



## **Study: 80%+ of the Buffalo Shooter Manifesto Copied Directly from Hate Sites Raising Concerns about Internet Dangers**

A [new study summarized here](#) from Montclair State Justice Studies professor Dr. Daniela Peterka-Benton and Dr. Bond Benton of the Joetta Di Bella and Fred C. Sautter III Center for Strategic Communication in the School of Communication and Media demonstrates the extent to which Buffalo Shooter Payton Gendron's manifesto was derived from hate content he consumed online. His highly planned attack on May 14, 2022 at a Buffalo, NY supermarket focused on the killing of African Americans and left 13 people dead. Understanding what motivated such a hateful attack was a focus of the research.

Specifically, the study showed over 80% of the visual and written content of the rationale sections of the manifesto came from extremist spaces he reported visiting. The full study can be found in the [Journal for Deradicalization](#).

### **Online Content and Extremist Radicalization**

On page five of Gendron's manifesto, he states he derived his beliefs "mostly from the internet. There was little to no influence on my personal beliefs by people I met in person. I read multiple sources of information from all ideologies and decided that my current one is most correct."

In his manifesto, Gendron identifies several sites that were particularly significant in motivating his hateful, violent action. Specifically, he states, "I started browsing 4chan in May 2020 [...] From there, I also found other sites, like worldtruthvideos, dailyarchives, and dailystormer." He also notes consuming extremist content on Reddit along with the manifestos of white nationalist shooters Anders Behring Breivik and Brenton Tarrant. Given the almost boilerplate collection of common white nationalist sources, the researchers

speculated that content in the manifesto would be liberally borrowed and possibly even copied from these sources.

The study used analytic software to assess textual authorship with results confirming content was substantially copied and pasted from the sources Gendron identified. The researchers also scraped 62 images from the document and used analysis programs to identify the online locations that have hosted these images.

## **Highlights from the study analyzing the “rationale” sections of the manifesto include:**

- At least 82% of the rationale sections of Gendron’s manifesto was plagiarized
- Over 56% was taken from manifestos of other white nationalist attackers
- Another 26% was copied from white supremacist sites
- 95% of the images studied were copied directly from hate and extremist sites
- 4chan hosted 69% of the images Gendron used for his rationale

The data collected and analyzed demonstrates the extent to which radical material he consumed influenced manifesto content- the public statement for why he perpetrated in this attack.

“The internet has long been an unchecked playground for extremists and hate groups,” said Peterka-Benton. “People can be pulled into those hateful spaces, and it can define how they see the world. This was especially true during the COVID-19 pandemic, as young people like Gendron were online for vast portions of the day,” said Benton.

Ultimately, the results represent a call to action for improved media literacy. “From parents to online consumers, we need to be critical about the content we consume- particularly when we are just a few clicks away from the worst messages imaginable,” said Peterka-Benton

The study was conducted by Daniela Peterka-Benton, a professor of Justice Studies at Montclair State and Bond Benton, a researcher at the Joetta Di Bella and Fred C. Sautter III Center for Strategic Communication, which provides social media analytics tools and training for faculty and students for classroom learning and research projects.

###

**About the School of Communication and Media:** Founded in 2012, the School of Communication and Media offers a range of dynamic programs in communication and media to a talented and diverse student population of over 1,800. Offering degrees in film and television, social media and public relations, advertising, journalism and digital media, sports communication, communication and media studies, animation and visual effects, and an MA in public and organizational relations, the School prepares the next generation of communication and media practitioners and leaders. The School houses award-winning student programs that include **WMSC Radio**, **The Montclarion** newspaper, **Hawk Communications Agency**, the **Red Hawk Sports Network**, **Hawk+** OTT streaming platform, and **News Lab**, as well as the **Center for Cooperative Media**, which serves the public by working to grow and strengthen local journalism. Student projects and programs have recently received national recognition from PRSSA's Bateman Competition, an Edward R Murrow Award, several Marconi Award nominations, and a College Television Award from the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences.

**Media Contact:** Keith Green, School of Communication and Media, 973-655-3701 or [greenk@montclair.edu](mailto:greenk@montclair.edu)

**montclair.edu**  
**1 Normal Avenue, Montclair NJ 07043**  
**An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution**