Masculinity and Violent Extremism

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Global Masculinities

The dramatic success of Gender Studies has rested on three developments: (1) making women's lives visible, which has also come to mean making all genders more visible; (2) insisting on intersectionality and so complicating the category of gender; (3) analyzing the tensions among global and local iterations of gender. Through textual analyses and humanities-based studies of cultural representations, as well as cultural studies of attitudes and behaviors, we have come to see the centrality of gender in the structure of modern life. This series embraces these advances in scholarship, and applies them to men's lives: gendering men's lives, exploring the rich diversity of men's lives - globally and locally, textually and practically - as well as the differences among men by class, race, sexuality, and age.

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Foreword

The past ten years have been a period of significant upheaval and disharmony, with ruptures and fissures appearing in many liberal democracies. A new stage of capitalism, underpinned by neoliberal economics and the surveillance and commoditisation of our data, has taken root, substantially reordering the ratios between rich and poor, replacing democratic processes and institutions with privatised, for-profit solutions and eroding the social safety net. In addition to this, governments and societies have finally acknowledged the bleak realities of climate crisis, yet react at glacial speed. A global pandemic has further disturbed the supposed security of liberal democracies for many, while advantaging the rich and accentuating vaccine inequity between the Global North and South. Meanwhile, the locus of public debate has moved out of democratically accountable spaces onto corporate-owned platforms, owned by billionaires with openly expressed aspirations to a new world order. The power of local and national government structures is thus severely diminished. As we now transition into the era of Web 3.0, fears about the impacts of virtual reality, artificial intelligence and automation on all aspect of lives are apposite. As Gavan Titley (2021) points out, "The bigger problem is this: Social media corporations provide us with important infrastructure for public debate in democracies, but we have no democratic relationship to these private, largely unaccountable entities"

These seismic shifts have occurred in such a short timeframe that their significance and impact are difficult to process. From farmers, factory workers, food delivery drivers and call centre operators to health-care

workers, educators, public servants and medium-tier white-collar workers, the vast majority of the world's population are engaged in the daily struggle for survival, under increasingly challenging conditions. For many politicians and business owners, however, the instability of the past years has been a time of immense opportunity. We have seen a slew of far-right, populist demagogues rise to power in many countries, including the United States, Hungary, Poland, Turkey, India, Brazil and Russia. As Joshua Roose (2020) has argued, the decay and corruption of key social institutions has created a vacuum of intellectual and moral guidance for working people, which has been exploited by the 'new demagogues'. Focussing on the election of Trump, the UK's departure from the European Union and the recruitment of Islamic State foreign fighters from Western Muslim communities, Roose demonstrates how masculinity and religion have been strategically mobilised to garner popularity for far-right and other extreme ideologies.

The concept of disenfranchised masculinity in times of socio-economic turmoil is not new. According to Michael Kimmel (2017, 2018), American working-class men have felt left behind by the agendas of 'big government' for some time. In his recent study of young men and violent extremism, Kimmel (2018) identified "aggrieved entitlement" as a key motivating factor for these men's attraction to violent groups. Denied the same privileges as their fathers and grandfathers, such as property ownership, a job for life and the presumption of marriage, new generations of men have felt emasculated by and ashamed of their lack of status and power. However, rather than attributing their disentitlement to neoliberalism capitalism, they have found a more convenient scapegoat in women, ethnic minorities and other genuinely disenfranchised groups, whom they believe have benefitted from liberal democracies at their expense. Mainstream politicians such as Trump and Bolsonaro have tapped into this sense of wounded masculinity, both exploiting existing anger and stirring up new antipathy towards progressive social movements and groups. Emboldened by this swing to the right and amplified by the technological affordances of social media, a raft of extremist formations has grown in number and impact in recent years. These include not only alt-right, far-right and patriot movements but also a number of men's rights assemblages such as incels, Men Going Their Own Way and other male supremacist communities, as well as QAnon and various other anti-globalist and militant wellness movements.

Much centrist commentary, through the deliberate framing of right and left as closely resembling one another rather than being at opposing ends of the political continuum (horseshoe theory), would have us believe that right and left are equally dangerous and violent. It is, however, precisely through the lens of masculinity that this myth of equivalence falls apart, since leftist movements neither depend upon male anger nor are they framed around ideologies of dominant or violent masculinity. By contrast, as this book so cogently demonstrates, far-right, Salafi jihadist and other anti-progressive movements are not only driven and led by men but also fundamentally organised around regressive ideologies of manhood. Despite this, coverage and analysis of recent terrorist attacks have largely neglected or underestimated the key role of gender in extreme political violence. Moreover, the role of masculinity in recruiting men to these organisations has also been widely overlooked.

This book is therefore a crucial intervention into current debates. Roose et al. critically interrogate the existing scholarship on gender and terrorism, upon which many cybersecurity policies are based. They challenge a number of problematic assumptions, for example that social isolation, weak support networks, poverty and certain psychological profiles are accurate predictors of gender-based terrorism. On the contrary, this study shows that the circumstances and expressed beliefs of many of those who are drawn to violent extremism are often far from marginal, but rather common and mainstream. As Eugenia Siapera has argued (2019), misogyny is primarily a political strategy rather than a sentiment, and it is used strategically in times of structural 'crisis' to exclude women from accessing and controlling the means of production and from full socio-economic participation. Using the work of Silvia Federici (2004) on the witch hunts of the middle ages, Siapera argues that online misogyny currently has a function similar to that performed by the spectacular punishment of women in the transition from feudal to industrial capitalism; but in this case, it emerges as a weapon to prevent women from participating in the rapidly emerging new phase of technocapitalism.

It is possible to see, therefore, how acts of gender-based terrorism might be performing a similar function, namely to warn feminism, the left and other progressive movements that societal shifts towards gender equity and LGBTQ+ inclusiveness—which are perceived as disturbing the 'natural order'—will be spectacularly punished. Roose et al. have written the first book to explain the intersection of masculinity and extremism

based on empirical research. It draws on three rich seams of empirical data: a digital ethnography of violent extremist websites and manifestos, a quantitative analysis of these sites' texts and a survey and interviews of men in Australia. One of its key findings—that men display more affinity with violent extremist narratives than is commonly considered—has resonance far beyond Australia, and must be given urgent consideration by academics and policy makers everywhere. Too often, Australian research is side-lined in Anglophone academia, despite its applicability in international contexts. This book situates Australian research on masculinity and extremism at the centre and cutting edge of the discipline.

Dublin City University   Debbie Ging
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Personal

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Simon would like to thank his colleagues in this team and at his school who have made his work possible over the past years.

Praise for *Masculinity and Violent Extremism*

"This book takes an obvious but largely neglected question seriously: Why are men the overwhelming majority in violent extremist groups? Drawing on rich empirical research, it gives a persuasive account of the role of masculinity in far right, jihadism and anti-women movements. This compelling book will be an essential source for anyone interested in gender, radicalization and violence."

—Lucas Gottzén, *Professor of Child and Youth Studies, Stockholm University, Sweden*

"This book is a must read for anyone wanting to understand the role masculinities play in violent extremist groups of diverse ideologies—far right, Islamist and far left. It provides new empirical data and offers clear and practical solutions for policy makers looking to put theory into practice, and help men resist extreme groups."

—Elizabeth Pearson, *Lecturer in Criminology, Royal Holloway, University of London, UK*

"The central role and allure of narrow, extremely patriarchal understandings of gender roles as 'push' and 'pull' factors in violent extremist movements across the political and ideological spectrum is too often overlooked. This book is thus a most welcome, crucial and necessary contribution to current debates on violent extremism."

—Henri Myrttinen, *Visiting Research Fellow, University of Bremen, Germany*

"*Masculinity and Violent Extremism* proves a detailed and valuable contribution to the literature, helping readers better understand the role of masculinities in contemporary violent extremist movements. A must read."

—Joana Cook, *Assistant Professor of Terrorism and Political Violence, Leiden University, Netherlands.*

"At a time when the role of masculinity in exacerbating political violence has become inescapable, *Masculinity and Violent Extremism* gives the most in-depth empirical accounts thus far. With rich comparisons of violent masculinities in Australia, the book gives clarity about the enormity of the challenge and some steps which might be taken to address it. *Masculinity and Violent Extremism* is essential reading for anyone with an interest in gender and violence in contemporary politics."

—David Duriesmith, *Lecturer in Gender and Politics, University of Sheffield, UK*

"This gripping book explores the role of masculinities in violent extremism, a topic which is more often skirted around than rigorously investigated. No one wants to blame men and masculinity *per se* for violent extremist events, yet there is no denying that men dominate extremist movements and are much more often involved in acts of extremist violence. One of the virtues of this book, in my opinion, is to avoid relying on broad and rather empty generalisations like 'toxic masculinity'. Rather, the book treats the problem of masculinities in violent extremism as it should be handled, with due attention to the complexities of gender and other socio-cultural factors that are involved. Early on, the reader is given a succinct yet incisive review of the literature in the field. Subsequently, empirical data obtained from men themselves and from popular extremist network sites allows the authors to thoroughly explore the phenomenon, and to give convincing evidence for their analysis and explanation. To my mind, the most compelling section of the book articulates the intersection of extremist and normative masculinity, depicting significant overlap between the discourse of violent extremist organisations and the norms of hegemonic masculinity. A welcome strength of this book is to end on a chapter which draws out for scholars and practitioners the implications for police and practice. The authors amply demonstrate the applicability of their study to international contexts."

—Pam Nilan, *University of Newcastle, Australia*

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About the Authors

Joshua Roose is a political sociologist and Senior Research Fellow in Politics and Religion at the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation, Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia. He is a Chief Investigator on an Australian Research Council-funded Discovery Project study 'The Far Right: Intellectuals, Masculinity and Citizenship' (2021–2023) and Lead Chief Investigator on an Australian Research Council Discovery Project funded study 'Anti-Women Online Movements: Pathways and Patterns of Participation' (2022–2025). He sits on the Executive of the Addressing Violent Extremism and Radicalisation to Terrorism (AVERT) research network and the editorial board of the journal *International Centre for Counter Terrorism* (*ICCT*)—the Hague. He has contributed to advisory boards for the Victorian State and Federal government in Australia on social cohesion and violent extremism. His recent books include *The New Demagogues: Religion, Masculinity and the New Populism* (2020) and *Political Islam and Masculinity: Muslim Men in Australia* (Palgrave Macmillan 2016).

Michael Flood is an internationally recognised researcher on men, masculinities, and gender, violence against women and violence prevention. He has made significant contributions to scholarly and public understanding of men's involvements in preventing violence against women and building gender equality, and to scholarship and programming regarding violence and violence prevention. Flood is the author of *Engaging Men*

and Boys in Violence Prevention (2019) and the lead editor of *Engaging Men in Building Gender Equality* (2015) and *The International Encyclopedia of Men and Masculinities* (2007). He is also an advocate and educator.

Mark Alfano's work encompasses subfields in philosophy (epistemology, moral psychology, philosophy of science), social science (social psychology, personality psychology) and computer science. He also brings digital humanities methods to bear on both contemporary problems and the history of philosophy (especially Nietzsche). He has experience with R, Gephi and Tableau.

Alan Greig is a gender specialist with more than 20 years' experience working on issues of masculinity, violence and oppression in countries of the Global South and North. Through research and support to programme design, implementation and evaluation, his work addresses the connections between gender injustice and other forms of oppression, interpersonal and institutional violence as well as personal and social change. Greig has written widely on these issues, authoring a range of curricula and toolkits for use in professional development. He is an experienced gender trainer and facilitator of strategic planning and project design processes for a range of international and national organisations. As a co-founder of the New York-based Challenging Male Supremacy project, he is committed to a vision of social justice with gender equality at its heart.

Simon Copland is a PhD candidate in the School of Sociology at The Australian National University (ANU), Australia, studying online men's rights groups and communities 'manosphere'. He has research expertise in masculinity, the far-right, online hate and digital media platforms. He has a Masters in Science Communication. Simon is also a freelance writer and has been published in *The Atlantic*, *The Guardian*, BBC Online and *Overland Journal*, amongst others. He has a number of high-quality publications and chapters in books including a chapter in the books *Global Anti-feminism (upcoming), Rise of the Far-Right: Technologies of Recruitment and Mobilization, Queer Stories* and *Going Postal*. Simon is a David Bowie and rugby union fanatic, and volunteers for the local State Emergency Services.

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Introduction: Masculinity and Violent Extremism

Abstract This chapter sets out the context for the book, exploring the role of masculinities in violent extremism. It also outlines the current challenges faced by scholars and practitioners on a global scale in addressing the rise of the far-right, Salafi Jihadism and anti-women online movements. We outline the key research questions and methodological approach, and provide a chapter outline to guide the reader. Particular attention is given to demonstrating the applicability of the study to international contexts.

Keywords Masculinity • Violent extremism • Far-right • Incel • Conspiracy • COVID-19

Introduction

Violent extremist groups and networks are proliferating across the globe. To understand them and to prevent violent extremist acts, we must pay attention to masculinity—by which we mean the social expectations of what it is to be a man (Kimmel & Bridges, 2011). Masculinity defines the social expectations of manhood and the social structuring of hierarchies based on the privileging of what is considered masculine and the devaluation of that considered feminine. The participants in violent extremist groups are often men, but beyond this, such groups' origins, ideologies,

internal processes and means of recruitment are tied in powerful ways to masculinity. That is, they are tied to the political, cultural and economic relations of many men's lives, to influential ideologies about men and gender and to narratives about men's roles and position in society. Violent extremist groups often draw on and intensify ideologies of misogyny or women-hating that are already present in society. Men's participation in such groups is shaped, in some contexts, by gendered processes of economic marginalisation and political repression. Such groups seek to attract recruits and support by deploying various narratives of masculinity in their messaging and organising.

This book examines the role of masculinities in violent extremism. We specifically explore men's motivations to support or participate in violent extremist groups and commit violent political acts. It draws on three rich sets of empirical data: a digital ethnography of violent extremist websites and manifestos, a quantitative analysis of these sites' texts and a survey and interviews of men in Australia. The book integrates these with a wide-ranging review of contemporary scholarship, exploring how masculinities may be at stake in violent extremism. It brings a critical eye to this scholarship. It notes, for example, that some accounts of masculinity and terrorism in the literature are overgeneralised, decontextualised or ethnocentric, and that in turn, some forms of countering violent extremism (CVE) policy and programming may reinforce the very inequalities that can breed violent extremism in the first place.

Extremisms on the Rise

We live in an era defined by the emergence of new, constantly evolving forms of political and religious violent extremism.

In what may be the aftermath of the flux caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is worth reflecting on just how significant this change has been over the past decade. In 2012, President Barak Obama had just been re-elected for a four-year term as President of the United States. Prime Minister David Cameron was two years into his term and the stirrings from anti-European activists such as Nigel Farage remained marginalised. The 2012 Summer Olympics were widely considered a success and notwithstanding the continued long-term occupation of Afghanistan (then in its 11th year), the global rules-based order was, so far as the dominant political powers were concerned, largely intact. This is not to disregard the impact of the global financial crisis (2007–2009), activist streams

including the 'occupy' and 'tea party' movements and the growth of far-right political parties. However, liberal democracies nonetheless demonstrated continuity and for many there was little reason to anticipate what was to follow.

Just a decade later, the world is a very different place. The emergence of anti-democratic far-right demagogic populist strong men on a global scale in the United States, Hungary, Poland, Turkey, India, the Philippines and Brazil, as well as the emergence of hard-line nationalist Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013 and invasion of the Crimea and Ukraine by Russia under the leadership of Vladimir Putin in 2014 and again in 2022, has signalled that liberal democracy globally faces an existential challenge. Amidst political turmoil in Western nations an authoritarian turn has been not only possible but looks increasingly likely.

