

Praise Jesus (and Trump): Language and Indoctrination Strategies Used by the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalists¹

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Abstract

Ever since Donald Trump's 2016 presidential election win, researchers have studied how two controversial communities helped secure his win: the online Alt-Right and Christian Nationalists. Putting these communities in the spotlight also showed researchers the unique language and indoctrination strategies these two groups use to radicalize new and established members. My research aims to bridge the gap between the research on the two groups and answer the following questions: How has a common ideological foundation established similarities between how the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalists formulate a shared identity and indoctrination practices within their respective communities? And, more specifically, what linguistic strategies and emotional appeals do both groups utilize to indoctrinate and further radicalize new members? Before going over my analysis, I first provide an overview of the histories, ideologies, and key characteristics of each group. Then, I answer my research questions by looking at what strategies both groups use to indoctrinate new members, as well as what shared ideologies, such as white supremacist and paternalist values, are emphasized when speaking to new and established members alike. My research shows that the similarities run deeper than surface-level ideology: Although these movements have extremely different organizational structures, modes of communication, and methods of reinforcing a common in-group identity, they have nonetheless cultivated a unique ideological identity through the ways members are forced to give up their 'past lives' in order to join the group. Additionally, members are encouraged to spread their beliefs to as many people as possible to help their movements expand and gain more cultural and political power. My findings not only provide important historical context for understanding the modern-day Christian Nationalist movement but also fill in a significant gap in the literature on the similarities between the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalism by providing an in-depth analysis of the ways the language and indoctrination strategies are similar between the two groups.

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I was twelve years old when Donald Trump won the 2016 election.

I remember watching the living room TV while sitting at my family's dining room table. A picture of a smiling Trump was posted next to some text about the number of Electoral College votes he had received, all neatly pasted over a searing red background. Because my parents were out, my younger brother and I were being watched by a family friend. I don't remember her giving any sort of reaction to the news; I'm not sure if she was old enough to vote at the time. I do, however, remember the reactions of people in my hometown, which sat in the rural plains of northeast Texas: 'Praise Jesus, Trump won!'

The 2016 election was the first presidential election I was old enough to understand. Thanks to the combination of living as a young queer person in the rural South and my mother working on a political science cognate while she completed her PhD in cognitive psychology at the time, I developed an early interest in politics that persisted as I got older. As I sat at that dining room table and watched as CNN anchors declared Trump the winner, I remember thinking, 'What just happened?'

I wasn't the only one shocked by the news. Trump's win came as a surprise to American voters, academics, and politicians alike. Researchers wasted no time trying to discern how Trump managed to conjure enough support to defeat his opponent, Democratic Party nominee Hillary Clinton, and who exactly voted for him. In doing so, two groups emerged to the forefront: the online Alt-Right and Christian Nationalists. These communities helped push Trump to victory by promoting him in church sermons, trolling supporters of other candidates, and indoctrinating more moderate conservatives to support Trump's far-right policies and promises.

Research Questions and Significance

Many researchers and mainstream news sites have stated that the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalists' success in their attempt to mobilize support for Trump was due to shared ideology. Both groups hold beliefs rooted in white supremacy and traditionalist, patriarchal gender roles (Nagle 2017, 15; Paff 2022, 38; Butler 2021, 12). Additionally, they both share similar membership demographics, with a majority of their members being white, conservative men (Wendling 2018, 149). Although researchers have established surface-level similarities between the two groups, there is little to no research on the ways the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalists parallel each other in the methods they use to indoctrinate others and formulate a shared identity. My research identifies this gap and begins to bridge the literature of the two groups together. For the Alt-Right, this indoctrination takes place in online communities such as 4chan and involves slowly radicalizing recruits through content that utilizes memes, chronically online language, and slurs, all targeted towards minority populations; for Christian Nationalists, it takes place in church communities and families, and involves tediously interpreting Biblical stories of the End Times to connect them to their own communities and the world around them, therefore generating fear and hostility towards others. However, even if the doctrinal material is different, the patterns of indoctrination are extremely similar: both groups weaponize ideas of exclusivity, superiority, and marginalization to create a community that believes the world is turning against them, forcing them to fight back against growing globalization, diversity, and inclusivity.

I address these gaps in our common understanding of these movements by investigating the following empirical questions: How can a common ideology establish similarities between how the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalists formulate a shared identity and indoctrination practices within their respective communities? And, more specifically, what linguistic strategies

and emotional appeals do both groups utilize to indoctrinate and further radicalize new members?

Conducting research into just how deeply connected these two communities are could be instrumental in helping predict how they may impact current and future elections, helping develop strategies for monitoring radical political and religious groups or movements, and detecting warning signs for online groups that may be becoming more radicalized and extremist. Far-right and alt-right radicalization has been on a concerning rise for years, even more exacerbated by the 2016 election and Donald Trump's willingness to parrot alt-right propaganda and conspiracy theories to his general audience. Additionally, online spaces such as Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), Reddit, and 4chan are becoming increasingly more important to the radicalization process, as modern extremist groups such as the Alt-Right rely heavily on utilizing online spaces to indoctrinate new members. Looking into the methods and strategies the online Alt-Right uses to indoctrinate and radicalize new members (also known as redpilling) can help researchers detect warning signs of groups potentially becoming more extremist online; additionally, it also helps us learn how to effectively monitor these groups to stay up-to-date on their constantly-evolving language, indoctrination strategies, and ideologies (Grover and Mark 2019, 193).

Christian Nationalists have had a similar trend in American politics and culture, especially during the 2016 election, thanks in part to a considerable percentage of the community choosing to vote for Donald Trump. Although these groups have a history of voting for Republican candidates, from Ronald Reagan in 1980 to George W. Bush in 2000, the ways in which evangelicals and fundamentalists have rallied behind Trump during and after the 2016 election have shifted discussions of what political and religious indoctrination look like in

mainstream American politics (Margolis 2019, 16–17; Husser 2020). This religious extremism has also had an impact on public policy, as leaders have begun to go after various laws in the name of God. It is important to look into how our leaders may use Christian Nationalist ideology to justify legislation that strips Americans of their rights to freedom of speech, bodily autonomy, and freedom of—and *from*—religion.

Conclusion: Paper Roadmap

Over the course of this paper, I will: (1) provide a brief overview of the established literature on the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalism; (2) identify and discuss the gap in current literature that my research aims to fill; (3) discuss the ideologies and common rhetoric of each of these movements; (4) identify the language and emotional appeals used by each movement to indoctrinate and further radicalize others, and; (5) analyze the parallels in these language and indoctrination strategies.

