140). Misogynistic movements have and will continue to gut discourses that threatens the role of men as superior, and alt-right narratives will viciously denounce and dehumanize threats to a white, hetero, male hegemony.

Women have historically and in modern times been the leaders in the fight for gender and sexual equality; however, women have also been active and prevalent within hate groups such as white extremist groups. The acknowledgment of women’s roles and
influence within hate groups is as important as recognizing the involvement of women in progressive movements. Educated and working women are in a pivotal role and it is crucial for them to utilize their degree of privilege to establish societal structures in which all people, regardless of gender identity, age, race, religion, income, have equal rights to opportunity and rights to their own bodies:

If we do abide by its norms, most women’s lives will remain what they have always been: a cycle of dependence, poverty, forced labour, forced sexual access, forced reproduction, and for many an untimely death. The position that some of us have moved up and out of will be filled by another woman. (MacKinnon, 2006, p. 76)

With the rise of female alt-right voices online, the need for examination and response to the discourse is imperative. It must be recognized that racism and misogyny are often entwined and intrenched in supremacist narratives with the aim of establishing a single, hegemonic, dominant collective.

After reflecting on my findings, I acknowledge my project’s lack of representation on the alt-right position and issues concerning women of colour and LGBTQ. This was not done with the intention of ignoring the threat alt-right discourse poses to these and other communities, but more so a reflection of my initial focus on trying to understand alt-right’s use of the medium itself and for instance the links between different alt-right platforms and in particular delineate the alt-right’s discourse on the role of the ‘womb’ and the ‘white mother’. Though discourse surrounding women of colour and LGBTQ collectives within alt-right platforms were not inconsequential and would be necessary for further research, at another level, the ongoing activities and expansion of alt-right collectives on digital platforms are largely ignored as if their existence was outside the realm of the white narrative. This is problematic and my first goal for my final MA capstone paper has been to research their platforms and the role of women in their discourse both as part of their narratives and as actors propagating their ideologies. Future research focusing specifically on non-white, non-heterosexual women as targets within alt-right online discourse could prove incredibly complex and beneficial to understanding the different layers at work within this discourse.
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Appendix A.

Website Resources

Breitbart: https://www.breitbart.com/

Fight White Genocide: http://www.fightwhitegenocide.com/

Free Speech Time: https://www.freespeechtime.net/

Jihad Watch: https://www.jihadwatch.org

Red Ice TV: https://redice.tv/

Rebel Media: https://www.therebel.media

Stormfront: https://www.stormfront.org