Paralleling these changes at the global level, in the past decade alone, we have witnessed the emergence of a wide number of violent extremist movements and terror attacks that have reshaped the political landscape. The global (re)emergence of the far-right has given rise to aggressive and organised movements that have morphed beyond their traditional caricature of jackbooted skinheads to often multi-racial formations that have developed their own vocabulary and symbology to aid in communication and recruitment. Such groups include the 'Proud Boys' in the United States (with chapters globally), alt-right and patriot movements, whilst individual activists also build considerable followings. The culmination of this was seen most recently in the United States with the January 2021 storm on the US Capital Building in Washington D.C. as outgoing US President Donald Trump sought, extrajudicially, to cling to power.

In addition to this, white nationalist terrorism has continued to remain a strong force in the Western world. Individuals motivated by White nationalism have been responsible for several of the deadliest terror attacks in recent times, specifically in 2011 at Oslo and Utoya in which Anders Breivik targeted left-wing political activists he believed were selling out the nation to Muslim migrants, whilst leaving a manifesto decrying low fertility rates amongst Western (white) women. In 2015 in Charleston, South Carolina, Dylann Roof attacked black church goers, killing nine. The United States has seen similar attacks in recent years, such as the Pittsburgh Synagogue targeting Jewish congregants in 2018. Many more plots, including that by Gruppe S in Germany targeting Muslims and migrants, have been uncovered and prevented. Most notably, in 2019, white Australian ethno-nationalist terrorist Brenton Tarrant attacked mosques in

Christchurch New Zealand, killing dozens of innocent Muslim attendees and wounding scores more.

Paralleling these worrying developments, we have seen the emergence of 'Involuntary Celibates' or 'Incels', who self-flagellate about their lack of access to women for sexual activity on the one hand and blame women for being attracted to more desirable men on the other hand. Starting initially as an inclusive, non-violent group including men and women, this was eventually taken over, escalating from a primarily online anti-women movement into real-world violence for the first time in 2014 when Elliot Rodger, a self-described 'supreme gentleman', carried out what may arguably be defined as a terror attack in California. He left behind a manifesto calling for the eradication of most women, with those remaining to be reduced to sexual slavery. Numerous others, both in North America and in Europe, have since carried out violent attacks, targeting women on the basis of their gender.

Anti-women activity has not been limited to incels. Beyond wide-ranging sexism and prejudice embedded in institutions, most notably evident in the repeal of Roe v. Wade by the US Supreme Court and refusal to allow women to lead prayer within key religious groups, violent misogyny, an output of what may be termed 'male supremacism', has become pervasive in online environments. This sees women and girls and in particular feminists targeted for abuse, harassment and threats of violence. This has been demonstrated to have a significant detrimental impact on both the well-being of women and girls and to act as a powerful barrier to their full democratic participation in online spaces, including exploiting the economic potential of the internet. This behaviour is particularly prevalent in what has been referred to as the 'manosphere', an online ecosystem composed of men's rights activists, Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW), pick-up artists and incels. Such has been the growth of violence emanating from these groups that national security agencies across Western contexts have started to take notice and to build a concern with the prevention of gender-based political violence into their planning.

While many of these threats dominate news coverage now, in this book we also consider the primary concern of security agencies a decade ago, Salafi jihadist terrorism. We have seen the rise and fall of the Islamic State movement, including the declaration of a caliphate, punctuated by the genocide and sexual slavery of the Yazidi peoples. Western foreign fighters and in particular young men played a significant and high-profile role in the Islamic State movement, acting primarily as recruiters and

participating in atrocities, which were documented and transmitted back to the West in an attempt to provoke division. Terror attacks in Western cities from London and Paris to Orlando, Ottawa and Melbourne demonstrated the long reach of the movement and their willingness to frame all Western citizens as enemies of their faith. Despite the land defeat of Islamic State, both Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State movement remain potent potential terrorist actors with global reach.

Finally, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, conspiracy theories such as those propagated by 'QAnon' have taken hold with small, but highly dedicated segments of society. This includes some fringe politicians merging with a variety of anti-lockdown and anti-state actors including militant wellness movements, sovereign citizens and far-right actors. Drawing from a libertarian political vocabulary emphasising the 'tyranny' of the state, these movements, primarily located in the United States, are exporting their radical and violent language and political outlook on a global scale through social media. Beyond the symbolic violence of opposing public health science such as the use of masks and vaccines, these movements, which assert the presence of a liberal elite bent on the subordination of God and citizens, have been linked to violent attacks, particularly in North America and the January 06 Insurrection.

These movements often are driven by men and organised by masculinities. Men's participation in some contexts is shaped by a variety of factors associated with masculinity, including, but not limited to, ideologies of male supremacy, limited economic conditions, the changing nature of work including casualisation and loss of the 'job for life' and welfare safety net, political repression, and particularly amongst white-collar workers, a sense of 'aggrieved entitlement'—a perceived loss of the respect, recognition and social standing to which they were entitled as men. Involvement may be driven by men's resentment and blame directed at the women and minorities who are perceived to have benefited from male economic, legal and political subordination and directed at both these groups and the governments perceived to have facilitated it. This may be grounded in a sense of shame, humiliation and anger as social trajectories stagnate and turn downward.

In turn, extremist movements have become skilled at utilising masculinities as a recruitment mechanism. Extremist narratives are highly calibrated in both tone and content to appeal to men, valorising hegemonic masculinities and emphasising the urgency of a return to patriarchal societies. These messages promote men back to the role of breadwinners and

the heads of households, whilst castigating Western women and feminists as licentious, immoral and requiring forceful correction. In contrast to what may be nebulous daily lives, extremist narratives reposition men as protectors of the tribe, as warriors engaged in an existential war against a defined enemy, whether liberal elites and the political left, the 'west' and even specifically, women. This sees the intersection of masculinities from across the political and ideological spectrum in extremes of anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim racism and anti-women hatred.

Narrative messaging is very often highly emotively charged, and, angry in tone. This resonates with the anger of those experiencing stagnating and downward social trajectories, on the one hand, though also widens the potential appeal of narrative messaging to a wider body of men in Western contexts, for whom anger is commonly experienced. Interestingly, whilst prevalent across the political right and Islamist groups, this is not the case across left-wing and environmentalist movements, despite their expressions of anger and often-hard-line commitment to civil disobedience. Despite the increasing body of research exploring the role of masculinities in violent extremism, much work remains to be done to adequately understand how masculinities are utilised in the recruitment of men to violent extremism. Of course, women too play active roles in some violent extremist groups and movements. However, the specific role of masculinity is often under-studied in research of violent extremism.

The Study

This book, grounded in in-depth empirical research conducted in Melbourne, Australia, aims to contribute towards filling this gap. This book seeks to contribute to better understanding these challenges by highlighting a core delineating factor across the political and religious spectrum, the role of masculinities in recruitment and patterns of participation. The lessons learnt in both the empirical and wider dimension of the research make this study an important point of reference for liberal democratic states internationally.

Groups and movements across the political and religious spectrum are tailoring their recruitment narratives to reach men, offering a sense of respect, recognition and belonging, honour and warrior status missing in other facets of their lives. These groups in this sense often have far more in common than their differences, whether far-right or Salafi jihadist, placing recapturing masculinity and manhood from a place of powerlessness and

social impotence at the core of their pitch to potential recruits. The use of emotion, and in particular, anger, is a critical tool to engage men, ensuring the right tone and content of messaging, including promises of revenge and retribution against perceived enemies, including those that are considered to have stolen what rightfully belongs to them, whether it is racial minorities, atheists, governments or most commonly, women. Importantly, given the preoccupation by some in law enforcement and key arms of governments, the book also explores 'left wing' groups with a demonstrated history of protest and civil disobedience that could potentially have violent potential. Here the results speak for themselves, with left-wing groups neither appealing to hegemonic norms of masculinity nor using violent language similar to that of the far-right or Salafi jihadist groups.

Like any study, this book has its limitations. The rapid evolution in the far-right and movements operating in online environments means that many of the groups and platforms explored within this book will undoubtedly evolve and change, if they have not already. The messaging application Telegram, for example, has become an increasingly significant meeting point for extremists globally since commencing this study. However, the underpinning would be expected to remain the same. Whilst the book seeks to capture as wide a variety of literature as possible, we also note that this is a rapidly developing field and that some relevant research may not be captured.

The authors of this book come from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds, including sociology, politics, philosophy, media and communication. Our differing expertise ranges from masculinity to countering violent extremism (CVE), alongside much in between. This diversity provides the book a strength, particularly as we seek to merge masculinity and CVE studies for a unique contribution. However, at times, this can also create some differences and inconsistencies in approach. We have tried to limit this as much as possible in the text, but this tension may appear in some moments.

Book Structure

The book from here is set across four chapters. Chapter 2 features a comprehensive review of the key strengths and gaps in contemporary literature exploring the role of masculinities in violent extremism and policy responses to this. Chapter 3 examines representations of masculinity by progenitor groups (those legal civil society groups that nonetheless

demonstrate a propensity to extremist narratives) and those of established violent extremists and terrorists. Grounded in a digital ethnography of key websites and a quantitative analysis of text from these websites and manifestos, this chapter takes a deep dive into the role of masculinities and emotion in these movements and their recruitment narratives. Chapter 4 explores the intersection of extremist and normative masculinity. Grounded in a survey of close to 500 Australian men and interviews with 41 men across the age, regional and socio-economic spectrum in the state of Victoria (of which Melbourne is the capital), this chapter demonstrates significant overlap, in at least some key areas, between narratives of violent extremist organisations and hegemonic masculine norms. This includes views towards minorities, women and the use of violence between, suggesting that violent extremist narratives have much more potential resonance with men than commonly considered. Chapter 5 synthesises prior chapters and considers key potential sites for effective intervention with men who may be attracted to violent extremist movements. It outlines what such policy interventions may look like for practitioners at different levels and how these may be effective in different international contexts. We particularly investigate a burgeoning area of research around 'alternative narratives', which has been focused in the area of Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE). We argue that alternative narratives provide a means through which to communicate alternative concepts of masculinity, ones which are focused positively rather than trying to counteract negative of violent ideas.

We hope that the book serves as a foundation for better understanding the intersection of masculinities and violent extremism, as a handbook for promising prevention and reduction strategies and as a basis for more research in the field.

Reference

Kimmel, M., & Bridges, T. (2011). *Masculinity. Oxford Bibliographies.* Oxford University Press Online.

Literature and Policy Review and Analysis

Abstract This chapter outlines what is known about the intersection of masculinity and violent extremism, based on an extensive literature review. The literature review is composed of a systematic review of scholarly and policy literature on issues of masculinities in relation to both violent extremism and policies and programmes to CVE. It focuses on works published over the period 2010–2019, in English, addressing violent extremism and making reference to men and masculinities. Recent international studies indicate that higher levels of gender inequality, gender-based violence and misogyny contribute to a greater vulnerability to both intrastate political violence and a predisposition towards violent extremism. The 'gender lens' is an effective indicator of rising extremisms and must inform policy responses.

Keywords Radicalisation • Masculinities • Gender • Misogyny • Narratives • Policy

INTRODUCTION

What does contemporary scholarship tell us about violent extremism and masculinities? This chapter begins by examining accounts of radicalisation and the notions of men's pathways to political violence they invoke,

calling for more complex and multi-faceted understandings of this. We explore processes associated with masculinity—to do with the social expectations of manhood and the social structuring of hierarchies based on the privileging of what is considered masculine and the devaluation of that considered feminine—in relation to men's motivations to support or participate in violent extremist groups and commit violent political acts. This chapter critically assesses explanations in terms of men's identity crises, social and cultural alienation, economic marginalisation, disaffection with government and so-called toxic masculinities.

There is growing recognition of the foundational links between violent extremism and misogyny, that is, women-hating or patriarchal ideologies, although this recognition at times has been formulated in racist and in particular, anti-Muslim ways. The chapter notes how anti-feminist networks and communities in the online 'manosphere' feed far-right recruitment and mobilisation. Violent extremist groups themselves deploy various narratives of, or appeals to, masculinity and misogyny in their messaging and organising. The chapter explores typical themes including male protection of women, restoration of a lost patriarchal order, potency and virility, and revelations of male disadvantage. It concludes with a discussion of the uptake of considerations about masculinities in CVE policy and programming.

Theorising Radicalisation

Theories of radicalisation have emerged over the last decade in particular, in response to the threats posed by far-right and Islamist groups, and the terrorist violence perpetrated by them. With an apparent increase in the numbers of people participating in such groups over the same period, radicalisation has become a 'master' concept with which to explain the process by which people become extremists. Even as research has drawn attention to the presence of women in such groups, it remains true that Islamist and far-right formations are preponderantly male in their composition, and overwhelmingly so in their leadership. Explaining the reasons why so many men, then, are drawn to participating in such groups and perpetrating terrorist violence has been the central concern of radicalisation theories; implicitly or explicitly, research on radicalisation has been concerned with understanding and demonstrating the links between men, masculinity and the political uses of violence.

Recent reviews have shown that research is currently inconclusive when it comes to explaining pathways of radicalisation towards involvement in terrorist action. A 2019 report (Bennett, p. 61) on debates about radicalisation in relation to Australian counter-terrorism policy concludes that the "term is at best confusing, due to conflicting interpretations and limited empirical studies". Of more concern, the "radicalisation discourse poses a dangerous threat to freedom of political discourse by securitising ideas that fall beyond the ambit of mainstream thought" (Bennett, 2019, p. 61). The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the world's largest security-oriented intergovernmental organisation comprising 57 states from Europe, Central Asia and North America, echoes this concern. In its 2019 report on the *Role of Civil Society in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism*, the OSCE (2019, p. 18) notes that there "are different legal, policy and academic definitions and understandings of terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism", which "serve different purposes and are not always aligned, which sometimes challenges efforts to advance good practices and build international co-operation". Notably, the OSCE (2019, p. 19) emphasises that there "are significant semantic and conceptual challenges in the terminology related to violent extremism and terrorism, especially from a human rights perspective". In order to uphold basic human rights, the OSCE (2019, p. 20) insists on a focus on "the link between radicalization/extremism and acts of violence and criminalized terrorism", and in so doing, "explicitly underscores the importance of preserving fundamental freedoms when working to prevent these security threats".

Across the vast literature on radicalisation, one of the most common premises is that the political violence of 'criminalised terrorism' is preceded and supported by ideas considered outside the mainstream, in other words, 'extremist' conceptions about how the world should be ordered and governed. The term radicalisation refers to the personal or interpersonal process by which an individual adopts these extreme social and/or political ideas that justify and lead to the use of violence for attainment of their political goals. The impetus to both insist on, and then intervene in, the relationship between extremist ideas and violent actions arose in response to the killing of Dutch journalist Theo van Gogh in 2004 and the London bomb attacks in 2005, both events being identified as Islamist-inspired terrorism. The stochastic nature of these attacks led to a broadening of counter-terrorism policy beyond policing and military interventions,

on the understanding that those "perpetrating terrorist violence are drawn from a larger pool of extremists who share an ideology that inspires their actions" (Kundnani, 2015, p. 117). The model of radicalisation developed by the Dutch and UK governments, and soon embraced by the United States and the UN's Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (established in 2005), focused on delineating the aspects of Islamic beliefs and/or of Muslim life that could inspire terrorist action.

Although common models of radicalisation represent it as a linear process, the evidence is in fact that processes of radicalisation are non-linear and complex. An early, and still influential, formulation of the radicalisation process prepared for the New York Police Department (NYPD), and focused on the Salafi branch of Sunni Islam, outlined a linear four-stage model (Kundnani, 2015). The first stage, the NYPD proposed, begins with 'pre-radicalisation', during which the individual lives his or her ordinary life. This is followed by 'self-identification', during which period the individual explores Salafi philosophy in response to some kind of personal or political crisis. The individual typically associates with like-minded people, while loosening the bonds with their previous life. The third stage is 'indoctrination', during which the individual intensifies their new beliefs. The final step, 'Jihadisation', involves an acceptance of the duty to participate in Jihad. The appeal of this model, and its seductive linearity, is evident in the metaphors of staircases, escalators and slippery slopes, which have proliferated in descriptions of radicalisation. But, as Bennett (2019, p. 60) observes, the "difficulty with paths and staircases […] is that they imply that there are steps towards radical activism that can be taken in an ordered and logical fashion. However, it is precisely the lack of a discernible pattern that is frustrating scholars and policymakers." Indeed, the four-stage radicalisation model adopted by the NYPD, and adapted by many others, lacked any empirical basis.