My findings show that the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalism are both rooted in long-standing white supremacist and heteropatriarchal traditions in the United States and share similarities in their perceived enemies, indoctrination practices, and processes of cultivating community-based languages. These groups each have a unique vernacular that can only truly be acquired through becoming a member of the in-group, which involves a conscious decision to isolate oneself from mainstream society in favor of receiving a higher understanding of the inner workings of the universe. This separation reshapes one's entire identity, ideology, and goals, and provides them a sense of purpose as they work to share their beliefs with as many people as possible; additionally, it also separates those considered part of the 'in-group' from the 'out-group', creating shared enemies and threats to their way of life.

Finally, I would like to provide a content warning. The Alt-Right and Christian Nationalists both hold strong ideologies that harm many minority groups in the United States. There will be discussions of genocides of Jewish peoples, implied sexual assault and control of women's reproductive rights, and the promotion of violence and murder of those who are considered enemies of these groups. Additionally, there will be mentions of slurs used against Black Americans, Jews, and the LGBTQ+ community. Although I absolutely abhor the use of such violent, hateful language towards others, it is extremely important to be completely transparent about how members view and refer to others they identify as part of the out-group, as it is instrumental to understanding how these groups identify and interact with themselves and others. I will censor any slurs mentioned in my findings and in figure captions to limit the harm they may cause readers who identify with these targeted communities.

Literature Review and Methodology

This section first outlines the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalist movements by citing the literature written on both groups to discuss their origins, significance, ideology, language, and sites of indoctrination. Additionally, I discuss the previous literature written on connections between the two groups, though this literature is extremely limited and largely focuses on the relationship between the Alt-Right and the Christian religion. Finally, I highlight the significant gaps in the research on the similarities between the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalism. Currently, those within these two literature camps are inattentive to the ways these two groups have come to parallel each other. After this, I outline my methodology.

Pepe & Joker & Trump, Oh My! The Online Alt-Right

Background: What is the Alt-Right?

The term “Alternative Right,” more commonly known as the “Alt-Right,” is commonly believed to have been coined by Richard Spencer in 2008, whose extremist beliefs rose to mainstream discussion alongside Trump’s 2016 win (Nagle 2017, 47). Commonly known as a modern-day offshoot of the Far-Right movement, the Alt-Right has become widely known for moving far-right content from the fringe corners of the internet into mainstream media (Winter 2019, 49). Due to explicit, violent threats made towards communities they view as threats to the movement, the Alt-Right has been labeled an extremist hate group and is monitored by organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League and the Southern Poverty Law Center (ADL 2017; SPLC, n.d.).

Ideology of the Alt-Right

Unlike most mainstream political movements, the Alt-Right does not have an organized set of beliefs; this is largely what makes its presence in American politics so unique. Because of this, it is difficult to accurately define the group’s beliefs (Hawley 2017, 11). However, since its founding, numerous influencers, authors, and researchers have attempted to establish a general understanding of the Alt-Right’s ideological tenets. Author Angela Nagle provides a concise yet thorough overview of the group’s beliefs and goals, explaining,

The alt-right [sic] is, to varying degrees, preoccupied with IQ, European demographic and civilizational decline, cultural decadence, cultural Marxism, anti-egalitarianism and Islamification but most importantly, as the name suggests, with creating an alternative to the right-wing conservative establishment, who they dismiss as “cuckservatives” for their soft Christian passivity and for metaphorically cuckholding their womenfolk/nation/race to the non-white foreign invader. (2017, 16)

Based on my research, I define the Alt-Right as: a loosely connected political movement of online users who seek to disrupt mainstream cultural and political norms through shared beliefs around white supremacy, anti-establishmentarianism, intellectualism, antisemitism, misogyny, and conspiracy theories.

The Alt-Right and American Politics

Although primarily occupying less-traveled corners of the internet, there have been multiple instances of the Alt-Right crossing the threshold from the online to real life. The most infamous of these cases is the Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August of 2017. From August 11-12, hundreds of members of the Alt-Right and various far-right groups gathered in Charlottesville to “protest the planned removal of the city’s Robert E. Lee statue,” as well as to show the mainstream public the strength of the group as a whole (ADL 2022; Winter 2019, 55). No longer hiding behind computer screens and anonymous message boards, the groups openly took to the streets, marching across the University of Virginia campus as they held tiki torches and chanted racist, antisemitic slogans, such as “Jews will not replace us” (2022). Tensions exploded when one member, James Alex Fields Jr., drove his car into a crowd of counter-protesters, killing Heather Heyer and injuring dozens of others; he was later sentenced to life in prison for his crimes (2019, 54–55; Office of Public Affairs 2019). Though one might be quick to label instances such as this as rare occurrences in the overall stable shelf life of American politics, it’s important to note that similar violence enacted by the Far/Alt-Right has become alarmingly more common since 2016. According to the Center on Extremism, there were twenty-seven “right-wing extremist terror incidents in the U.S.” from 2017-2019 and forty from 2020–2022; “These include successful terrorist attacks, failed terrorist attacks, and foiled terrorist plots” (Center on Extremism 2023).

Another major impact the Alt-Right has had on American politics is how the group has helped topple the grip the mainstream media had on American citizens during election years. Although we still find ourselves glued to CNN and ABC News during the election, staying up to date through social media and the internet has become increasingly more common. This increasing reliance has also promoted widespread misinformation campaigns and the degradation of public trust in mainstream media, experts, and news outlets, all due in part to the Alt-Right and Donald Trump's campaigns to topple as many social and democratic norms as possible in the name of being 'politically incorrect.' As Nagle explains, "The year 2016 may be remembered as the year the media mainstream's hold over formal politics died. A thousand Trump Pepe memes bloomed and a strongman larger-than-life Twitter troll who showed open hostility to the mainstream media and to both party establishments took the White House without them" (2017, 8).

The Role of the Internet in the Alt-Right

The most significant factor that distinguishes the Alt-Right from other far-right groups we have seen is the group's use of the internet to promote its movement and gain new members. Unlike traditional far-right groups, the Alt-Right almost exclusively resides, evolves, and promotes itself to new members online. As Aaron Winter explains, "The general population of the Alt-Right is composed of relatively anonymous youths who were exposed to the movement's ideas through online message boards and discussion threads such as 4chan and 8chan's /pol/ and more mainstream internet platforms such as Reddit, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube" (2019, 50). The use of online platforms to promote right-wing ideology isn't new—the Far-Right has decades-old websites dedicated to connecting with other members of the community. What is new in this development is how the Alt-Right weaponizes social media algorithms (2019, 43).

Additionally, the Alt-Right is unique in how it uses both the mainstream and fringe corners of the internet to appeal to younger generations, especially young, white men. As Nagle explains, “It was the image- and humor-based culture of the irreverent meme factory of 4chan and later 8chan that gave the alt-right [sic] its youthful energy, with its transgression and hacker tactics” (2017, 16). 4chan and its much more fringe counterpart, 8chan, are anonymous online message boards where members can discuss a variety of topics, with dedicated boards available for members to choose from. Many of the memes recognizable on mainstream social media today, such as Pepe the Frog, were started and/or made popular by, prominently, alt-right 4chan users (see Nagle 2017; Sparby 2017).

Language Used by the Alt-Right

Common wisdom among researchers on Alt-Right online communities on 4chan, 8chan, and Reddit agrees that the language in these communities can generally be characterized by its use of memes and online trends, shocking and offensive rhetoric, community-based jargon, and coded words or phrases. The language of the Alt-Right is constantly shifting and evolving to best fit various online spaces and contexts (Colley and Moore 2019, 10). For example, if a member is focused on recruiting young academics similar to Richard Spencer, they may speak with a more formal, intellectual tone to ensure their arguments sound rational and objective, but if they are targeting a younger audience, their language would be much more casual, such as using memes (Lyons 2017; AntiFascistFront 2015). Similarly, the frequency of hate speech varies across different websites depending on the level of moderation; hateful language grows more extreme when moving from Reddit to 4chan, for example (Rieger et al. 2021, 4).

Over multiple decades, the Alt-Right has created an entirely new language based on hundreds of unique words, phrases, and slang acquired through its sprawling connections with

various online spaces and subcultures. Much of the slang used today has historical connections to the various discussion boards of 4chan, especially the politically incorrect (/pol/) and the random (/b/) board. For example, one way this language is used is to determine who is an actual member of the Alt-Right versus a “normie,” a slang term for non-members (Paff 2022, 9). Because the language in these online communities is constantly evolving, members are expected to understand coded references to hundreds of memes, individuals, and slurs (Sparby 2017, 138). If one is outed as not knowing the unique vernacular of the Alt-Right, they may be subjected to trolling and bullying by other members of the community, similar to ritualistic hazing (2022, 45). By being separated and bullied by the in-group as a “newfag” (i.e., an obviously new member), the victim learns the social norms and expectations of the online community and, in turn, becomes a more established member (Nagle 2017, 17; Phillips 2015, as cited in Colley and Moore 2022, 12; Rieger et al. 2021, 11, 4). The reason this language is constantly evolving is to avoid censorship or backlash from moderators who help run the platforms where many members of the Alt-Right congregate, but also to deepen the level of understanding between established members.

The most significant feature that has become unique to the Alt-Right is the movement’s use of memes as a form of communication and bonding between members. As with any online-based community, the Alt-Right relies heavily on memes to promote its beliefs, “gain visibility... and target opponents” online (Lyons 2017). As Emily Paff explains, “Like other forms of communication, meme usage fosters consistent discussion of shared culture or ideology, which leads to the evolution of discourse and aids in group production of ideology” (2022, 48). Some of the most popular memes within the community include Pepe the Frog, #Cuckservative, and the (((echoes))) meme (Anglin 2024). Though seemingly harmless at first, these memes can

hold sinister intentions. By using an innocuous meme to disguise potentially harmful messages and ideology, posts made by members of the Alt-Right may be overlooked by members of the out-group, as they may not understand the knowledge possessed by the in-group to fully understand the meme's meaning (2022, 50).

Redpilling and the Alt-Right Pipeline

According to Luke Munn's article titled "Alt-Right Pipeline," the term 'redpill' comes from the 1999 film *The Matrix*. In the film, protagonist Neo is forced to choose between two pills: "You take the blue pill and the story ends. You wake in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe" (2019). According to Munn,

In the rhetoric of the alt-right, the red pill means awakening to the true nature of reality, though what this entails exactly is always left productively undefined. It can mean anything from denouncing the mainstream media as propaganda to understanding the cultural agenda that SJWs (social justice warriors) and leftists impose, to something more overtly conspiratorial or racist like acknowledging the JQ (Jewish Question) (2019).

Redpilling occurs at the individual level, creating a unique pipeline for each new member based on their social media algorithms, history of content creators they have interacted with in the past, and any "offline factors" that are impossible to consider when establishing the indoctrination process (NIJ 2023). However, Munn has identified three general phases that all individuals eventually go through when traveling down the pipeline: normalization, acclimation, and dehumanization.

In the first phase, normalization, the Alt-Right's ability to promote extremist ideas in an ironic, meme-y fashion allows users to familiarize themselves with the harsh ideology of the movement in a way that won't overwhelm them or turn them away (Munn 2019). This phase

often goes hand-in-hand with the second phase, acclimation, where users “slowly become accustomed to new ideologies and beliefs” through the habitualization and desensitization of racist, antisemitic, and misogynistic content (2019; Peters et al. 2022, 33). This ultimately leads the user to the final stage, dehumanization, which “ensures that the alt-right [sic] initiate is never confronted with a human... Instead, the ‘other’ ... is an indistinct assailant, an averaged figure that emerges from the constellation of media comprising an individual’s online environment” (2019). It is important to note that although these phases are given a general order of occurrence, they are in no way “mutually exclusive or strictly linear” given the individualization of the process (2019).

From the Pews to the Voter’s Booth: An Analysis of Christian Nationalism

What is Christian Nationalism?

Christian Nationalism is a religious-based political movement whose core belief is that “the United States was founded as a white Christian nation, and... fear that ‘their’ nation is being muddled by non-European immigrants, corrupted by ‘secular humanists,’ and infiltrated by ‘radical Islam’” (Gorski 2017, 348). According to Caleb E. Campbell, “American Christian nationalism argues that the American state should be run by Christians and should protect and promote the concerns of Christians over others” (2024, 24). This ideology is a holy matrimony that binds the premillennial apocalypticism and born-again superiority of Christian fundamentalism to the gun-shooting, eagle-screeching, war-winning ideology of American Exceptionalism (Harding 2000, Gorski 2017, 338, 340–341). The result of such a marriage is an ideology that Susan Harding describes as follows: “Unless born-again Christians acted politically they would lose their ‘freedom,’ religious and political, which was what enabled them to spread the good news at home and abroad, that is, to fulfill Bible prophecy” (2000, 245).