The evidence that does exist to explain people's, and this mostly means men's, involvement in and support for terrorist violence is much more confusing than such linear models suggest. A systematic review (McGilloway et al., 2015, p. 39) of pathways to and processes "associated with radicalisation and extremism amongst Muslims in Western societies" concluded that "[n]o single cause or pathway was implicated in radicalisation and violent extremism. Individuals may demonstrate vulnerabilities that increase exposure to radicalisation; however, the only common characteristic determined that terrorists are generally well-integrated, 'normal' individuals."

Far from the linearity of the slope or staircase, Hafez and Mullins (2015), in their theoretical synthesis of empirical approaches to "home-grown extremism", prefer to talk of the "radicalisation puzzle" and its mingling of personal and collective grievances, networks and interpersonal ties, political and religious ideologies, and enabling environments and support structures. As Anderlini (2018, p. 30) notes in her summary of the state of the evidence in the 2018 report 'Challenging Conventional Wisdom, Transforming Current Practices: A Gendered Lens on PVE', there "is significant research being done currently on the 'push' and 'pull' factors associated with radicalisation" but the "reality is that there are countless variables and significant differences from one context to the other".

This confusion over radicalisation has not deterred its uptake as a concept by researchers and policy makers. "Despite caveats that there is no agreed profile, pathway, or context, and that theories of radicalisation are not predictive, researchers nevertheless usually make a series of recommendations to state policy makers", notes Brown (2013, p. 37). In an effort to make some sense of this puzzle, Borum (2011, p. 37) insisted on the "importance of distinguishing between ideological radicalisation and terrorism involvement". This distinction and the relationship between its two terms are still being debated. The challenge more generally for the radicalisation discourse is "how to explain the mechanics by which ideas lead to physical violence" (Bennett, 2019, p. 49). As Crone suggests, the problem with cognitive radicalisation theories is that they posit an ideational determinism, in which ideas produce action. By contrast, Crone (2014) argues that ideas rarely instigate violence but are more commonly used as rationalisations of such violence.

The politics of this ideational determinism are coming to be acknowledged in both the scholarly literature and policy discourse on radicalisation. A recent report commissioned by the Australian Department of Defence has argued that there is a real danger that cognitive radicalisation theories can delegitimise minority views, as within the cognitive approach, "radical thought is measured against mainstream opinion", with the risk of thus "criminalising legitimate political opinions that are merely different from normative social thinking" (Bennett, 2019, pp. 49–50). Such criminalisation, Kundnani (2015, p. 129) makes clear, arises from a "failure to distinguish between radical beliefs and violent methods". From the beginning, then, the concept of radicalisation took as a premise the view that "the question of violence can only be answered by assuming certain

ideologies are inherently violent. […] At the heart of this model remain[ed] an unexamined assumption that violence has its origins in dangerous theological ideas" (Kundnani, 2015, p. 130). This failure continues to have severe human rights consequences for many people identifying as, or perceived as being, Muslim. Over ten years after the inauguration of the UK's Prevent CVE strategy, Rashid (2016, p. 178) noted that "[e]xtremism continues to be couched in 'culturalist' terms and adherence to the 'wrong type of Islam' is regarded as the principal explanation for radicalisation". The intent of this 'culturalist' emphasis, as Kundnani (2015, p. 117) makes clear, is to

> exclude ascribing any causative role to the actions of Western governments or their allies in other parts of the world; instead, individual psychological or theological journeys, largely removed from social and political circumstances, are claimed to be the root cause of the radicalisation process.

Given the above, it is clear that simplistic accounts of radicalisation as linear and that posit a deterministic relation between ideas considered extreme and the use of political violence are deeply problematic. Not only do they miss the complex and multi-faceted character of radicalisation pathways, but also risk stigmatising or criminalising legitimate political opinions and ideologies. This is important to note for, as this chapter will discuss, such simplistic models of radicalisation that emphasise psychological and/or cultural/theological dysfunction have often turned to reductive accounts of masculinity, implicitly or explicitly, to authorise their explanations of men's journeys to involvement in political violence. The next section looks more closely at such accounts.

Masculinity and Men's 'Journeys' to Violent Extremism

Masculinity is often identified in both research and policy-oriented literature as a critical factor in affecting individual motivations to support or participate in extremist groups and the violence they perpetrate. Narratives and tropes of crisis figure prominently in such accounts. It is important however to unpack the different ways in which this trope of crisis is used and the different accounts of the causes of violent extremism it produces. As Kundnani (2015, p. 121) warns, there is often a danger of confusion and conflation in analyses of violent extremism, for "[a]lready the term

'radicalisation' tends to merge a number of meanings—disaffection, youth alienation, radical dissent, religious fundamentalism, propensity to violence—which ought to be kept analytically distinct". How the concept of masculinities has been deployed to maintain or obscure analytical distinctions is of concern here. Equally, it is important to consider the ways in which the notion of men being in crisis, and "in particular their inability to perform their traditional gender roles as family providers, protectors of their community, or fathers and procreators", results in "male violence [being] explained by social and economic pressures, rather than ideology". For, as Díaz and Valji (2019, p. 40) warn, "this often leads to over-privileging a narrative of men's struggles and disaffection to the detriment of those experienced by women".

Five themes, emerging from the literature review, provide a way to clarify important analytical distinctions and consider the deployments of masculinities in explanations of violent extremism: (1) psychology and identity crises, (2) culture and male alienation, (3) governance and protest masculinity, (4) political economy and aggrieved entitlement and (5) toxic masculinities. These five themes are discussed in turn below.

Psychology and Identity Crises

Psychological accounts of a 'wounded' masculinity leading to violent extremist action or support recur in the literature on radicalisation. At its most reductive, this is explained in terms of the difficulties attending young men's passage into adulthood, and their desire to both rebel against and progress into the adult world. For Bartlett et al. (2010, p. 13), this crisis is figured in terms of the problem of "angry young men", when they note that

> al-Qaeda inspired terrorism in the West shares much in common with other counter-cultural, subversive groups of predominantly angry young men. Being radical and rebelling against the received values of the status quo is an important part of being young. Ways must be found to ensure that young people can be radical, dissenting, and make a difference, without it resulting in serious or violent consequences.

In similar vein, Bartlett suggests that the reasons young men may be attracted to violent extremism are that it offers "a fun adventure", "gets you street cred" and "makes you the hero of the story". As he (Bartlett,

2014, p. 3) puts it, "[v]iolent extremism offers young men the chance to transform themselves from a nobody in a run-down suburb to a heroic warrior battling dark forces in a global war on terror". Certainly, narratives of heroism, and relatedly accusations of cowardice, feature prominently in the recruitment messaging of violent extremist groups.

Analysis of the largest collection of interviews with foreign fighters and those closest to them, combining information from open-ended interviews with 43 parents, siblings and friends of 30 men and women who travelled from the UK to Syria and Iraq, also emphasises the psychological dimensions of their motivations. Summarising the process and dynamics of their radicalisation, Amarasingam and Dawson (2018, p. 5) emphasise that "[w]e are dealing with individuals:

- who are experiencing an acute emerging adult identity struggle,
- with a moralistic problem-solving mindset,
- that is conditioned by an inordinate quest for significance (to make a difference in this world),
- that is resolved by believing in a (religious) ideology and participating in a fantasy (literally) of world change,
- that is consolidated by the psychological impact of intense small group dynamics, and perhaps the influence of charismatic leaders,
- resulting in a fusion of their personal identity with a new group identity and cause".

In other accounts, often focused on what are termed diasporic communities, the identity crisis leading young men into violent extremism is linked to being 'between two cultures'. Al Raffie (2013, p. 67) invoked social identity theory for investigating "Islamic Extremism in the Diaspora", and reported that "an overview of literature on radicalisation in the Muslim diaspora in Europe finds identity crises to be a key precipitant to the process. Studies also typically focus on the manipulation of identity by violent Islamic extremist groups." Male identity crises arising from social and economic change are also invoked to explain men's involvement in far-right extremism. In Sheveland's (2019, p. 85) account, the mass murder committed by Norwegian right-wing terrorist Anders Breivik should be understood in relation to a broader sense of a "collective wounded masculinity that lashes out against others looking for its own foothold and self-assertion, fearful of its own disappearance, often at the expense of Muslims and people of colour from within and without who

are perceived to be 'taking what's ours' and creating unacceptable social change".

Another common finding in the literature is sometimes referred to as the 'bunch of guys' thesis, emphasising that what violent extremist groups provide to young men experiencing some form of masculinity crisis is the comfort and comradeship of a like-minded peer group. In their systematic review of pathways to and processes associated with radicalisation and extremism amongst Muslims in Western societies, McGilloway et al. (2015) found in qualitative research that issues of identity were given important emphasis by individuals affiliated with extremist organisations. Yet this same study, a systematic review of pathways to and processes associated with radicalisation and extremism amongst Muslims in Western societies based on an analysis of original qualitative and quantitative primary research published in peer-reviewed journals up until September 2012, concluded that "the only common characteristic determined that terrorists are generally well-integrated, 'normal' individuals" (McGilloway et al., 2015, p. 39). In the same vein, psychological studies of the links between group attachment and violent extremism indicate that people engage in violent extremism because they have strong social networks, and not because they are isolated or marginalised (Atamuradova et al., 2018; Caiani & della Porta, 2018; Pearson, 2017; Ünal & Ünal, 2018). A 2017 report (Schomerus & Taraboulsi-McCarthy, 2017, p. 3) on lessons learned from CVE programming, by a partnership of research institutes, think-tanks and consultancy organisations with expertise in governance, social development, humanitarian and conflict issues, concluded that "[p]sychology has not been able to isolate psychological factors as causes of extremism, nor have broader social, behavioural, or psychological theories been empirically affirmed".

Culture and Male Alienation

An overlapping set of findings about masculinities and violent extremism emphasise the cultural and social dimensions of male crisis or alienation. As Bennett (2019, p. 56) notes, the "idea that social alienation and discrimination are a precondition for radicalisation has a substantial influence over Australian counterterrorism policy". This emphasis on social and cultural alienation, applied most often to explaining support for and participation in Islamist extremism, focuses on a presumed identity crisis of Muslim youths in the West. Second- or third-generation Muslims may

find themselves disconnected from the country of their parents or grand-parents, and yet not wholly belonging to their nation of residence due to discrimination and/or socio-economic disadvantage. Consequent feelings of alienation, it is suggested, may render them vulnerable to the lure of a community and ideological cause through which they can express their sense of injustice (Roy, 2017).

This thesis of cultural alienation is often linked to a narrative of 'failed multiculturalism'. Such a narrative, and its gendered dimensions, featured prominently in the elaboration of the UK's *Prevent* CVE policy, with its emphasis on Muslim women's roles in helping 'their' men adjust to 'British' values (Elahi & Khan, 2018; Rashid, 2016). But this narrative has been challenged by empirical research. A large-scale study (Goli & Rezaei, 2011), using a nationally representative telephone survey of youth (ages 15–30) in Denmark with ties of national origin to a 'Muslim country', compared the attitudes and experiences of four categories of respondents, identified as non-radical, least radical, affiliated and most radical. The study (Goli & Rezaei, 2011, p. 105) concluded that "[t]aken together, these comparisons do not suggest that Muslim radicals integrate more poorly in a Western country". Much more significant than a sense of cultural alienation was direct experience of the police and anti-Muslim discrimination. The study found that the "Radical Islamists" were about three times more likely than the non-radical Muslims to have been arrested by the police, and "much more likely than their non-radical counterparts to experience discrimination in their daily lives" (Goli & Rezaei, 2011, p. 105).

As Bennett (2019, pp. 56–57) concludes in reviewing the alienation-radicalisation hypothesis, there are both theoretical and empirical weaknesses in its account:

> From a theoretical perspective, one of the issues with this assumption is that the concept of alienation is applied in a broad and inconsistent manner with little attention paid to just how it serves as a springboard to extremism. From an empirical standpoint, these studies typically lean heavily on anecdotal accounts, autobiographical materials and speculation.

Governance and Protest Masculinity

The third theme linking masculinity with motivation to join or support violent extremist groups is poor governance. The links between 'awareness of injustice and exclusion' and men's involvement in violent

extremism have been explained in terms of Connell's (1995) concept of "protest masculinity", through which different forms of political action to protest injustice become bound up with a reclaiming of manhood (Duriesmith, 2017). As emphasised by a United Nations Development Program (UNDP) study (2017, p. 5) referred to above:

> [D]isaffection with government is highest by significant margins among the Journey to Extremism respondents who were recruited by violent extremist groups across several key indicators. These include: belief that government only looks after the interests of a few; low level of trust in government authorities; and experience, or willingness to report experience, of bribe-paying.

The notion of a 'tipping point' is invoked to explain the transition from 'disaffection with government' to participation in extremist groups. "The idea of a transformative trigger that pushes individuals decisively from the 'at-risk' category to actually taking the step of joining is substantiated by the Journey to Extremism data", the report (UNDP, 2017, p. 5) notes. "A striking 71% pointed to 'government action', including 'killing of a family member or friend' or 'arrest of a family member or friend', as the incident that prompted them to join." A correlation between incidences of violent extremism and levels of brutality and abuse by state security actors across a range of countries is apparent in the data from the Global Terrorism Index (Anderlini, 2018). International Alert's research in working-class neighbourhoods of Tunis, investigating support for and participation in Islamist groups fighting in Syria, found a similar link between state violence and support for violent extremism. As Lamloum (2016, p. 11) reports,

> [Y]oung men—particularly those who were most disadvantaged—spoke of their resentment towards the law enforcement authorities. […] They also reported acts of brutality and humiliation during 'crackdowns' and spoke of the harassment and discrimination that they had encountered during identity checks in Tunis city centre and affluent areas.

The young men's experiences of state violence had, Lamloum (2016, p. 12) reports, a "significant impact on the course of these young people's lives, moulding within their conscience an acute awareness of injustice and exclusion". But other accounts of the gendered mediations of governance, state violence and violent extremism add nuance to this concept of protest

masculinity. The World Bank's (2011, p. 2) landmark The World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security and Development made clear that "the central message of the Report is that strengthening legitimate institutions and governance to provide citizen security, justice, and jobs is crucial to break cycles of violence". But in reviewing the report, Watts (2012, p. 120) cautions that

> [i]t is not at all clear that rebels, militants, militias, vigilantes, drug gangs, and Muslim martyrs can all be lumped together in the sort of brief discussion of motives and intentions briefly surveyed by the Bank researchers. The continuum of violence and the heterogeneity of conflicts demand a much more sophisticated sense of causality and mechanism than is on offer in the Bank's analysis.

As Duriesmith (2020, p. 3) comments, "[c]ommentary on masculinity and violent extremism tends to flatten these complexities". Indeed, the proliferation of violent extremist groups cannot simply be read in terms of a protest against poor governance, for such groups themselves are often linked to state forces. A July 2017 report by the UN's Special Rapporteur in the field of Cultural Rights, Karima Bennoune, which included submissions from 54 countries, noted an "unholy alliance of states and extremist ideological movements" (Anderlini, 2018, p. 29). Indeed, the links between some far-right extremist groups and law enforcement agencies are well documented in a number of countries.

Political Economy and Aggrieved Entitlement

A further common theme is that men, and especially young men, may be drawn to violent extremism out of frustration that economic conditions render them unable to live up to social expectations of manhood. Anderlini (2018, p. 30) articulates this well, noting that many of those who join and support these movements have borne the brunt of decades of state corruption, poor governance, repressive regimes and ineffective development policies:

> Although they come from various socio-economic classes, they have witnessed or experienced rising inequality and absence of opportunity to live dignified lives. As young men, they are facing a challenge of fulfilling their own socially circumscribed or 'gendered' roles such as being good providers and husbands. Yet many lack the skills or education needed to compete in a

competitive and often service-oriented workplace. They also find themselves in competition with women—often better educated—for the few scarce jobs that do exist.