It is important to emphasize that Christian Nationalism's history is rooted in the cultural isolation of Christian fundamentalism and the emergence of evangelicalism in the 1920s and 1940s. However, it must be noted that although Christian fundamentalists and evangelicals are commonly found within Christian Nationalist circles, not everyone who identifies with these denominations also identifies as a Christian Nationalist, and vice versa.

“Born Again”: Language and Rhetoric Used in Christian Nationalist Indoctrination

The Christian Nationalist indoctrination pipeline can be broken down into two steps: religious indoctrination, or being ‘born-again,’ and political indoctrination. The language used by Christian Nationalists in religious spaces can best be understood by analyzing the rhetoric used by Christian fundamentalists when talking to non-believers. Susan Harding’s *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics* (2000) is one of the most cited sources when discussing this. Harding’s book is the culmination of years of ethnographic research in Jerry Falwell’s Thomas Road Baptist Church and discusses the unique way fundamentalists utilize the Bible to establish themselves as ‘true’ Christians in the modern United States.

Fundamentalists utilize specific rhetoric to separate themselves from non-believers, non-Christians, and non-*conservative* Christians. However, it is important to note that, to these members, this process cannot begin unless and until someone repents for their sins and puts their faith in God by asking Jesus for forgiveness—a process known as salvation. According to Harding, “Salvation is experienced as a release from the bondage of sin and a personal reconciliation with God. A new self, or the spiritual man, emerges and the supernatural imagination is cut loose as the newborn Christian accepts the meaning of the gospel and begins to speak the language of Christ” (2000, 38). This is why members of the church call themselves ‘born-again.’

Fundamentalists' communication between believers and non-believers comes in two forms: witnessing and preaching. Preaching is a more formal way of expressing the gospel and is done through rituals such as sermons, while witnessing “is more informal and often occurs in the course of what appears to be no more than a conversation between the witness, who is saved, and an unsaved listener” (2000, 36). According to Harding, “A witnessing session minimally includes the gospel story... and a confrontation between the witness and his or her listener in which the witness invites or exhorts the listener to receive Christ as his or her personal savior” (2000, 28). This is often done by using emotional manipulation, such as shocking the listener with some sort of emotional or distressing story, then using that shock as a way to further push God into their heart.

When attempting to indoctrinate new members, fundamentalists use many linguistic strategies that one may not recognize when listening at first, but are very crucial in opening one's mind up to being indoctrinated later on. These strategies include creating parallels between Scripture and the speaker's personal journey in finding Christ, the use of pronouns to connect—and disconnect—the speaker from the listener (when to use ‘we’ and ‘us’ versus ‘I’ and ‘you’), and refashioning their own experiences to place the listener in the speaker's shoes at the time of their salvation (Harding 2000, 43). In doing this, the speaker makes their language more accessible to the listener so they can better understand and relate to them.

Generally, Christian Nationalist rhetoric relies on these fundamentalist foundations to effectively radicalize members of their movement. The language used by Christian Nationalists is that of someone preparing for battle, such as Jerry Falwell's goals of converting his followers into “conservative Christians” who would fight worldly battles and seek worldly power and influence in the name of “Christian values” (Harding 2000, 10). Through his sermons and

speeches, Falwell encouraged Christians to bridge the gap between religion and politics: he called for his followers to “engage with the political process and the social life of our country [to reach] the whole person for the cause of Christ,” and to band together across denominations to work towards this common goal (2000, 148). Political leaders within the movement, such as Donald Trump, use various social issues, emotional appeals, and linguistic strategies to encourage Christians to take up arms against the progressive, secular government that is destroying their country’s morals. This rhetoric is often directly or indirectly inspired by the Seven Mountain Mandate, the idea that God wants His people to conquer the seven “mountains,” or spheres of influence in society: education, religion, family, business, government/military, entertainment, and media (Ajoy 2024, 32). According to Elle Hardy, “The movement provides supernatural justification for the politics and theory of government of the Christian Right (not to mention an emphasis on prosperity), and one that understands the shifting demographics of the U.S. that will see white Christians become an ever increasing [sic] minority in the coming decades” (2020).

Connections Between the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalism

Although there is a plethora of literature available on Christian Nationalism and, to a lesser degree, the Alt-Right, very few researchers have directly analyzed the relationship between the two groups outside of their shared beliefs and support for Donald Trump.

Alt-Right Perspectives on Religion

As Damon T. Berry explains in his revolutionary book, *Christianity and the Alt-Right: Examining the Relationship*, the Alt-Right does not have an official understanding of incorporating religion within the movement (2022, 17). Although the Alt-Right is generally considered to be an atheistic movement due to the prominence of figures such as Richard

Spencer, it actually encapsulates a broad range of religious beliefs. In general, Berry explains, “The domain of religion has proven an obstacle for the Alt-Right. For white nationalists in America, religious differences, especially concerning disagreements over Christianity’s place in white ethnonationalism, are sites where division often leads to larger splits in specific movements” (2022, 36).

Christianity as a Topic of Debate in the Alt-Right

Following in the footsteps of white nationalist groups before them, members of the Alt-Right consistently engage in debates over whether or not Christianity is an asset or a risk to the movement’s success. On one side, certain aesthetics and histories of Christianity appeal to the Alt-Right. These include the ways Christianity emphasizes traditional gender roles, “large families,” strong, masculine leadership, racist theology, and a core identity “which might compel them to fight for their preservation” (DeCarlo 2018; McCaffree 2017, 38; Berry 2022, 21). This “aesthetic phenomenon,” as Dan DeCarlo labels it, is related to the Alt-Right’s goals of saving the white race and restoring “Western Civilization, a rather vague and ill-defined concept which seems to exist in the alt-right imagination largely as a kind of composite or mashup of medieval cathedrals, Renaissance sculpture, nineteenth-century landscape paintings, and descriptive passages from J.R.R. Tolkien” (2018). This appropriation is often referred to as “Alt-Right Christianity” or “Alt-Christianity” (Grubaugh 2018; Decarlo 2018). On the other side of the debate are atheists and religious skeptics, who believe modern-day Christianity has become watered-down and progressive. The biggest point of contention is how those who followed Christianity tried to establish more political and religious values into the movement’s overall ideology, such as opposing abortion as a way to prevent non-white races from expanding and to force white women to birth more children for the movement (Berry 2022, 42, 34). These

ideological splits often leave Christian Nationalists (who would have otherwise been willing to accept the idea of white nationalist ideas) feeling isolated and at risk of abandoning the movement altogether (Rodriguez 2021, 4).

Research on Both Communities

Despite the lack of research on the similarities between the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalists, theologians have still attempted to raise the alarm on the groups' budding relationship. As Paul Dafydd Jones notes, "When alt-right demonstrators chanted 'You will not replace us' and 'Jews will not replace us' in Charlottesville, and when similar sentiments are voiced in chatrooms, bars, schoolyards, churches, and government offices ... we have to acknowledge that it is a tradition forged, at least in part, by Western Christian thought" (2018). The research that does exist focuses on the movements interconnecting through their shared support for Donald Trump, the similarities in history, ideology, and membership demographics between the two movements, the "Alt-Christianity" religious subculture within the Alt-Right, and how the Alt-Right appropriates aesthetics of Christian Nationalism and traditional Christian values through their beliefs that they must fight to restore Western civilization—more specifically, the white race (McAlister 2018; McClaren 2017; Grubaugh 2018; DeCarlo 2018; Berry 2022). Although this literature is important, no research within it looks into the similarities in language and indoctrination strategies between the two groups. This is the gap my research will begin to fill.

Overview of Methods

Research Hypothesis and Design

Based on the previous literature on the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalists, I have identified a need to extend our knowledge of these groups and refine our understanding of the

language and indoctrination strategies these groups use to recruit and retain members. Although researchers have identified clear similarities and connections between the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalism, my findings show that these parallels are deeper than what the current literature suggests.

Due to the observational nature of my design, I did not want to formulate a strict hypothesis that would attempt to predict the findings of my analysis. The Alt-Right and Christian Nationalism are two extremely hostile and polarizing movements, ones that often provoke strong reactions in those whose communities are often negatively impacted by their ideology. Because of this, I believed it would be irresponsible to risk allowing my personal preconceptions and biases to impact my ability to provide an objective and thorough analysis by formulating a predefined hypothesis before beginning my research. Instead, I chose to start my research using an initial working hypothesis: The Alt-Right and Christian Nationalists may share similar linguistic strategies and emotional appeals that promote a common in-group identity, reinforce social boundaries to exclude out-groups, and mobilize members to take action against their perceived enemies. I used this as a starting point to establish my general research design and what data I was interested in collecting and analyzing.

Qualitative Content Analysis of 4chan's /pol/

To effectively analyze language and indoctrination strategies found in online message forums for the Alt-Right, I conducted a mix of random and convenience sampling to gather my data. This was done by monitoring the boards during their peak activity times from October 4 to November 4, 2024. These times fell on Tuesday from 4–6 PM, Friday from 9–11 PM, and Sunday from 2–4 PM. It should be noted that these times are not always accurate, and activity

seems to fluctuate rapidly on the board; I simply made an estimate based on the statistics found on <https://4stats.io/> at the time.

Although /pol/ is generally active all the time, it was especially so during this time due to the presidential election. This is important to note because although this means that more members who consider themselves part of the Alt-Right are likely to post, it could also skew my data slightly. Because /pol/ is extremely active, with hundreds of members posting at any given time, its post archive only holds up to 3,000 expired threads at any given time; this means that the archive would not accurately reflect the true number of posts made on any given day. To ensure my data set would be as accurate as possible, I used the site <https://archive.4plebs.org/> to collect posts retroactively. I gathered screenshots of posts made during my selected time frames, then randomly sampled from this collection to ensure my unconscious biases did not impact which posts I decide to sample from.

After collecting my data, I was left with 3,500 individual posts. From this, I randomly chose 24 to 25 posts for each day to reduce my data set to 346 observations. I initially planned to conduct my analysis using these posts, but quickly determined there were too many observations to code by hand. I then randomly sampled from the reduced set to create my finalized sample of 100 posts. Once I established my sample size, I conducted qualitative content analysis by coding my data for three general themes: ideology, in-group identity, and recruitment strategies. I coded my data by storing and tagging my observations in Zotero. To ensure my dataset accurately reflected the themes I was coding for, I coded any data that did not fall into any of my themes, such as posts that did not have enough information to tag them accurately, as ‘untagged’; in the end, two posts were coded as ‘untagged’ and did not go through further analysis. It is important

to note that, of the posts I have elected to include here, I have digitally altered the screenshots to conceal any comments posted in response to them.

Literature Analysis

Alongside my interviews and content analysis, I also built additional support for my analyses and conclusions by conducting an in-depth analysis of existing scholarly literature on the language and indoctrination strategies of Christian fundamentalist and Christian Nationalist leaders, such as Susan Harding's *Book of Jerry Falwell* (2000) and Caleb E. Campbell's *Disarming Leviathan* (2024), secondary sources on Trump's actions during his various presidential campaigns, and primary and secondary sources on Jerry Falwell's sermons. Additionally, April Ajoy's *Star-Spangled Jesus: Leaving Christian Nationalism and Finding a True Faith* (2024) provides a modern first-hand account of Ajoy's experience deconstructing from Christian Nationalism after watching the January 6 insurrection live on the news. Her book provides a general overview of Christian Nationalism's ideology and the different ways leaders indoctrinate and radicalize members, such as promoting fear and anger towards non-believers and sowing distrust in mainstream media as being too 'liberal.' Her story is an extremely valuable primary source documenting the ways Christian Nationalism can impact members' understanding of the modern world, as well as how members react when someone questions the movement's goals or beliefs.

I chose to use a different methodology for my analysis of Christian Nationalism for three reasons: (1) Because the literature on Christian Nationalism spans back decades before the Alt-Right was formed and has been contributed to by researchers from a variety of different fields, I can use this work as a foundation to build my own research on. On the other hand, existing research on the Alt-Right is not anywhere near as abundant due to how young the movement is,

as well as being largely based in fringe corners of the internet that researchers are often hesitant to engage with; because of this, I have less of a foundation to work off of and am more so piecing together my own work to expand the existing knowledge of the movement.