Studies of the rise of the far-right in the wake of the 2008 economic recession often invoke the significance of a crisis that is experienced in gendered terms. For Balakrishnan (2017, p. 43), the "fallout of a mounting global economic turbulence has more recently led to breakthroughs of right-wing populism across Europe and the US". As Kováts (2017, p. 183) makes clear, "the English, French, German and Hungarian literature" suggests "that more and more scholars are seeing a link between these movements and the crisis of the socio-economic order". This crisis, as Roose (2017, p. 63) among others sees it, is linked to "a new 'crisis of masculinity' amongst male members of the working class and underclass across the Western contexts". He (Roose, 2017, p. 58) warns that "the state and political status quo are battling to counter the emotionally manipulative narratives of populist movements that capture the alienation, anxiety, anger, humiliation and resentment of marginalised young men". He also argues that it is important to look beyond strictly socio-economic factors shaping the attraction to violent extremism, arguing that upward social trajectories, irrespective of the level from which an individual starts, inspire the development of meaning and a sense of hope that is critical to developing 'project' masculinities that seek to positively impact the world around them (Roose, 2016).

Kimmel's in-depth study (2018) of young men and violent extremism—based on more than 100 interviews with current or former extremists, including American neo-Nazis and white supremacists, anti-immigration skinheads in Europe and jihadists and Islamists in Western countries—identified what he termed "aggrieved masculinity" as a significant motivating factor. The young men he interviewed described their feelings of being emasculated by economic and social change, their sense of manhood thwarted by women's employment and education, as well as changes in the global economy and political culture. Denied access to the rewards and status they associated with manhood, and to which they felt entitled, such young men were vulnerable to extremist messaging and movements that promised them the realisation of their proper manhood.

In many countries of the global South, whose demographic profile is often characterised as having a 'youth bulge', such economic and social frustrations of young men have been described in generational terms. Discussing the gender politics of the youth bulge in the Middle East,

Austin (2011, p. 84) notes that "analysts also see a connection between Islamist support and generational conflict brought about by a deep education divide". Similarly, in his account of attraction to and involvement in armed insurgencies among young men in Sierra Leone and South Sudan, labelled as violent extremists by their respective governments, Duriesmith (2017, p. 110) notes the breakdown in 'patriarchal bargains' between older, elite men and younger, marginalised men. The latter turn to involvement in anti-state armed insurgencies as a result of being "increasingly unable to attain full masculine status as it was locally understood".

Empirical support for this emphasis on the political economy of aggrieved entitlement as a motivating factor in men's involvement in violent extremism is however mixed. Research in the Balkans did find that "socioeconomic marginalization and high unemployment have played an important role in Kosovar and the Sandjak Muslims' decision to join the Syrian and the Iraq conflict, as has humanitarian and spiritual concerns" (Speckhard & Shajkovci, 2018, p. 85). In its report on Journey to Extremism in Africa, the UNDP (2017, p. 5) also notes that

> [t]he grievances associated with growing up in contexts where multidimensional poverty is high and far deeper than national averages, with the lived reality of unemployment and underemployment, render 'economic factors' a major source of frustration identified by those who joined violent extremist groups.

On the other hand, research (Berman et al., 2011, p. 496) on the links between unemployment and non-state political violence in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Philippines reports that "[c]ontrary to the opportunity-cost theory, the data emphatically reject a positive correlation between unemployment and attacks against government and allied forces". In their study of Pakistan, Blair et al. (2013, p. 30) note that "debates on strategies to end extremist violence frequently cite poverty as a root cause of support for the perpetrating groups". However, they state that there "is little evidence to support this contention, particularly in the Pakistani case", not least because "Pakistan's urban poor are more exposed to the negative externalities of militant violence and may in fact be less supportive of the groups". In similar vein, a UK study (Bhui et al., 2014) of the factors determining support for violent extremism among men and women of Muslim heritage living in two English cities found that youth, wealth and being in education rather than employment status correlated most strongly

with such support. Based on the above, it is clear that local context matters significantly, and that accounts of the links between economic grievances, male entitlement and violent extremism cannot be generalised.

Toxic Masculinities

Melding aspects of the cultural alienation thesis and the crisis of masculinity associated with aggrieved entitlement is a framing of violent extremism in terms of a toxic, dysfunctional masculinity. In much of the early research on violent extremism, driven by concerns about the terrorist violence of Islamist groups, "Muslim male youth emerge as contemporary folk devils" (Rashid, 2016, p. 11). This demonisation is based, as Rashid (2016, p. 162) makes clear, on "Orientalist stereotypes of the uniquely misogynist Muslim man, inflected with contemporary representations of problematic Islamic masculinity in the post 9/11 world".

The growing recognition of the threat posed by far-right extremist groups has necessitated a less overtly anti-Muslim account of problematic masculinity, and for this the language of toxicity has proved useful. As Pearson (2019a, p. 1256) notes, discussing the UK's *Prevent* counterterrorism strategy, "[f]rom 2011, when Prevent began to engage with the far-right, the strategy drew parallels between those actively supporting extreme right and Islamist ideologies, through an invocation of the hallmarks of subordinate and toxic males". In this conception,

> Policy-makers typified extremism as a problem of the 'low-achieving', effectively discounting explanations of male violence that did not feature educational, familial or economic dysfunction. The effect is the 'toxification' of masculinities in communities understood as 'extreme'. (Pearson, 2019a, p. 1256)

Framing men's support for and involvement in violence extremism in terms of toxic masculinity is becoming increasingly common; the recent UN (2020) report on *The Nexus between Masculinities, Femininities and Violent Extremism in Asia* makes use of this concept. In Pearson's (2019a, p. 1269) overview, "[g]overnments have focused on extremism, first violent Islamism and now the radical right, and in so doing have produced as embodying 'risk' particular racialized and marginalized men, framed through the prism of 'toxicity'".

Some scholars have criticised this use of the concept of toxic masculinity. In his ethnographic study of violent extremist groups in the Philippines, Duriesmith (2020, p. 25) emphasises "the importance of understanding violent extremist masculinities relationally, avoiding monolithic accounts of 'toxic' or 'hyper' masculinity". He (Duriesmith, 2020, p. 12) notes that much of the research work on the links between patriarchal notions of masculinity and the ideology of many violent extremist groups "tends to rely on generalised accounts of 'toxic' or 'hyper' masculinity that struggle to explain the operation of gender in local settings". He says this is not least because there is a "tendency in media discourse to write about 'toxic' or 'hyper' masculinity as a singular set of problematic practices and ideas exhibited to varying degrees" (Duriesmith, 2020, p. 13). These accounts risk giving the impression there is a singular form of 'real' or 'good' masculinity and that other harmful forms are deviations, or can be considered external to and poisonous of a 'healthy' gender system. As Duriesmith (2020, p. 25) suggests, there is an urgent need to understand the masculinities of violent extremism in their contemporary and historical contexts:

> The comparison between mainstream militarized masculinities in the Philippines and VE masculinities suggests that both forms exist relationally and symbiotically. The dynamics underpinning this relationship are informed by patterns of colonialism, military rule and globalisation that inform gender order in the Philippines. The focus on dynamics necessitates a shift in how responses frame the problem of VE masculinities. Rather than being a set of isolated qualities, norms and narratives, this study suggests that VE masculinities are produced in intimate relationship with other forms of masculinity in society.

Pearson (2019a, p. 1259) makes a similar point, noting that the "exceptionalism of particular men read as both extreme and toxic, and their framing as such in policy initiatives, does nothing to disrupt existing gendered relations" and that

> it is possible to recognize that many of the so-called toxic practices of the extreme fringes are present in society more widely. Just as extremists are in reality not separate from society, toxic masculinity is not separate from patriarchy or social gender norms. (Pearson, 2019a, p. 1269)

From Masculinity to Misogyny: The Gender Politics of Violent Extremism

Uses of the concept of masculinity to explain men's support for and involvement in violent extremism are often insufficiently grounded in theory and lack empirical support and political acuity. Each on their own fails to account for the complex, multi-faceted and highly variegated character of individual men's 'journeys' to extremism. Indeed, as Pearson (2019b, p. 97) notes, the same is true for the growing number of women involved with extremist groups:

> There is no one pathway. While violent extremism is predominantly a collective and social enterprise, and dependent on context, for each individual involved there are different enabling, and push and pull factors impacting the path to violent extremism.

Taken together, these accounts of masculinity can provide different angles of view on these "push and pull factors" and their psychological, social and cultural dimensions. But equally, taken together, their tendency is to depoliticise efforts to understand and address the roots of violent extremism. This depoliticising effect is clearest in the 'cultural alienation' thesis, with its failure to account for anti-Muslim policies and cultures as producing such alienation. More generally, their tendency is to distract attention from the politics of why men, and increasing numbers of women, join extremist groups; to counter the anti-Muslim foreign and domestic policy of 'western' governments in the case of many Islamist groups or to assert ideologies of ethno-nationalism and racial superiority in the case of far-right formations. As Pearson (2019a, p. 1269) notes with reference to the "toxic masculinity" discourse reviewed above, "[n]or is it an adequate term to describe what may not always be ideological, but is certainly political, action from 'underclass' men, given its delegitimizing effects".

In this way, such explanatory discourses of masculinity can tend to flatten important distinctions between violent extremist groups in their political purposes and expressed ideologies, misconceiving 'violent extremism' as a singular phenomenon, rather than a variegated political field of struggle involving the use of political violence for differing purposes. At the same time, such uses of masculinity also serve to exceptionalise, as abnormal, dysfunctional or toxic, those who are drawn to violent extremism, when their circumstances and expressed beliefs are often far from being marginal, but common and mainstream.

Paradoxically, what these explanatory discourses of masculinity also often miss is the shared gender politics of otherwise differing extremist groups and ideologies. As a 2020 survey (Pearson et al., 2020, p. 315) of the gender dimensions of violent extremism makes clear,

> Some far right groups share with jihadist organisations a traditional and conservative view of gender relations, with women's natural place secured through caring roles in the home and family, and men acting as the providers and protectors. The performative and structural conditions of gender imagined here are of unequal gender hierarchies that support other racialised hierarchies of extremist groups.

The fact that different extremist groups share a common commitment to patriarchal masculinities and a misogynist worldview, and that such misogyny, far from being extreme, is often mainstream within the societies in which they operate, is occluded by the portrayal of violent extremist masculinities as abnormal, dysfunctional or toxic. In reviewing the joint study conducted by the UN and the World Bank, Pathways for Peace, which highlights the link between gender inequality and conflict, Díaz and Valji (2019, p. 40) note that the report's authors do discuss masculinities in order to "unpack the role of men in this violence, but they do so primarily from the angle of aggrieved masculinity, rather than misogyny".

Some research does highlight the links between misogyny and political violence. Studies in four countries (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Libya and the Philippines) found that hostile sexist attitudes towards women and support for violence against women were the factors most strongly associated with support for violent extremism. Individuals who supported violence against women were up to three times more likely to support violent extremism. On the other hand, the study found no correlation at all for common factors thought to affect support for violent extremism—such as the degree of religiosity, age, gender, level of education achieved, employment and geographic area. On this basis, the study (Johnston & True, 2019, p. 1) concluded that "[q]uantitative and qualitative analysis reveals misogyny to be integral to the ideology, political identity, and political economy of current violent extremist groups".

It is also the case, though still rarely foregrounded, that when the personal histories of those who commit terrorist violence are known, they frequently include misogynistic attitudes and behaviours. As Díaz and Valji (2019, p. 44) emphasise,

One can find examples of expressed misogyny or domestic violence in the personal histories of nearly all the perpetrators of the worst terrorist incidents and mass killings in Western countries in recent years, which is remarkable because neither misogynist acts or expressions nor violence against women are typically reported and exhaustively documented.

They (Díaz & Valji, 2019, p. 45) note that even though information about the personal histories of the members of the most prominent terrorist groups in the world is mostly not available, when "we do have this information, in the case of individual perpetrators that have lived in Western countries and conduct their attacks there, the pattern that emerges is exactly the same".

The misogynistic character of violent extremism is ideological, rather than a matter of psychology or 'culture'. To insist on the ideological character of misogyny is to highlight the political agendas and collective interests that it serves. Although misogyny also can be seen as part of culture, the social norms and behaviours of any particular community, the term 'culture' too often has been used in ethnocentric and anti-Muslim ways to suggest that misogyny is a feature only of 'Other', usually racialised cultures. As Díaz and Valji (2019, p. 41) emphasise, "focusing on misogyny puts the emphasis on the ideology itself, rather than on the circumstances that purportedly affect men's sense of identity". Insisting on its ideological character focuses attention on "misogyny as a political phenomenon whose purpose is to police and enforce women's subordination" which is (Díaz & Valji, 2019, p. 49)

shared by many actors in mainstream society, [but] is more virulently and overtly expressed and acted on by violent extremists, and […] is the common link between white Christian extremists in Western countries and Muslim extremists in Africa, the Middle East, or Asia.

Reviewing the evidence, Anderlini (2018, p. 28) is clear that the "control, co-option, coercion and subjugation of women are central features of the ideology of VE movements today". A common theme emerging from the literature on the misogyny of violent extremism is that the evidence of increasing "control, co-option, coercion and subjugation of women" can be taken as a warning sign of the growth of violent extremist ideology and practice. This notion of misogyny as an early warning sign features in recent studies of both Islamist and far-right groups

(Johnston & True, 2019; True, 2019; Zimmerman et al., 2018). As Díaz and Valji (2019, p. 49) emphasise,

> It is clear that these misogynist acts and ideology are a very salient element of the way these groups think and operate, if not the central purpose of their enterprise. But the point that feminist analysts and advocates have been making, and is frequently ignored, is that this misogyny is the precursor and early warning sign of further political violence and terrorism.

Similarly, Anderlini (2018, p. 34) urges that "the international policy and security community needs to take the gender lens more seriously as it is a very effective 'early warning' indicator of rising extremisms". As she (Anderlini, 2018, p. 34) continues, the "violence that extremist groups and individuals condone and perpetrate against women and marginalised communities gets little attention or is framed as 'cultural' is the same phenomenon that metastasises and spreads to become the high profile 'terrorism' or 'violent extremism' that gains attention".

While the CVE field's growing recognition of the links between violent extremism, misogyny and masculinities is desirable, it is troubling that it has at times been comprised only of racialised constructions of Muslim masculinities and notions of misogyny as a problem only of 'other' societies. This 'culturalist' view of extremist misogyny predominated in the CVE field for its first ten years, when it focused almost exclusively on trying to prevent Islamist terrorism. Homogenised references to misogynistic Muslim masculinities recur often in the literature on gender and violent extremism, especially in the early years of the CVE discourse (Aslam, 2012; Lentin & Titley, 2012; Open Society Institute, 2010). As Brown (2013, p. 50) makes clear, "counter-radicalisation programs in Britain are set within wider discourses about deviant youth masculinities, and in particular youthful Muslim masculinities have found themselves the focus of government policy initiatives", such that "Muslim men are typically depicted in popular and political discourses as militant, aggressive, and intrinsically fundamentalist".

The centrality of the uniquely misogynist Muslim male as the target for CVE concern can be traced back to the Bush administration's War on Terror, and the 'clash of civilisations' discourse that underpinned it. Recall that one of the justifications made by the US government for invading Afghanistan was "to save Muslim women from their culture/religion/men" (Sarkar, 2017, p. 245). This civilisational discourse has, implicitly

and explicitly, shaped CVE policy-making and programming on the links between gender and violent extremism. As Rashid (2016, pp. 163–64) writes, such "characterisations necessarily foster the demonisation of Muslim men, since it is principally from them that Muslim women need to be rescued". Within this framing, it is women's victimised bodies, rather than their rights and agency, that become the ground on which violent extremism is to be countered.

This culturalist orientation of much early CVE work on gender and violent extremism also signals a racialisation of misogyny, in which misogynistic beliefs and behaviours are attributed to a racialised other. Writing again of the UK context, but applying more broadly, Elahi and Khan (2018, p. 14) note that this orientation has "positioned 'the Muslim community' as homogeneous, outside of and opposed to Britishness, and understood through stereotypes of poverty and the underclass, criminality, misogyny, cultural and generational conflict, identity crisis, and the clash of civilizations". As they (Elahi & Khan, 2018, p. 62) conclude, there "may be valid questions about the relationship between extremism, gendered violence and toxic masculinity. Such discussions, however, usually only address Muslim men, and where non-Muslim men are involved, this is not generalized into a wider stereotype."