(2) Because the Alt-Right has no organizational structures or hierarchies, members are forced to do the work themselves to cultivate a shared language, identity, and ideology through various online spaces such as 4chan and YouTube. This dissemination of shared characteristics is largely done by word-of-mouth as members slowly spread these beliefs from one platform to another. The Christian Nationalist movement, however, is much more organized and has an established hierarchical structure, as well as more exposure to the general public. Although members also have to put in the work to spread the gospel and cultivate a shared identity, much of their political rhetoric and ideology is shaped by sermons and speeches given by figureheads of the movement.

(3) Finally, the Alt-Right is entirely based online and uses different social media platforms for various purposes to indoctrinate new members and promote their ideology. On the other hand, the Christian Nationalist movement is primarily based in person through shared physical communities, such as churches, political parties, and organizations, and is considered much less taboo and therefore not as hidden from the mainstream public compared to the Alt-Right.

Interview with James Bryant

Finally, I interviewed James Bryant (he/they), co-owner of the YouTube channel Fundie Fridays. According to their channel description, the couple posts content discussing “different aspects of Christian fundamentalism, American and conservative politics, pop culture, gay stuff, and the way those things all bump into each other” (Fundie Fridays, n.d.). James’s research

specifically focuses on Christian Nationalism and American conservative politics. Their unique insights into how these communities work and interact with each other were extremely useful in supporting my research.

Comparative Analysis of the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalists

I then took my individual analyses on the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalism and put them in conversation to highlight the similarities and differences between the groups in each of my core themes: Ideology, In-Group Identity, and Recruitment Strategies. I chose to only include my most significant findings here so it is easier for readers to understand, at a glance, the similarities and differences between the two groups. It is also here that I discuss findings that appeared repeatedly across all three themes for the sake of space and clarity.

Making a Deal with the Devil: Comparative Analysis of the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalism

In the beginning of this paper, I outlined the histories, ideologies, languages, and pipelines of indoctrination and radicalization of the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalism. My evidence shows these groups share striking similarities that have led to their paths crossing in 2016, such as their white supremacist roots, fears of corruption, and relentless hostility toward those they view as their enemies. Through these findings, I highlight how the indoctrination processes of the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalists are much more similar than they may seem at first glance.

Summary of Key Similarities

Despite their very different histories and motivations for promoting their ideologies, the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalists share many similar targets and ideological themes.

Table 1. Summary of Key Similarities

<u>Similar Targets</u>	<u>Similar Themes</u>
● Immigrants	● Institutional corruption

● Political opponents ● People of Color ● Muslims ● LGBTQ+ community ● Women	● Demonization of out-groups ● Exclusionary and controlling beliefs ● White Supremacy ● Community-based language
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Much of this is because their targets are motivated by their ideologies. For example, shared sentiments of institutional corruption—specifically from the government—have led the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalists to share similar hostilities towards Donald Trump’s 2016 and 2024 campaign rivals, Hillary Clinton and Kamala Harris, respectively. Accusations of government corruption have promoted conspiracy theories that both women worked with political and economic elites to attempt to rig their respective elections, leading to the culmination of the Stop the Steal Movement and the 2021 insurrection.

These ideological themes should not be viewed as mutually exclusive, however. For example, attacks against Kamala Harris by the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalists can be viewed as a mix of demonizing out-groups (misogyny, racism, xenophobia, etc.), White Supremacy, beliefs of institutional corruption, and attempts to degrade truth and expertise. One common finding across members of both groups was the accusation that Harris was not actually qualified to take office, despite being involved in politics for decades. Members of the Alt-Right accused her of ‘sleeping her way to the top’ rather than actually working towards her goals.



Figure 1. 4chan Post Captioned, “Has she blamed Trump”

Similarly, Christian Nationalists dismissed her as a “DEI hire” when discussing her performance as Vice President under Joe Biden to perpetuate stereotypes that women and people

of color “can only be in positions of power or authority because of quotas, preferential treatment and unfair advantage given to them based on their social identities,” therefore reinforcing the idea that the “only people qualified to lead America are white men” (Gorski 2017, 343; Burke 2024; Ward 2024).

Of course, Kamala Harris is not the only individual impacted by these intersecting forms of oppression. Because both movements believe their status as white men and women is under attack in a diversifying nation, they often target marginalized communities made up of people of color, gender minorities, and sexual minorities. This includes Black people, Muslims, immigrants, the LGBTQ+ community, and gender non-conforming women. Racism, especially against Black people and non-white immigrants, is especially prominent between these groups.

Similar rhetoric can be seen when analyzing how both groups talk about the LGBTQ+ community, especially gay men and transgender women. Similar to Christian Nationalists, the Alt-Right believes in traditional, patriarchal gender roles, where the man is the dominant, masculine breadwinner and the woman is the submissive, feminine homemaker. Because of this, they view anyone who does not align with these assigned expectations as a threat to white, heteronormative society, and especially the children, who are expected to help repopulate the white race once they are old enough. Members often accuse the LGBTQ+ community of being pedophiles who seek to groom children into joining the movement. Similarly, Christian Nationalists often blame the LGBTQ+ community for America’s moral decline, accusing it of infecting the nuclear family with sexual debauchery (Harding 2000, 167). Members hold little sympathy for the violence that is inflicted upon these communities and even justify their suffering because they refuse to conform to these beliefs. For example, Jerry Falwell has justified the AIDs epidemic as God’s way of punishing the LGBTQ+ community: “God destroyed Sodom

and Gomorrah primarily because of the sin of homosexuality. Today He is again bringing judgement against this wicked practice through AIDS” (Ajoy 2024, 60).

Most importantly, the exclusionary and controlling beliefs held by the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalists are used to establish themselves, the ‘in-group,’ from the ‘out-group,’ therefore creating a sense of superiority among members while placing those on the outside in a position of ‘the Other’ (see De Beauvoir 1952). This is mostly done by cultivating unique community-based languages among both groups that can only be acquired by actively integrating oneself into the movement to prove one's loyalty. The language of the Alt-Right is comprised of a loose collection of chronically online vocabulary cumulated over decades by 4chan users on the general (/b/) and politically incorrect (/pol/) boards. Though not as sophisticated as the language and rhetoric in the Christian Nationalist movement, the seemingly random use of words such as ‘chud,’ ‘kek,’ and ‘based’ makes it difficult for new members—and outside researchers—to follow and understand discussions happening on /pol/. The language and rhetoric found in Christian Nationalist spaces come from being ‘born again.’ This speech is especially prominent in religious and political leaders of the movement, who develop many literary and emotional devices to pull their listeners in and invoke the Holy Spirit within them.

Finally, both groups weaponize strict consequences when a member does not uphold the beliefs and norms of their community. If one is outed as not conforming to the social norms of the Alt-Right, they may be subjected to trolling and bullying by other members of the community, similar to ritualistic hazing. By being separated and bullied by the in-group, the victim learns the social norms and expectations of the online community and, in turn, becomes a more established member. Because Christian Nationalists are often told that those who ask critical questions such as these are the enemy, members perceive even the slightest hints of doubt

as a “‘lack of true allegiance’ to the movement” (Campbell 2024, 57). Therefore, one of the most harmful social consequences of not adhering to the social norms of the movement is being abandoned by friends and loved ones for not being loyal to ‘their people.’

Summary of Key Differences

Although the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalists share many common traits, my findings also show significant differences that must be addressed. Unlike the previous section, I found it easiest to separate my findings into two separate sections: one discussing different targets and one discussing different themes.

Table 2. Summary of Key Differences

Different Targets	Different Themes
Alt-Right • Jews • Mainstream Republicans and conservatives • Donald Trump Christian Nationalists • Atheists • ‘Unsaved’	• Use of memes and trolling • Motivations behind cultivating an ‘us-vs-them’ ideology

Different Targets

When looking at different targets, my most prominent finding was how the Alt-Right differed from Christian Nationalists in targeting their attacks and ideology towards Jews. For the Alt-Right, Jews are to blame for everything wrong with society today; they are the shady elites who are pulling the strings behind the scenes to destroy Western civilization and the white race. Across all themes, members of the Alt-Right used violent language when discussing Jews, including calling them slurs, encouraging violence against them, and openly wishing for their deaths. One such example is shown below:



Figure 2. 4chan Post Captioned, “174 KB”

Although existing research does show a concerning link to Christian Nationalism and antisemitism in recent years, I personally did not find any cases as explicit as my findings on the Alt-Right in my own work. However, this is not to say that some Christian Nationalists are not also antisemitic. As Donald Trump and Alex Jones have continued to perpetuate antisemitic dog whistles such as the ‘Deep State’ and the ‘New World Order,’ researchers such as Dennen and Djupe (2023) have shown that promoting QAnon-style conspiracy theories, combined with the self-victimizing ideology of Christian Nationalism, can cause members of this group to perpetuate antisemitic rhetoric, intentionally or not. Due to this, I cannot say for certain that every Christian Nationalist who uses these phrases is doing so with the best intentions.

Secondly, the Alt-Right is unique in targeting mainstream conservatives and Republicans, including Donald Trump. Although both groups are extremely loyal to the president, the Alt-Right has no problem criticizing and making fun of him. During the 2024 election, members often criticized his campaign strategies, such as his photo-op of himself working at a McDonald's or his forty-minute “impromptu” dance party after two medical emergencies halted a campaign rally in Pennsylvania (De Guzman 2024; Licon and Cooper 2024). Although the intentions of these posts are unclear, they still signal a willingness to go after one’s allies and temporary figureheads until the Alt-Right finds someone deemed worthy enough of leading the movement. This is consistent with research showing that although the Alt-Right chooses to stand behind Trump, they do not believe he is radical enough to accurately represent the movement’s ideology and goals (Hawley 2017, 115; Wendling 2018, 198). However, I did not notice this same pattern

in my observations on Christian Nationalism. This is not to say it didn't happen; many evangelical and fundamentalist leaders with whom Christian Nationalists often associate criticized Trump during his 2016 and 2020 campaigns, but I believe the movement has created an environment of strict conformity that likely prevents members from safely and productively expressing critiques towards Trump (Du Mez 2018, 252–253). As James explained in our interview, “Republicans don't give a shit. Assimilate. Do what we want. Vote for who we told you. We made this simple, and they—and the people who like it—they love it.”

Additionally, members often compare Trump to biblical figures, such as King Cyrus, or as their secular messiah (Gorski 2017, 347; Taylor 2024). To them, people such as Trump can do no wrong and would never lead them astray; he is their strong-willed leader, fighting for their rights and working to bring God back to America. Christian Nationalists trust their leaders to always do what's right, not only by them but by God, even when their leaders do not exactly fit the criteria of being ‘born-again.’

On the other hand, Christian Nationalists were unique in their hatred of atheists and non-believers, whom they believe to be one of the greatest threats facing the United States today. Across all of my themes, Christian Nationalists explicitly or implicitly accused atheists and those who ‘refuse to be saved’ of colluding with Satan to bring about America's moral decline. Christian Nationalists justify their hostility towards these groups as acting as ‘warriors for Christ,’ fighting to save America's soul from Satan. However, within my findings on the Alt-Right, I did not note any mentions of hostility towards such groups.

Different Themes

Although the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalists share many common themes and ideological beliefs, my findings showed that these groups differ significantly when analyzing

their individual motivations for cultivating a unique in-group identity. For example, although both groups seem to justify their self-imposed marginalized statuses by pointing to increasing globalization, modernization, and diversity happening around them, Christian Nationalists in particular believe this progress stems from a desire to eliminate Christian values from the United States (see Campbell 2024, 55). They believe they are in the midst of a culture war that has not only infected government institutions but also the minds of everyday citizens, which is why they are mobilizing to restore conservative values to society. For the Alt-Right, they are purely secular: Although they believe Jews are behind it all, they do not think they are being persecuted for being white Christians. Simply put, the Alt-Right's anxieties about being marginalized are a secular response to increasing globalization and modernization in the world. Although these motivations may seem similar on the surface, it is important to distinguish them from each other as wholly separate beliefs and end goals.

The second major difference between the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalists is how the Alt-Right utilizes online communication tactics, such as memes and trolling, to both harass others and recruit new members. Although Christian Nationalists, especially those from evangelical traditions, have historically learned how to use the newest mass communications technology to promote their beliefs to a wider audience, I don't believe members have successfully utilized it to the same degree as the Alt-Right. However, I am inclined to believe that these tactics will become more popular within Christian Nationalist spaces as the movement continues to grow across mainstream social media platforms today.

Key Takeaways

My findings show that, to the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalists, Democrats, immigrants, people of color, Muslims, and the LGBTQ+ community are considered to be the

cause of society's moral and cultural decline. Despite coming from two extremely different backgrounds, both groups share mutual beliefs in traditional gender roles, having large, nuclear families, purity culture, and marriage being defined as a union between a man and a woman. Their language and rhetoric toward those who do not adhere to these beliefs are aggressive and violent, believing that by perceiving these out-groups as threats to their in-group identity, they are justified in enacting violence against them.