There are signs that valid questions about extremism, gendered violence and masculinity are now being asked, not least because the ideological, as opposed to cultural, character of extremist misogyny is being highlighted by the scholarly and policy literature on far-right extremism. "The most vehement and explicit attempt to protect a masculinist worldview is the contemporary loose coalition of social and political movements around men's rights and father's rights, with shared roots and overlaps with the alt-right, in the Anglosphere and Europe", Nicholas and Agius (2018, p. 34) make clear. Reflecting on the rise of the 'manosphere', the online ecology of sites, memes and message-boards focused on male insecurities and resentments whose content is frequently deeply misogynistic, Murdoch (2019, p. 2) notes that "[m]anosphere ideas have snowballed into an ideology that has taken on a life of its own, and for some it has served as a route into wider far-right politics". The misogyny of the manosphere and men's rights activists (MRAs) appear to have played an important role in the far-right project of legitimising racist ethno-nationalism. In his call to action to resist the far-right, Murdoch (2019, p. 3) insists:

> Not only is it essential that we fight for the feminist cause for its own end, but as we are increasingly seeing, anti-feminism is acting as a prominent route into the wider far-right for many, making it core to the mission of fighting hate and restoring hope in society more widely.

With reference to the proliferation of far-right messaging and memes online under the rubric of the 'alt-right', Dibranco (2017, p. 15) notes that "misogyny is not only a significant part of the Alt Right, it's the 'gateway drug' for the recruitment of disaffected White men into racist communities". In her study of the anti-feminist men's rights movement and its ideological connections with far-right formations in Germany, Träbert cautions however against a too simplistic equating of anti-feminism with the far-right, not least because of the pervasive misogyny in mainstream public discourse. Writing of anti-feminist ideologies and strategies, she (Träbert, 2017, p. 281) notes that their "danger lies precisely in the fact that they are not merely connected to transparently far-right groups", while recognising that "there is a real danger that the links between the two may grow". Träbert (2017, p. 282) concludes that "future research should focus on antifeminist sentiments within the political and cultural mainstream", not only to "counter the antifeminist men's rights movement" but also the "heterosexism and misogyny where it affects vast numbers of diverse individuals, namely, in mainstream culture".

The extremist violence of misogyny has, however, become evident with the increasingly serious incidents of violence that have been committed by young men predominantly in the United States and Canada who self-identify as incels (Involuntary Celibates) (Hoffman et al., 2020). As a recent study (Zimmerman et al., 2018, p. 2) emphasises,

> While incels have not yet formed organized violent groups or cells, the existing attacks have been premeditated, politically motivated and perpetrated violence against civilians. These factors clearly designate incel attacks as a form of terrorism and require incel ideology to be explored as a form of violent extremism.

Central to incel ideology are misogynistic notions of gender roles and shared beliefs about sexuality, male supremacy and the need to violently re-establish 'traditional' gender norms. The term 'ideological masculinity' has been coined to name this ideological commitment to misogyny and male supremacy, and to insist on it being recognised as itself a form of

violent extremism (Roose, 2018). Misogynist online groups, from men's rights activists, to 'pick up artist' communities and incels, have increased in number and size over recent years, in which "Incels represent just one end of a spectrum of extremist groups spanning a vast range of political ideologies, all united by militant misogyny" (Zimmerman et al., 2018, p. 3).

In her survey of gender issues in CVE work, Anderlini emphasises the need to recognise the ideological affinities across otherwise differing extremist formations and the importance of gender in structuring these affinities. She (Anderlini, 2018, p. 24) summarises these affinities in terms of an ideology of often racialised and gendered anti-pluralism:

> So how can we define or characterise 'violent extremism'? Across the range of violent extremist movements that exist, there are shared features. Such movements tap and seek to elevate one core identity as being superior to all else. […] This normalisation of intolerance and disrespect for people of different ethnicities, religions, gender or nationalities lays the groundwork from which the more radicalised and violent forms of extremism can grow.

If this insistence on the ideological character of misogyny and male supremacy, and its centrality to contemporary violent extremism, is gaining prominence in the literature on the gender dimensions of CVE, then care must still be taken in the application of a gender analysis of 'ideological masculinity' to particular terrorist incidents. A cautionary example is provided by a 2020 report (UNDP & UN Women, 2020) on *The Nexus between Masculinities, Femininities and Violent Extremism in Asia*. In the chapter on Bangladesh, Rahman argues that in some rural communities, violent extremist groups are perceived as a way to reclaim traditional roles for young men who feel ridiculed and undermined by the urban social norms and the perceived Western influences that allow women increasing power and autonomy. On the basis of interviews with university students, madrasa students/graduates and imams and mullahs, she highlights the role played by Fatwa rulings in structuring gender inequality and promoting what she refers to as 'toxic masculinity'. In this way, she (Rahman, 2020, p. 56) "helps elucidate how gender inequality and gender norms contribute to further violent extremism on a community and structural level in Bangladesh and how these gender rigidities may lead a person to violent extremism on an individual level".

Yet the terrorist incident that prompted the research in the first place, in which Islamic State claimed responsibility for an attack which killed 29 people, mostly foreigners, in a café in an upscale neighbourhood of the capital Dhaka, was committed by highly educated, urban young men from the wealthy elite. Far from the 'toxic' and traditional rural masculinities identified by Rahman, a study (Riaz & Parvez, 2018, p. 944) of the actual militants involved "found evidence that four factors—social relationships, use of the Internet, personal crises, and external relations—appear most frequently in the narratives of Bangladeshi militants". The dangers of a too reductive account of the masculinities involved in violent extremism are evident here. The gender analysis proffered of patriarchal Fatwa rulings was disconnected not only from a close study of militant motivations to engage in terrorist violence but also from the broader literature on the workings of Islamic jurisprudence which finds that women may have agency within such rulings, which do not necessarily embody a simple patriarchal politics (Siddiqi, 2011).

Violent Extremist Narratives of Masculinity

Research on gender and violent extremism is also drawing attention to the ways in which violent extremist groups themselves deploy various tropes and narratives of masculinity in their messaging. These include narratives organised around the themes of protection, restoration, potency and revelation, whose patriarchal and misogynistic aspects are highlighted below.

The Male Protector

Calling on men to protect their family, community of faith and/or nation continues to be a significant theme in violent extremist recruitment. The 'family values' of the far-right centre on the importance of the heteronormative family and its essentialised gender roles, emphasising the 'natural' role of women in both biological and social reproduction and men's roles as provider and protector. White supremacist and other ethno-nationalist far-right formations deploy a racialisation of masculinities and femininities, in which the threat to the ethno-nation is commonly depicted in terms of the dangerous masculinities of the racialised male Other; the far-right's claim to protect the nation and its culture is often framed as a protection of white/majority women and children.

This is to say that for many far-right groups, the vision of a heteronormative gender order, and associated 'family values', relies on a racialisation of masculinities, in which the threat of the outsider/minority male must be resisted by the insider/majority male protector. Such accounts are visible, for example, from studies in the United States, India and Northern Africa. Examining white supremacist discourse in the United States, Ferber (2000, p. 36) observes that the "protection of white womanhood comes to symbolize the protection of the race; thus, gender relations occupy a central place in the discourse." The figure of the hyper-sexual Muslim male continues to be central to far-right Hindu nationalist ideology and its claim to defend the Hindu identity of India (Vanaik, 2018).

Research on Salafi Jihadist extremist groups also draws attention to this appeal to men's role as protector. In its study of violent extremist recruitment in the central Sahel region, International Alert (2018a, p. 42) reports that

> gender relations have a significant indirect influence on encouraging young men to join violent extremist groups. The social construct of masculinity resonates with the aim of trying to protect women from the systematic abuses of which they are victims. All the regions of the central Sahel provide pertinent examples of this.

The research (International Alert, 2018a, p. 46) found that the "social pressure from their young comrades, girls and mothers compels the young men to conform to the social role expected of them, including joining violent extremist groups if necessary to protect their community". Extremist groups and their leaders have self-consciously developed messaging around the male protector role. Messerschmidt and Rohde (2018, p. 675) draw attention to the ways in which Osama Bin Laden "expounded notions of the patriarchal protective heterosexual father". As they (Messerschmidt & Rohde, 2018, p. 675) explain,

> A global relationship between Bin Laden and the umma worldwide was constructed discursively that is analogous to the masculine father/husband protector toward his wife and to the other members of the patriarchal household, in the sense that his masculine superiority flows not from acts of repressive domination but from his willingness to risk and sacrifice for others who, in turn, both submit to his power and rejoice in his ability to protect them from the outside and intrusive villains.

Restoring a Lost Patriarchy

A second theme, related to that of protection, is that of restoration: that violent extremist action is the only way to restore a lost patriarchal social order. This theme of restoration is linked to narratives of gendered decline, which for both Islamist and far-right groups are figured in terms of the 'clash of civilisations' discussed earlier. Research on Salafi Jihadist group ISIS has examined the way that its messaging constructs masculinity to attract young men to its ranks, in which the alienation and estrangement of young Muslim men is blamed on a 'crisis' produced by egalitarian gender roles and women's rights in late modern societies (Necef, 2016). Van Leuven et al., in their detailed study of ISIS (referred to as ISIL in their study) propaganda, observe that it shapes and manipulates masculinity to draw in male foreign, that is, non-Syrian or Iraqi, fighters and places emphasis on traditional and rigid feminine roles in supporting 'real men' in ISIL. In the 'ideal society' Muslim men and women can practise idealised masculine (the fighter/husband/father/protector) and feminine (the wife/mother/protected) gender roles (Van Leuven et al., 2016).

A similarly sexualised narrative of social decline and gender anxiety is mobilised by the far-right. By representing the nation's past as one with a patriarchal family structure, far-right and fascist politics connects nostalgia to a central organising authoritarian structure (Stanley, 2020, p. 16). We have witnessed the emergence to prominence of the 'great replacement' theme, which has featured prominently in far-right campaigns, from Europe to North America and most recently in the attacks on two mosques in New Zealand. Before embarking on his murderous attack in Christchurch, the suspected gunman posted a manifesto on Twitter titled "The Great Replacement", an explicit reference to the title of a 2012 book by right-wing French commentator Renaud Camus, in which he claims that Europe's white majority is being replaced by North African and sub-Saharan African immigrants, many of whom are Muslim (Köttig & Blum, 2017). Similarly, fears of demographic decline have long stalked the US white nationalist imaginary (Ferber, 2000). A reproductive anxiety, then, has come to characterise far-right discourse on the white/majority family and its place and functions in the far-right's ethnonationalist vision.

Male Potency

Linked to this sexual and reproductive anxiety is an appeal to masculine potency and virility, common in both Islamist and far-right messaging. The study (Van Leuven et al., 2016, p. 107) of ISIS propaganda referred to above emphasises that its media presence is largely structured and calculated to draw young men as recruits by employing "hyper-militarised, hyper-masculinised and particularly violent motifs to portray its fighters as the epitome of 'real men'". Fantasies of glories and excitement of being involved in apocalyptic battles between good and evil can be particularly appealing to young men who feel unmanly, who have lost control over women and their own lives. ISIS recruiters and media outlets "identify and feed this desire for violent and 'righteous' male domination and empowerment" over women and infidel men (Van Leuven et al., 2016, p. 108).

Male warrior motifs proliferate in both Islamist and far-right messaging. Brown's study of Islamist propaganda and recruitment messaging highlights the figure of the "warrior-monk", who is valued for his overt signs of both piety and physicality. As she (Brown, 2018, p. 183) explains,

> In Daesh, the ideal Muslim male is the "warrior-monk", and he epitomizes a militarized religious nationalism. The term "warrior-monk" is more common in Buddhist nationalisms; here it combines ideas of heroism and publicly performed piety. […] The myth of the warrior-monk remains potent for Daesh, as the figure unites (together with the Muslim woman) its claims for control, authority, and legitimacy.

Brown notes the ways in which the ideals of male vitality, fitness and strength are promoted in the Twitter avatars of male Daesh members, in its media output, and in magazines. Protein shakes, free weights, and AK-47s and other rifles feature prominently in images of men in the home or in the street as well as the battlefield, and tracksuits or camouflage uniforms are essential to the 'jihadi look'. Images of virility and masculine vitality have long been central to fascist propaganda (Testa & Armstrong, 2012). For the far-right and Christian nationalists, the figure of the male crusader heroically defending Christianity and the West has become a common meme. This religious inflected 'warrior masculinity' is highly volatile, their struggle in millenarian and very often apocalyptic terms, providing a justification for extreme violence (Roose, 2020, p. 13; Du Mez, 2017).

But the fact that male heroism and potency has been celebrated in so many cultures for so many causes has led some scholars to question the particular demonisation of Islamist violence and its masculinist tropes of heroic sacrifice. In characterising the confrontation between Western military forces and the Islamist suicide bomber, Gardell (2014, p. 197) notes that they "share the same hyper-masculine romantic stories, the same heroic poetry, and the same foundational ideal that the only way to be human is to face death rather than unfreedom". As he (Gardell, 2014, p. 169) makes clear,

> Glorification of the male warriors who sacrifice their lives to inflict defeat on the enemy has been a recurring feature of heroic tales for many centuries. So, why we are filled with such horror at the "suicide bomber" figure? Is it because this act is carried out by the Other? Is it because we see the behavior through an Orientalist lens, a dramatic outbreak of irrational barbarian violence against civilization?

Irrespective of the answer, it is clear that narratives of masculine potency through violent action recur across both old and new forms of violent extremism.

Revelation of Men's Suffering

Violent extremist recruitment messaging, especially for the far-right, has also focused on a theme of revelation of men's suffering. This is closely connected to the online world of men's rights activism commonly referred to as the manosphere, in which there is a similar theme of the revelation of the 'truth' that men are the victims of a man-hating social order. It is not simply that the manosphere is constructed around a rejection of the evidence of men's patriarchal oppression of women in favour of a narrative of feminism's oppression of men. More significantly, much of the discursive impact of the manosphere is concerned with propagating the 'red pill philosophy'. This 'red pill' meme enjoins men to see through the illusions of contemporary life and, as Ging (2017, p. 3) writes, "purports to awaken men to feminism's misandry [man-hating] and brainwashing, and is the key concept that unites all of these communities".

Ging (2017, p. 8) notes that although the "red pill" meme originated on a relatively obscure online forum (as the subreddit, r/TRP[the Red Pill]), it has since proliferated into other domains of the manosphere, including

pickup artist and men's rights forums, going so far as to suggest that r/TRP's underlying philosophy functions to "generate consensus and belonging among the manosphere's divergent elements". The masculine coding of the red versus blue pill is also clear; "in the alt-right sphere 'blue pill' is a term that is usually attached only to men portrayed as spineless, desperate and sexually unappealing to women—all traits antithetical to most understandings of hegemonic masculinity", Kelly (2017, p. 74) emphasises.

Uses of Masculinity in CVE Policy and Practice

Problematic Gender Frames in CVE Policy

Gender issues are now on the agenda of CVE policy-making and programming. As a recent survey of the CVE field makes clear, "[o]ver the past decade, policy-makers, academics, and practitioners alike have put an increasing emphasis on gender in the space to both prevent and counter violent extremism (P/CVE)" (Pearson, 2019b, p. 95). In 2015, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2242 on Women, Peace and Security, which highlighted the importance of a gender perspective in countering violent extremism. A year later, the UN Secretary-General issued his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, outlining guidance for national governments and international organisations to address the root causes of violent extremism, including its gendered determinants.[1] The Plan of Action dedicates significant attention to women and the importance of gender considerations when developing Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) strategies, calling on states to ensure that strategies devised to address terrorism and violent extremism place the protection and empowerment of women at the centre of such efforts, and that these efforts do not impact adversely on women's rights. A 2020 survey (Pearson et al., 2020) of the field notes the recent interest in the gender dimensions of CVE, with a range of reports, seminars and guidelines at the international level by the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (UNCTED), UN Women and UNDP, the European Union Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) and the

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[1] Pearson (2019b, p. 96) notes that "CVE differs from the more recently introduced concept of 'PVE', in that PVE is understood to be more broadly focused on an earlier stage, 'pre'-radicalisation, or to take a longer-term approach, addressing structural factors. However, in reality, many countries use the two terms synonymously and interchangeably."

Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF). It (Pearson et al., 2020, p. 281) concludes that "particularly in 2018 and 2019, there has been a significant increase in policy attention to gender and counter-terrorism and CVE more specifically".

Such policy efforts have tended to equate gender with women. A 2018 guidance (International Alert, 2018b, p. 21) on improving the impact of PVE programming makes clear that the "majority of gender sensitivity in PVE programming focuses on women's roles and participation in PVE". This emphasis on women also often relies on stereotyped understanding of 'women's roles'. Brown (2013, p. 45) critiques many counter-radicalisation efforts for their 'maternalist' logic, in which "Muslim women are considered the missing link in counter-terrorism policies because they are assumed to be peaceful and not radical, and because they can perform educational and supportive roles in the family". As she (Brown, 2013, p. 44) suggests, the "maternalist logic is not only that women are naturally peaceful, but also that they are domesticated and familial", itself a notion connected to the patriarchal conception of the male protector, embodied in this instance in the state's counter-terrorism apparatus. This state apparatus is an "extension of the gendered and culturally constructed paternalist logic that justifies state intervention in their daily lives in the name of their security, yet fails to provide that protection. This is premised on a chivalric masculinity, with deference expected in exchange for governance" (Brown, 2013, p. 41). Ndung'u and Shadung (2017, p. 8) note the instrumentalist logic at work, in that "PVE programming with a narrow view of women's roles runs the risk of instrumentalising and essentialising women if they are not empowered to play a role, consulted, and included in programme design and implementation".

When men and 'their' masculinities are included in CVE policy statements, it is often in similarly reductive terms. As a leading scholar (Pearson, 2019a, p. 1252) on gender issues in CVE work has noted recently, "[s]implistic accounts of masculinities increasingly 'fill the gaps' in both understandings of extreme groups and policy to counter them ('countering violent extremism' or CVE)". These accounts tend to focus on the 'wounded' and/or 'toxic' masculinities discussed earlier, in ways that resonate with analyses of political violence that emphasise issues of resilience and vulnerability, conceived in biophysical terms. In his review of the World Bank's discussion of the stressors and triggers producing different forms of political violence, including violent extremism, Watts (2012, p. 119) notes that, in the Bank's account, "complex and interrelated trigger mechanisms operate in a homologous way to the World Health

Organization's health framework: vulnerability to violence is rather like the body's immune system". It follows from this, then, that "[a]s with fighting off disease, fighting off violence requires a powerful immune system, or in the Bank's case, legitimate institutions" (Watts, 2012, p. 119).

This biophysical conception of vulnerability to, or immunity from, political violence has indeed become widespread in CVE policy discourse, often with a gendered inflexion. The UK's *Prevent* strategy focused on the role of Muslim women in strengthening community resilience in the face of violent extremist messaging. As Rashid (2016, p. 39) makes clear, *Prevent* "suggests that resilience is almost akin to immunity; that women's empowerment represents a vaccine for the community against violent extremism and radicalism and that women are the carriers of that immunity." Such biophysical metaphors have resonated well with the growing discourse of toxic masculinity, with its trope of poisoning the healthy 'body' of gender relations in families and communities. They also contribute to a growing and problematic propensity by some governments including the United States to view countering domestic violent extremism and terrorism through a public health paradigm (National Security Council, 2021, p. 20). As noted earlier, the exceptionalising discourse of toxic masculinity not only fails to account for the differing political motivations and purposes of violent extremists themselves but also distracts attention from the underlying misogyny which violent extremist groups not only share in common, but share with the mainstream societies in which they operate.

Working with Men in CVE Programming

The problematic nature of these reductive policy accounts of the links between masculinity and violent extremism are further highlighted in their translation into CVE programming. A review of the literature on such programming indicates problems of homogenisation, securitisation and the stigmatisation of certain groups of men designated to be 'at-risk' of violent extremism. CVE programming has tended to operate with a reductive, homogenised view of men's experiences with violent extremism, concentrating on processes of radicalisation into violence and neglecting the many aspects of men's vulnerability in contexts where political violence is rife. In its study of recruitment into non-state armed groups in Syria, International Alert (2018b, p. 21) notes that "[i]n the Syrian refugee context, men's vulnerabilities have not been given the same degree of consideration as those of women and girls, who tend to be seen theoretically as

the most vulnerable". Particular groups of men and boys may be particularly vulnerable to the military violence of counter-terrorism operations. Amnesty International reports that between 2013 and 2014 over 1000 boys and men were murdered in extrajudicial killings by the Nigerian military, in contravention of international humanitarian law. The report further notes that since 2011, over 7000 men and boys have died in military detention in Nigeria, with their deaths often neither recorded nor investigated (Ndung'u & Shadung, 2017).

The literature on CVE programming also highlights many concerns about securitisation and is beginning to explore the ways in which discourses of masculinity are linked to this. A 2018 review (Marsh et al., 2018, p. 101) of CVE programming emphasises that "CVE is importantly linked to wider debates about the securitisation and politicisation of development assistance, in the post-9/11 context of the 'Global War on Terror'". This securitisation in relation to the US-sponsored War on Terror is evident in the fact that CVE is still "predominantly associated with violent jihadist extremism" (Pearson et al., 2020, p. 295), and the relative neglect of far-right violent extremism in CVE programmes. A recent study (Pearson et al., 2020, p. 320) of communities affected by both Islamist and far-right extremism in Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom reports that this neglect

> meant that there was frequent resistance to CVE interventions across countries within Muslim focus groups, who felt that government prioritisation of jihadism had led to a policy blindness to other extreme movements. Their frustration with a lack of engagement with the far right coincided with a period in which far right activity was increasing.

A recent report (Myrttinen et al., 2020) on Implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the OSCE Region bears out some of these concerns. Discussing the ways in which CVE issues have been integrated within WPS National Action Plans (NAPs), the report notes that subsequent to the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2242, several National Action Plans (NAPs) have included mention of this issue, including those of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Luxembourg, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. Terrorism and violent extremism are now specified areas of activity within a number of NAPs from the OSCE region. In particular, the report (Myrttinen et al., 2020, p. 58) notes that preventing and countering of

violent extremism "was an emerging issue in several countries, in particular in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kyrgyzstan and, to a lesser extent, Serbia", but that "in all three countries, as in the wider OSCE region, the focus of the public debate has been on violent forms of radical Islam rather than on a broader perspective of ethnonationalist radicalisation". As it (Myrttinen et al., 2020, p. 58) continues,

> Concerns were raised in all three countries to differing degrees about whether this topic should be part of the WPS agenda, given its potential to stigmatize particular population groups and put women at risk. Recent civil society research in Kyrgyzstan highlights two more broadly shared concerns in the efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism: PVE measures may lead to excessive state scrutiny of some minority communities, and the diversion of peace-building and development funds into PVE efforts can mean that deeper structural issues will be neglected.

Given the concerns that economic grievances can be a significant, if not sole, driver behind marginalised young men's involvement in and support for violent extremism, development programming has been identified as an important component of a CVE response. Here, too, problems of securitisation arise. The UNDP (2017, p. 6), in its report on *Journey to Extremism in Africa*, concluded that "[w]here there is injustice, deprivation and desperation, violent extremist ideologies present themselves as a challenge to the status quo and a form of escape". Anderlini and Holmes (2017) make a number of recommendations to address this including the integration within the CVE national plan and development of in-depth strategic analyses of the structural economic conditions that have contributed to lack of employment or livelihood opportunities, and to help identify gaps and possible solutions through alternative policy-making. However the UNDP (2017, p. 8) warns of the danger of securitising development assistance, commenting that "the global context in which international development budgets are facing shrinkage has created a significant inducement for development programming in at-risk African contexts to be rebranded as PVE-related". As the report (2017, p. 8) makes clear, "[o]bservers have raised concerns about the 'securitization of aid'. They have also flagged the potential pitfalls that may arise through framing development interventions as PVE in highly charged political contexts." Equally challenging, though less remarked upon, is to design CVE-related development assistance in such a way that it promotes

women's economic empowerment and does not reinforce traditional notions of the male breadwinner.

A second major area of CVE programming in which discourses of masculinity are implicated is education initiatives, targeted at 'at-risk' young men; here, problems of stigmatisation may be especially acute. Efforts to codify risk assessment note the difficulties involved, and the dangers of stigmatising the young men so targeted. A review by Aktis Strategy of its Counter Extremism Practice in Tunisia, Somalia, Iraq, Pakistan, Australia, the Balkans, Lebanon and Jordan discusses the limitations of its risk assessment framework. It (Marsh et al., 2018, p. 112) notes that the risk assessment is based on "focus groups, key informants, and other project stakeholders" sharing "their perceptions about radicalisation drivers" but as "these participants did not include known violent extremists" the information they provided included "an inherent bias toward the identification of circumstantial factors".

These 'circumstantial factors' are often drawn broadly, increasing the risk of stigmatising young men considered to be 'at-risk'. International Alert (2018b, p. 21) notes that

> [c]ounter-terrorism measures often disproportionately target men based on age, class, ethno-racial, political and religious profiling. This not only discriminates and stigmatises men who fall under this profile, but can also be counter-productive, contributing to their reasons for joining a VE group.

The STRIVE II programme, the European Union flagship programme for CVE in the Horn of Africa, includes in its "at-risk" group those "believed to be involved in crime", "school dropouts" and "recent converts to Islam" (Saghal, 2018). In addition to this expansive definition of being 'at-risk' of violent extremism, STRIVE II deploys teams of 'community mentors' drawn from civil society organisations to help in the identification and engagement of 'at-risk' youth. Yet, research with youth workers who have been employed in CVE programmes highlights the problems of stigmatisation that may arise. A study (van de Weert & Eijkman, 2019, p. 191) of Dutch youth workers tasked with engaging "at-risk" youth in deradicalisation programmes questioned "whether youth workers are sufficiently equipped to assess potential risks in youth who show no concrete plans for criminal action", in part because "the youth worker's judgement often relie[d] more on individual perceptions rather than evidence-based criteria to identify potential 'risky' persons", resulting

in "undesired side effects such as executive arbitrariness, prejudice or stigmatisation".

The content of CVE education programming is also affected by confusion over the complex causes and pathways of radicalisation, and in particular the ways in which patriarchal masculinities and societal misogyny shape these pathways. A diverse range of approaches are used to counter politically motivated extremism, including mentor-based interventions, direct online outreach to radicalised individuals, and semi-automated engagement online, derived from a number of different fields, from social work to counselling and psychology (Davey et al., 2019). The use of counter-narrative strategies, relying on the questionable assumption that 'extreme' ideas lead to violent actions, is frequently cited in the literature, yet with little to no evaluation data to support any claims of effectiveness (Silverman et al., 2016; Speckhard et al., 2018; Tuck & Silverman, 2016). In Western contexts, scholars have been critical of efforts to create a 'moderate Islam' as a 'counter-ideology' to Islamism through investing in state-sponsored deradicalisation initiatives including mentoring and educational initiatives. Such governance approaches have been argued to make 'moderate Muslims' vulnerable to portrayals by extremists as 'betraying' real Islam and to overlook deeper-seated factors including alienation and socio-economic factors (Akbarzadeh, 2013).

The need for educational curricula to challenge the anti-pluralism of violent extremism is often highlighted (Anderlini, 2017). This includes the importance of teaching skills such as conflict resolution, dialogue, deep listening and respect for 'the Other' as well as critical thinking skills to build confidence so that the youth involved are encouraged to question and analyse materials taught and consider their own opinions and choices. Yet, across all the literature on such CVE programmes, there is very little mention of addressing the patriarchal masculinities and societal misogyny which research suggests many violent extremist groups express and exploit. In its recommendations for addressing the extremist violence perpetrated by self-identified incels, the US-based Institute for Research on Male Supremacism recommends that CVE programmes draw on programming examples from the fields of responding to domestic abuse and countering racist violence in order to develop specialised counselling, and avoid interventions that reinforce young men's sense of patriarchal entitlement, through explicit collaborations with gender justice organisations. While noting the dangers of securitising gender justice work, they also call for more attention to intervening early and through health, education and

social welfare systems to prevent movement along a spectrum of dehumanisation and misogyny towards violent extremes (M. Kelly et al., 2021).

A third category of CVE programming is focused on rehabilitation work with those who have been formerly involved in violent extremism, but here too there is often a neglect of issues of male supremacy and misogyny. Some rehabilitation programmes are informed by a paternalist logic of deradicalisation, in which the turn to violent extremism is based on a conception of social breakdown, and the response is to restore the family and patriarchal order within the family as the bulwark of social order. This was the finding from Brown's (2013, p. 49) study of counter-radicalisation programming in Indonesia, which she concluded "has also perpetuated a more aggressive paternalism than this fatherly ideal that can be characterized as a hegemonic militarized masculinity of protectionism and muscular force". In particular, Brown (2013, p. 51) notes the ways in which rehabilitation programmes "rely on ideas about 'acceptable' masculine and feminine behaviors and notions of family life". The result is that

> while counter-radicalisation measures are often seen as a positive step in that they represent a move away from militaristic and coercive policies, they nevertheless rely on a series of gendered logics that are detrimental to realizing women's agency and rights. (2013, p. 51)

A similar critique has long been made of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration programmes with former military and paramilitary personnel, which have tended to reinforce rather than question normative masculinities and femininities. Examining these demobilisation efforts with young men in Sierra Leone and South Sudan, Duriesmith (2017, p. 112) notes that existing programmes have correctly identified young men's inability to gain employment and social status and get married as important destabilising factors. However, they observed that what "has been missing, is a deeper critique of the social context that first created damaging expectations of what a man needs to obtain, and the expectation that when faced with an inability of achieving these trappings of masculinity they will resort to violence". The peace-building programmes have focused their attention on making sure that militarised men, particularly young men, are lifted from the lowest position in society by providing them with employment, income and social status. As he (Duriesmith, 2017, p. 113) emphasises,

Not only does this approach tend to exclude women at each stage, but also it aims to serve and reinforce the oppressive hierarchies that existed prior to conflict. At the most basic level these programs have worked to re-establish patriarchal bargains that placate young men in each society.

Identifying and implementing the components of a truly transformative approach to CVE programming, which can address issues of masculinities, male supremacy and misogyny, remains a significant challenge.

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Representations of Masculinity by Progenitor Groups and Extremists

Abstract This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the views and agendas of those involved in violent extremism and the progenitor groups that may serve as gateways to participation. Progenitors are legal civil society actors who shared considerable overlap with extremist groups in their views. This includes men's rights groups, far-right wing associations and Islamist groups that support the notion of caliphate and a war on Islam by the West.

This chapter is based on digital ethnography, linguistic inquiry and word count based on over 5 million words scraped from websites and forums, and analysis of key tracts of text including extremist literature (propaganda material and manifestos), websites and forums. We explore the remarkable similarities in how masculinity is framed across the spectrum of violent extremism and the core elements of their narratives.

Keywords Masculinities • Far-right • Incel • Islamist • Terrorism • Manifestos

INTRODUCTION

There is an increasing concern amongst scholars, policy makers and law enforcement that the ready availability of violent extremist content online may have radicalising effects (Conway, 2017, p. 77). From formal websites to chat boards, microblogging devices such as Twitter and social media such as Facebook, it has never been easier for an individual, sitting in their own home, to access material ranging from provocative to incendiary, accompanied by images of violence, and to link into an online community of like-minded believers in a particular cause. Research, however, is lagging on a number of key fronts. Murthy (2018, p. 1), for example, notes that the literature on social movements and social media "has not fully grasped just how much social media have fundamentally changed the landscape of organisational communication". Conway notes with particular emphasis on Islamist terrorism that

> [m]issing are analyses of individual internet users' online activity and experiences in extremist cyberspaces, in addition to research on the online structures in which the latter are operating—even constrained—and the different workings and functions of these (Conway, 2017).