Most significantly, my research argues that the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalists both rely on the process of being 'born again' to indoctrinate new members. However, instead of only going through this process once after being saved as Christian Nationalists do, the Alt-Right experiences this rebirth dozens of times throughout their redpilling journey as they are prompted to open their eyes to the 'truth' behind a myriad of social and political issues, ranging from anti-feminist sentiment to holocaust denialism. Although it often stretches the new member's indoctrination process by weeks, months, or even years, breaking these 'truths' into pill-sized bits of information allows the member to become more familiar with the language, rhetoric, and ideology of the Alt-Right in a way that doesn't immediately overwhelm them and turn them away. When the member finally emerges on the other end of the pipeline, they have been 'reawakened' by finally understanding the way the world truly works. These findings not only establish new pathways of connection between the two movements but also contribute to the existing conceptual framework on Christian evangelical and Nationalist indoctrination strategies by showing how the Alt-Right engages in many similar practices.

Once members have successfully accepted their new reality and have taken the first step into this new life, there is no going back. For fundamentalists, salvation is eternal and solidifies their spot in God's Kingdom, so long as they continue to share the gospel with others. For the

Alt-Right, it means members have finally seen through the smoke and mirrors mainstream news, media, and politicians use to keep citizens complacent and satisfied so they can continue pushing their agenda with no resistance. Additionally, although the language and rhetoric vary across the two groups, members often see resistance to their beliefs as people who simply haven't opened their eyes to the truth yet, further solidifying their beliefs and invoking a sense of superiority over those who don't understand the way the world really works.

For both the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalism, the result of this indoctrination is the same: a community of members with a shared sense of superiority due to their elevated intellectual and spiritual statuses who now must spread the word to as many people as possible, amassing an army of believers who seek to take down those standing in their path to prosperity and salvation.

Conclusion: The 2024 Election and Personal Reflections

I was twenty years old when Donald Trump won the 2024 election.

I remember refreshing AP News' election map on my phone while lying in bed beside my fiancé, who was sound asleep. He decided to turn in for the night around midnight after CNN projected Trump had won Nebraska. As he got ready for bed, I reminded him to hold out hope as multiple key states had not been called yet. "There's still time," I told him, kissing him goodnight before returning to the living room to continue watching the results. However, after watching CNN's projection that Trump had won Pennsylvania only an hour later, I followed his lead and watched the results from my phone instead. Around 4:30 AM, after spending hours refreshing the election map, AP News announced that Donald Trump had won (Boak and Sanders 2024).

The 2024 election was the first presidential election I was old enough to vote in. Between attending Mount Holyoke College and working on my first thesis draft, I grew more and more hopeful that America would finally turn the corner by electing Democratic Party candidate Kamala Harris. As I lay in bed and stared at my phone, I remember thinking, ‘What just happened?’

Limits to My Research and Recommendations for Future Research

Although I believe my research provides strong evidence of the parallels in language and indoctrination strategies between the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalists, there are some limits to my methodology that I must address.

As with every research design, there are limits and risks I must consider. As Colley and Moore’s research shows, Alt-Right online communities are not exactly tolerant of outsiders looking into their discussions (2019). Aggression towards marginalized communities forces us to stop and consider if it is worth risking our safety and that of our friends, colleagues, and families to find out what discussions take place in these threads. Further discussions and research would have to be done to determine if online ethnographic research involving full integration into these communities is feasible. Additionally, further studies should be done to ensure all potential variables and avenues have been covered in comparing such subjective aspects of these communities. Doing this would provide clarifying information to expand my research question in ways I have thus far not been able to.

I also understand that my methodological decisions may have limited my ability to analyze different forms of data, such as looking at posts made on Truth Social. Although I believe my decisions accurately reflect the scope and depth of my research goals for this thesis, I strongly encourage future research to diversify the types of data used to analyze various ways the

Alt-Right and Christian Nationalists interact with those within and outside of their movements. Expanding this research to cover different modes of communication can help generalize my findings and provide more insight into how these forms of communication have evolved through the digital age.

The decision not to include access to quotes and figures from 4chan and similar sites was intentional. Although I understand the importance of being completely transparent in providing sources used in one's work, I felt that providing direct access to such communities through my work would have been counterintuitive to what my research is trying to accomplish: providing knowledge on these communities for readers who are curious to learn but don't feel comfortable putting themselves at risk to do so.

Finally, I must also take into account the ethical considerations of reproducing hateful language and rhetoric for the sake of research. I used similar steps taken by Colley and Moore to justify my research decisions and minimize the potential harm of any language quoted in my work as much as possible:

First, discourse analysis concerns the analysis of language as used, with the aim of providing depth and nuance inaccessible to quantitative content analysis. Second, reproducing discourse as used on the site is important to illustrate its normalisation [sic] and its potential role in radicalisation [sic]. ...Third, one of the few consistent ideological threads that characterises these communities ... is their fundamentalist belief in free expression. It is difficult to illuminate what the community means by "free expression" without examining, and illustrating, the language they use (2019, 7–8).

Future researchers in this field must take the time to consider the implications of analyzing and reproducing such language, especially if they identify as one of the communities often targeted by these groups.

Contributions to the Field

Watching the 2024 election unfold in real time as I worked on my thesis impacted how I analyzed my findings and underlined the significance my research could have in future years during Trump's second presidency. My findings from this research will not only help contribute to the limited existing knowledge on the relationships between the Alt-Right, religion, and Christian Nationalism but also expand on this knowledge by identifying and bridging the gap in current research on the similarities between these movements. Although previous research has noted the similarities in ideology and demographics (namely, white, conservative men), there is little to no existing literature that takes this comparative analysis further by analyzing the parallels in the inner workings of these movements (Wendling 2018; Hawley 2017; Rotolo et al. 2024; Harding 2000; Du Mez 2018). My research bridges the gap between the literatures on the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalism by showing how these groups use similar language and tactics to cultivate unique, distinctive personalities that separate themselves (the 'in-groups') from those they deem to be the 'enemy.' Additionally, I hope my research will act as a foundation for future researchers to continue furthering the conversation on the ways the Far-Right and Alt-Right movements and Christian Nationalism are connected through shared histories of white supremacy and colonialism, indoctrination practices, and cultivations of in-group identity.

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