This is arguably even more so in relation to the relatively recent emergence of far-right, far-left and anti-women actors in the Australian context. Whilst a growing body of research is emerging, there has been, to date, relatively little analysis of the content of websites and platforms associated with these movements, in particular how groups present themselves and the narratives they use to justify their extremist ideologies.

In this chapter, therefore, we conduct a detailed examination of far-right, far-left and anti-women actors in the Australian context to examine how they discuss and perceive their relationship to masculinity.

First, we conduct a digital ethnography of the websites of ten prominent far-right, far-left and anti-women actors relevant in the Australian context. We present key themes that run throughout these websites (though not all), primarily a valorisation of hegemonic masculine norms, expressed from a perceived position of subordination. We also detail a sense of nostalgia for a better time, with groups presenting a narrative of a need to restore an idealised version of the past. Men in this narrative are seen as the protectors and creators of a new or reborn society. Importantly we note that these themes are present in both far-right, men's rights, and

Islamicist groups and forums, but are not present in the far-left, despite the preoccupation of some in law enforcement and government agencies with balancing any necessary examination of the far-right with a focus upon the far-left and environmental groups. We then provide a linguistic analysis of these websites, alongside the manifestos of a number of far-right terrorists to examine the use of language in these spaces.

Digital Ethnography

Conway proposes virtual ethnography as an appropriate methodology as it "allows researchers to develop embedded understandings of the 'real' and 'online' day-to-day lives of countercultural groups" (2017, p. 86). Drawing upon the concept of a 'virtual ethnography' of online communities detailed by Hine (2008), this section aims to produce, in anthropological terms, a 'thick' description from which researchers can more adequately understand the everyday online world of progenitor groups that advocate direct action and, in some cases, violence. We follow a similar approach to Roxanne Marcotte, who has advocated for 'webservation', seeking to interpret the members' presentation of themselves in the technologically mediated environment (2010). This approach utilises the anonymity afforded by cyberspace to observe from the sideline and to be, in effect, lost in the crowd. In employing this strategy, we observe individuals and groups engaging in online activity without influencing their actions.

Websites were chosen for the digital ethnography from a broad array of politically motivated actors in the period late 2019 to mid-2020. These groups and forums are legal civil society actors across the political spectrum from far-left to far-right and include issue-motivated groups. All are either based in the State of Victoria or have some impact on political discourse and behaviour in Victoria through various forms of activism, either in online environments or through real-world activism including protests and civil disobedience. All call for some form of reordering of society in line with their political perspectives and demonstrate an uncompromising or 'hard-line' political perspective, though act largely within the bounds of activity generally tolerated in democratic societies. Some have, since the collection of data, evolved into more hard-line groups, whilst others may be, due to the pandemic, less active than they were in 2020. The language and ideas they express may be considered highly offensive to some segments of the community, and in a small number of cases associated individuals have overstepped the mark and faced legal sanction. These may be

considered progenitor political groups (developing and enacting ideas through political action) and therefore offer insights into more hard-line groups and forums that go a step further and employ violence.

This research, in effect, covers a broad sweep of a much larger collection of groups and forums that exist both physically, through their members, and in cyberspace. The aim is to simultaneously explore both their online structures and their framing of masculinity. The digital ethnography is accompanied by the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count Analysis (see next section), providing important context for the metrics that this latter form of analysis produces. The following progenitor activist groups and forums were chosen for analysis:

1. Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW)
2. Men's Rights Agency
3. The Australian Men's Rights Association
4. Lads Society
5. Gab
6. XYZ
7. Socialist Alternative
8. Extinction Rebellion
9. Hizb ut-Tahrir
10. Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah (ASWJ)

This list is not definitive or exhaustive, even in the State of Victoria alone. Some of these are international movements and forums with local actors and contributors, while others are confined exclusively to the local context. Many such groups exist across the political spectrum. These were chosen for their level of organisation and accessibility through the conventional Google search engine.

It would be expected from the outset that men's rights would embrace traditional notions of hegemonic masculinity, positioning men as head of the household. These groups would be likely to argue that rights for women have gone too far and that men now occupy a subordinated position in society. Far-right groups and web forums would be expected to emphasise an aggressive hypermasculinity, asserting traditional male roles as breadwinner and as social change agents. Similar to men's rights groups, they are likely to assert that men, and in particular white Australian men, have become subordinated and must reclaim their manhood. It is expected that hegemonic masculinity would be challenged in left-wing and

environmental group websites, tying into broader ideological leanings that seek to undermine existing power structures. It is expected that for Islamist (textualist) groups, division based on gender is self-evident and so hegemonic masculinity would not necessarily require asserting.

The Valorisation of Hegemonic Masculinity

Groups across the spectrum of men's rights, the far-right and Islamist movements use language that valorises a normative form of hegemonic masculinity and engages in male supremacist tropes. When we discuss masculinity here, we understand it as the social construction of what it is to "be a man" (Kimmel & Bridges, 2011). Our analysis builds of the integral work of Connell, who states,

> Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. (Connell, 1995, p. 77)

Hegemonic masculinity as a concept is not intended to describe something that is normal in a statistical sense (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832), with the vast majority of men not being willing or able to live up to the norms associated with hegemonic ideals all of the time. As Connell and Messerschmidt describe, it was however

> certainly normative. It embodied the currently most honoured way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men.

While often seeking access to hegemonic masculinity therefore, masculinities are "multiple, with internal complexities and even contradictions" (Connell, 1995). While referring to the valorisation of hegemonic masculinity this section does not suggest that violent extremist groups have an agreed version of their own idealised masculinity, nor of hegemonic masculinity in general. As it is with broader society, visions of masculinity in each of these groups have their own internal complexities and contradictions.

Where these groups and forums all align with a vision of hegemonic masculinity is through the use of masculinity as a means to subordinate women, and similarly identified 'Others'. Violent extremist organisations attempt to reinvigorate the image of the potent, dominant male, who sits in opposition to the emotional, weak 'Other'. This othering is not just targeted at women, although violent extremist organisations position themselves directly in opposition to 'femininity' (Copland, forthcoming). Violent extremist groups also react against what they describe as 'feminised' men—in particular 'social justice warriors' and homosexuals, all of whom present a challenge to hegemonic male norm (Green, 2019).

The Lads Society, for example, is a far-right nationalist group modelled on the US-based 'Proud Boys' and was founded in 2017 in Melbourne. The group evolved from the now disbanded white nationalist organisation the United Patriots Front and during our data collection had two club houses based in Cheltenham (Vic) and Ashfield (NSW). Key founders include Blair Cottrell, Neil Erikson and Christopher Shortis, who in 2017 were convicted of knowingly engaging in conduct with the intention of inciting serious contempt for, or revulsion or severe ridicule of Muslims contrary to section 25(2) of the *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001*. This was due to their 'mock beheading' of a mannequin in Bendigo in 2015. Another founder, Thomas Sewell, was reported in May 2019 to have corresponded with Christchurch terrorist Brenton Tarrant about the possibility of joining the Lads Society (Begley, 2019). We conducted an analysis of the Lad's Society in 2020, although the group has since disbanded and reformed as the National Socialist Network, which actively uses fascist symbology and violent language and has become the key focus of an Australian *60 Minutes/*Fairfax Media undercover series titled *Nazis Next Door* (McKenzie & Tozer, 2021).

In the *Who Are You?* section of the Lad's Society website the group starts by decrying changes in cultural and social norms, stating:

We are a group of like-minded people who have grown increasingly concerned over the state of affairs within our nation.

The values of community, personal responsibility and commitment are rapidly being washed away amid a flood of dramatic changes to our home, allowed by our apathy. We are experiencing a greater need to bond together as a cohesive collective for the benefit of the individuals within, and society as a whole.

The Lad's Society emphasises the value of community, calling for men to bind together to counteract the flood of changes facing men in the modern world. As will be discussed in more depth in our discussion of the linguistic analysis later in this chapter, this represents a commitment to what Moral Foundations Theory (Haidt, 2013) describes as 'binding domains', with individuals placing high value on loyalty, authority and sanctity.

The Lad's Society articulates a fundamental belief that *something* has changed—that the takeover of society from the left, SJWs (Social Justice Warriors) and feminism has destroyed what they describe as the natural order of things. This 'natural order of things' is based on normative ideas of masculinity and femininity. In a blog post titled *Mind, Body and Spirit*, they articulate a belief in a fundamental logic that is the foundation of all higher civilisation. As documented by Zuckerberg (2018), many men's rights and far-right organisations use ancient Greek and Roman philosophy and theology as a basis for their own ideology, using this material to justify an argument that there are inherent differences between men and women, and that the success of society is based on masculine ideals. This post echoes such approaches, with the Lad's Society claiming that society is based on three fundamental truths, or a 'natural order':

- He was the bearer of a spear, this was not a right but a duty, and it was his duty to protect his tribe and to hunt and fight for his tribe's survival. (Body)
- A man who holds a spear, and only a man who holds a spear has the 'right' to debate or dictate the path of the tribe. (Mind)
- A man who holds the spear and holds the right to speak must develop his higher purpose and his metaphysical reincarnation through rebirth. (Spirit)

These alleged fundamental truths are based on a hierarchical masculine notion of the world, in which men—the bearers of the spear—have a duty to protect the tribe. Through this protection men then earn the right to lead—to debate or dictate the path of the tribe. Men also have a responsibility to develop their own higher purpose, to be strong, rational beings. The post then continues to say "the sole purpose of the relationship between Mind, Body and Spirit is self-preservation, just as the purpose of life is the balance between the self-preservation of the micro (one's self)

and the macro (one's people)". Men are there to protect and it is through this protection that society survives.

On the other side of the valorisation of hegemonic masculinity, groups also present crude depictions of women based in male supremacist tropes. The Lad's Society engages in reductionist representations of women as primarily motivated by mating and social climbing. This is a common feature of manosphere representations (Farrell et al., 2019), which depict women as driven by hypergamy—the drive to seek men of a high social status in order to live off his resources. The group in turn depicts men as filling out a higher purpose, including building the nation, scientific discovery and the protection of the family, the community and the nation. Representations of men and their roles are therefore hypermasculine, with men being urged to wake up and reclaim what has been taken from them.

We observe similar valorisation of masculinity in Gab. Gab describes itself as "[a] social network that champions free speech, individual liberty and the free flow of information online. All are welcome." Gab has been widely associated with the far-right and a white male demographic and has faced numerous disputes with web domain registrars about the content hosted on its site and media scrutiny. The 'Gabby the Frog' logo resembles Pepe the Frog, a key feature of alt-right meme culture. Gab features a number of pages established by individuals for discussion on a range of different topics.

One page we studied is called the 'Manly Men of Gab' page, which features posts valorising American workers with comments such as 'WORKI' FOR A LIVIN' one piece at a time' and 'We built this city' accompanied by photos of construction workers. These posts depict a stereotypical image of strong men, who do the important work of building and protecting the nation.

On Gab, Blair Cottrell, the co-founder of the aforementioned Lad's Society, emphasises the valorisation of hegemonic masculinity through a post on his page:

> When people ask me 'what is our purpose?' I always fight back an urge to channel Zyzz[1]:

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[1] Zyzz, aka Aziz Shavershian, was a recreational bodybuilder who developed a large online following, labelled Zyzz fandom. Zyzz and Zyzz fandom valorises bodybuilder and strength development as masculine traits (Underwood, 2018).

At the end of the day man you've gotta listen to this, if you're a shredded sick cunt, you can get away with anything bro … go out and get bitches, stop being a little sad cunt, you want to sit around being a little sad cunt? Fuck that shit bro. Every little hater is gonna hate … in life, you've gotta get shredded, you've gotta fuck bitches, you've gotta be a sick cunt … and we're all gonna make it brah.

Cottrell encapsulates the hypermasculine outlook that is pervasive throughout both the Gab site and Lads Society, in particular the valorisation of bodybuilding, strength and discipline. Being masculine is seen as their purpose, with Cottrell arguing that the core purpose of men is to 'get shredded', 'fuck bitches' and 'be a sick cunt'. If all men can do that then "we're all gonna make it brah".

'Getting shredded' and 'fucking bitches' however aren't the only version of masculinity apparent in these groups. At times this valorisation of hypermasculinity is based in the notion of the rugged individual, which is focused more on living off the land, Do it Yourself ('DIY'), fishing and other outdoor activity.

The Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW) website is a significant global hub for the manosphere, a coalition of loosely affiliated, yet ideologically similar online movements including (but not limited to) anti-feminist groups, masculinist groups, men's rights movements, fathers' rights movements, Christian rights groups, MGTOW, pickup artists, Voluntary Celibates (volcels) and Involuntary Celibate (incels).

MGTOW valorises a conception of masculinity based in independence, reinforcing the cultural notion of the value of the "self-made man" (Kimmel, 2011). Being self-made in this conception actively rejects relationships with women, framing them as subordinating men. The website states:

MGTOW—Men Going Their Own Way—is a statement of self-ownership, where the modern man preserves and protects his own sovereignty above all else. It is the manifestation of one word: "No". Ejecting silly preconceptions and cultural definitions of what a man is. Looking to no-one else for social cues. Refusing to bow, serve and kneel for the opportunity to be treated like a disposable utility. And, living according to his own best interests in a world which would rather he didn't.

In other words … *common sense for men*.

The group reinforces this conception of masculinity with a definition of 'sovereignty' on their front page, indicating this as a value valorised by the community. The definition reads as "Noun. Meaning: Supreme power or authority. Autonomy, independence, self-government, self-rule, self-determination, freedom. Self-governing." This definition is full of tropes of valorised masculinity, which sees men as being strong and independent, compared to women who are weak and collectivist (Nicholas & Agius, 2017). Collectivism is framed as a sign of femininity and weakness. Interestingly, sovereignty is an increasingly recurrent theme in the vocabulary of the far-right (including also sovereign citizens) and anti-vaxxers alike.

This does not mean there is no sense of connection within this version of masculinity, with these groups valuing a sense of connectivity between men. Most of the websites studied in this ethnography are very hierarchical, with content controlled and managed by members of the organisations themselves, with little potential for participation from members not involved in the hierarchy. The MGTOW website is an exception to this, containing a number of forums, in which participants can register and discuss a range of different things associated with the MGTOW philosophy. Combined with the broader sources on the website, therefore, the MGTOW website appears to seek to foster a community and, indeed, political movement to reject the power that women have attained in society. Masculinity to this extent seeks to emulate traditional hegemonic masculinity centred on stoicism and rugged individualism, with men coming together to organise the best ways in which this version of masculinity can be lived individually and advocated for societally.

The Lad's Society operates similarly, promoting a sense of community in response to the perception that societal values are changing. The Lad's Society promotes individual development and growth as the means to achieve this. The Lad's Society focuses on creating "strong, honourable and healthy men" arguing that "strong Men create strong Families, strong Families create strong Communities and strong Communities make strong Nations". The focus is on developing individuals, but in doing so they believe that this will re-develop the strength of the Western nation. The Lad's Society points to far-right ideas, which run throughout many of these websites. In a blog post, referring to the 'natural order' in his discussion of those he perceives to be pro-multiculturalism and diversity leftists, Thomas Sewell invokes the concept of eugenics, which has historically been strongly aligned with the development of a perfect human race. In an article accompanied by a photo of a roaring lion surrounded by hyenas, he states:

> If we understand how eugenics works then those genetically prone to the brain virus, the softer, weaker and more cowardly of the European race will cleanse themselves of this world. These people do not breed and if they do then they make sure they infect their children with enough of this virus that they do not breed. Effectively 'the genetic trash takes itself out' (20 August 2019)

The goal of the Lad's Society therefore is to "create strongest possible organisation resembling Natural Order that we can achieve". The organisation argues that with the imposition of chaos, Western society has the potential of collapse and that therefore their duty is to develop "a self-reliant parallel society so that we succeed in our mission whether or not the collapse comes in our life time".

Websites associated with the far-right and men's rights/the manosphere therefore valorise a particular notion of Western hegemonic masculinity, one which values concepts such as logic, reason, conflict, individualism, strength and valour. Groups advocate the reconstruction of this valorised man, in particular in response to a perceived feminisation of society, implemented by feminists, multiculturalists and social justice warriors.

Subordination from Women and Nostalgia for an Imagined Past

Men are framed as somehow subordinated to women in a world that has turned against them. This is considered to be primarily due to the increased power of feminism, multiculturalism and social justice in general.

This narrative is particularly common in men's rights groups. The Men's Rights Agency is a non-profit organisation founded by Sue and Reg Price in Queensland in 1994. The 'About Us' section of the website states the story as to 'Why Men's Rights Agency Exists':

> In today's world, no matter where one lives, men and boys face increasing hostility just because they are male. Fairness and equal treatment for both genders, the original aim of the women's movement has been lost as society is encouraged to view men as perpetrators of evil and women as only victims. Feminist jurisprudence, the perversion of legislation to provide advantages to one gender over the other, contrary to human rights considerations is creating a two-tier society, with men and boys relegated to second class citizen status.

The website of the Men's Rights Agency claims to seek to "restore the balance between men and women", with a primary focus of "supporting the essential role that fathers have in their children's lives". This assumes that balance has been lost somewhere, with the inherent roles of men and women being overridden by social changes. As described in the section above, the group articulates a belief that this social development has caused an increasing hostility to men solely because they are male. The group provides more detail in its 'aim' of the organisation, which is "to promote equal rights and a level playing field for all men. We acknowledge the right of all women to equality, but over-reaction is causing an imbalance leading to discrimination against men." This is a common theme amongst men's rights and manosphere groups, who articulate a belief in the feminisation of society, with a sense that women have taken over at the expense of men (Copland, forthcoming).

Groups such as this articulate a belief that feminism has become extreme and that this extremism has resulted in the further subordination of men. The Australian Men's Rights Association (AMRA) states at the head of its website that it is a "Non-profit Association Promoting Gender Equality for Men and Their Children". The website itself appears to be functional, though is not secured and features contradictory information about when the website started.

The website of AMRA features a range of different content attacking feminists and claiming a range of injuries inflicted upon men. A 'Hot Topics' column on the left-hand side of the website features references to subject headings including 'Fatherlessness in Australia—Statistics', 'Paternity Fraud, The Case for Mandatory DNA Testing in Family Law in Australia', 'White Ribbon Day Campaign Unfairly Targets Boys' and 'Violent and Abusive Women—Crime Statistics'. Abstracts with the option to 'read more' and short articles with headlines primarily relating to family law and 'frustrated fathers' are featured, whilst the right-hand column features boxes with titles emphasising men as victims of domestic violence and a box titled 'Extreme Feminists':

Certain feminist 'scholars', such as law professor Catharine McKinnon, equate all sexual intercourse with rape.

Of the 12 recognised categories of feminists, the 'Female Supremacists' are by far the most damaging to society.

They inundate our universities with hatred of males and preach that males are inferior people. And you wonder why males don't go to university? If you were black, would you go to a university which teaches 'White Supremacy'?

The website is replete with a sense of victimhood and what might be termed a self-flagellating subordinate masculinity, with the basic position that men are being oppressed by women—particularly their former partners. Viewers of the website, likely to be men, are invited to read the bulk of evidence (featuring little if any contrastive positions) and align with the position.

A final example of this is found on the website of XYZ. The XYZ website serves as a news and opinion platform for the far-right in Australia, consciously positioning itself in opposition to the ABC. Activists behind the website content are aligned, to varying extents, with the extreme far-right in Australia. The 'About Us' at the bottom of the homepage states:

The XYZ caters to the needs of the population of Australia which believes in free speech, free markets, and unselfconsciously acknowledges our place in Western civilisation and culture. Learn why XYZ is the news YOU have been waiting for.

XYZ positions not just men, but the West in general, as being in decline, arguing that people need to fight back against so-called attacks on Western values. The Vision statement of the organisation is published on their donations page and serves as a call to arms to a primarily white, Australian-born male perspective:

Western society is currently experiencing a high degree of speech suppression. This speech suppression is conducted by the left.

The West is also currently in demographic decline, the final stage of a cultural disintegration which could see our civilisation and our people virtually wiped out. In order to preserve a future for our people, we must restore our culture.

In order to restore our culture, freedom of expression is paramount.

The XYZ aims to become a key player in Australia for the promotion of free speech and Western culture, opposition to the Cultural Marxist agenda, and the preservation of Western civilisation. In particular, we aim to be a primary

source in Australia for those opposed to the left-wing narrative to turn, to be exposed to ideas and knowledge which, regardless of their own views, expands their knowledge.

XYZ uses the notion of 'cultural marxism' to capture all the threats to the Western state, seeing it as the key facilitator of the left-wing narrative that is resulting in demographic decline and the final stage of cultural disintegration. The website thus promotes a valorisation of hegemonic masculinity, but from a position of perceived subordination.

This victim mentality runs throughout their articles as well. For example, in an opinion article titled 'The Real Problem With Masculinity', Adam Piggot criticises a 2019 Gillett commercial which questioned masculine stereotypes:

> If there is a problem with men then women caused it. Actually men caused it first by voluntarily ceding ground to women. Weak men create hard times and all that. I hate the Gillette commercial but yet at the same time I really love it because this sort of mass exposure goes a very long way to waking up the normies. Hopefully we are not far off from a point where the great re-correction is made.

Piggot argues that both women and weak men have fundamentally attacked masculinity, and in turn those men (i.e., those involved in these groups) who align with such a vision of masculinity. The problem is weakness—associated with femininity—which has overtaken the Western world and denied men access to their higher callings. Men have become subordinated, but it is through this subordinated position that they have the potential to rise up and engage in what Piggot describes as a 're-correction'.

Masculinity in Islamist Groups

There is a notable difference between far-right and Islamist groups in their language about masculinity and the position of women in society. Far-right groups are far more overt in their language, with more explicit anti-feminist language and statements about the need to return women to a position of subordination.[2] Misogynistic language and the valorisation of

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[2] We do not here explore the language of the Christian far-right, including Christian nationalist groups. However, a preliminary glance suggests that they have more in common with far-right than Islamist sources. This is an area requiring further exploration.

masculinity were more subtle in Islamist groups, with these groups speaking about it less commonly, and treating the superiority of men as more of an assumed natural order of being.

The *Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah* Association (ASWJ) is a *Salafi* Sunni Muslim organisation formed in the mid-1980s in Melbourne by Sheikh Mohamed Omran, also known as Sheikh Abu Ayman. Omran was a one-time associate of Sheikh Abdul Nacer Benbrika, leader of Australia's first convicted terrorist organisation and was a teacher to Harun Mehicevic, leader of the Al-Furqan Islamic Information Centre (closed) which was a base for well-known Islamic State recruiter Neil Prakash and Numan Haider. Haider was killed in an Islamic State-related attack on members of the Victoria Police in Endeavour Hills.

ASWJ has eleven centres (one in Perth, seven in New South Wales and three in Victoria). These include Islamic Information and Support Centre Australia (IISCA), Southeast Dandenong and Hume Islamic Youth Centre (HIYC), Coolaroo. The latter has had a number of Islamic State fighters (Salafi Jihadists) and those convicted of terrorist plots pass through, though there is no evidence of a direct link to official Centre teaching.

HIYC presents an example of the assumed differences between men and women through the creation of separate spaces for men and women in their community. Pitching itself as a form of youth centre, HIYC's website contains a 'About Us' statement:

> HIYC aims to provide a safe and friendly environment for the youth of the local community that facilitates and promotes learning, a healthy and active lifestyle, the development of virtuous character and an enlightenment of the spirit based on Islamic principles.

The 'What's Here' section expands on this featuring links to a prayer room, 'Islamic Superstore', restaurant and café, 'Gym and Fight Club', 'Youth Hangout' and 'Tanzeel Academy'. The Gym and Fight Club link outlines the purpose:

> Paramount to a healthy lifestyle is to have a healthy body. Yes, our gym caters to the needs of our youth without undermining the privacy of our women. With dedicated time slots for women, our women now have a place where they could go and train. We have a team of trainers, who have proven to be some of the very best trainers in Melbourne.

Similar to the Lad's Society therefore HIYC valorises work on the body as a means both for self-discipline and for building strength to address perceived social issues. This is based primarily in a belief in the value of 'self-discipline', coded as a masculine trait (Hinojosa, 2010). Unlike the Lad's Society, however, HIYC allows women into their group, but does so specifically through creating separate classes, in order not to undermine 'the privacy of our women'.

Similar to this comment, the website also has a separate 'Sisters' section including a link to the 'Sisters Branch of HIYC', with the motto 'The believers are but one sisterhood'. Links to Instagram (a private account with 532 followers) and Facebook (2761 followers) offer social media interaction whilst a series of links to a blog, a 'What's On' page, a gallery, structure of the team, opportunities to get involved and a 'Sisters Gym and Fight Club', which offers the chance to 'Join the gym and become a femme, fit *Muslimimah*'. Thus, whilst women are considered part of the ASWJ movement, they are at the same time to be kept separate from the men as gender mixing is viewed as undesirable. There is no option for co-participation or gender mixing.

We found similar representations of masculinity and gender politics in Hizb Ut-Tahrir, an international Sunni Islamist organisation formed in 1953. Hizb Ut-Tahrir has membership in over 50 countries and an estimated membership of over half a million followers globally. The group is outlawed or prescribed across the Middle East, Turkey and Indonesia along with China, Pakistan and Russia. Despite notable public debates, the group remains legal in Australia and, like far-right groups, skirts the boundaries of legality in their speech and deeds. Notable spokesmen include Wassim Doureihi and Uthman Badar, a PhD student in economics at the University of Western Sydney. The ultimate aim of the group is the establishment of an Islamic caliphate, that is, pan-national Islamic government.

Like ASWJ, Hizb Ut-Tahrir promotes gender segregation as a key element of Islamic practice, particularly in private spaces where temptation is possible. In an article featured on the site titled 'Muslim Gender Interaction in the West', the author states:

> The Islamic approach on all matters is a preventive one, meaning it simultaneously builds the individual and organises society in a manner that prevents problems from emerging. In terms of the interaction between genders, then, the *Shari'ah* sets the norm and deviation from it is considered an exception.

In this case, separation between men and women in society is the norm. Instances where men and women are allowed to mix are the exception. When they do mix, Islam defines a specific code of behaviour that men and women are obliged to follow in their interaction.

In this context, masculinity is to be managed and steered away from temptation: women. Women are not abused or abhorred in the manner of far-right or manosphere websites; however they are, in effect, to be controlled in a manner in which purveyors and followers of these websites may well approve.

The difference between the far-right and Islamist groups therefore represents reflections on the perceived differences of social norms in Western and Islamic communities. Western far-right groups express a belief that Western society has become 'feminised' due to the takeover by feminism of social institutions and the government. Western far-right groups therefore express a belief in the need to fight back, with this requiring more overtly masculinist and misogynistic language explicitly outlined a desire to change the current gender order.

This is not as true for Islamist groups, who, through their language, do not perceive as much influence of feminism and women in their communities. Instead, they base their language in the norms of *Shari'ah*, explicitly stating that "separation between men and women in society is the norm". This desire for separation is less overtly misogynistic in nature but is instead based framed as ensuring privacy for women whilst helping the maintenance of discipline for men and an avoidance of temptation. More normative gender orders are therefore an assumed and less explicitly stated part of the ideology and language of these groups.

The Far-Left

As part of our analysis we conducted research on two far-left groups: Extinction Rebellion (founded 2018) and Socialist Alternative (founded 1995). We found that neither of these groups valorised masculinity and instead were either gender neutral in their language or actively pro-feminist.

Extinction Rebellion's language, for example, is gender neutral, with no discussion of males or females, nor of gender politics in general. The website instead focuses entirely on climate change, without bringing gender questions into it. The site in turn acts as a shopfront to invite potential

participants to attend events, with different conceptions of masculinity not appearing to play a role in shaping their outlook or actions.

The same can be said about Socialist Alternative. Socialist Alternative's language is based on language about revolution, militancy and fighting. In contrast to the far-right, the group does not valorise masculinity, nor do they appear preoccupied with criticising the masculinity of their opponents. In fact, the group positions itself as pro-feminist, campaigning actively against the sexism and misogyny of the far-right.

In summary, therefore, we examined Extinction Rebellion and Socialist Alternative as examples of the far-left and as groups that call for some form of reordering of society in line with their political perspectives and demonstrate an uncompromising or 'hard-line' political perspective. Despite the militant language of Socialist Alternative, however, neither group talks actively about nor valorises masculinity. They are either gender neutral in their approach or actively promote feminism and anti-sexism. This represents a significant difference between the far-left, on the one hand, and the far-right and Islamist organisations, on the other hand.

Summary of Digital Ethnography

We identify a number of trends through our digital ethnography. Groups on the far-right and men's rights groups valorise a concept of hegemonic masculinity, one which values concepts such as logic, reason, conflict, individualism, strength and valour. These groups establish a belief that these values are inherently masculine, articulating a belief in a 'natural order' that strictly defines differences between men and women. We found this to be true for Islamist organisations as well.

Men's rights and far-right organisations however valorise a belief in hegemonic masculinity from a perceived position of subordination. They articulate a belief that masculinity has been attacked by feminism, social justice movements and multiculturalism. This aligns with a belief that Western society has been attacked in general and is in a moment of cultural decline. While Islamist groups position themselves as subordinated due to discrimination against their religion, they do not align as strongly with the belief in subordinated masculinity, with inherent differences between men and women remaining assumed, natural and continuing in these groups.

Finally, despite some militant language, far-left groups do not valorise masculinity and instead either adopt gender neutral language or actively advocate against sexism and for feminist ideals.

Linguistic Analysis (LIWC)

In the previous section we examined our digital ethnography of websites and forums connected to violent extremist groups. In this section, we build on this by conducting a linguistic analysis of six manifestos and websites of groups primarily associated with the manosphere as a means to further understand their relationship to masculinity. Analysis is conducted using the online tool *Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC)*, which allows us to understand the linguistic trends across each document (referred to as corpora), including the emotional valence, the type of language used and using a framework we have developed that expressed relationship to masculinity, misogyny and xenophobia.

We employ linguistic analysis of the corpora associated with and produced by a range of groups and individuals. We analyse two corpora from each of: manifestos of male domestic terrorists (Brenton Tarrant and Elliot Rodger), male supremacists (the Australian Lads Society and Men Going Their Own Way) and men's rights groups (the Men's Rights Agency and the Australian Men's Rights Agency). These corpora were chosen because they contained a large amount of writing from various progenitor groups as well as men who have taken the further step of violent extremism. The Muslim and far-left groups described above did not have large enough corpora of interest available to enable this sort of analysis. Our results indicate that there are four distinct strands of thinking, language and behaviour in these groups:

> *hegemonic masculinity,* grounded in the normative domination of women and other men perceived as threat;
>
> *subordinate masculinity*, which manifests in particular responses grounded in anger and resentment at perceived domination by other men;
>
> *misogyny*, grounded in resentful or outright hateful attitudes and actions towards women (especially women who are perceived as withholding men's entitlements) and
>
> *xenophobia*, which manifests in fearful and vengeful reactions to (perceived) invasion by foreigners and other outsiders (especially people of colour).

Each of these four strands, discussed in greater depth below, may lead to violent extremism, but hegemonic masculinity seems to be especially associated with collective action, whereas subordinate masculinity seems to be more associated with individual action.

Methodology

We focused on examples of confirmed violent extremists/terrorists who had authored some form of manifesto prior to the act and progenitor groups. We then looked at the progenitor political groups explored in our digital ethnography.

Lone-Wolf Manifestos

Elliot Rodger: Entitled, 'My Twisted World: The Story of Elliot Rodger,' this manifesto reads as an autobiographical account of the many real and perceived humiliations Rodger experienced during his youth, leading up to his resolution to go on a shooting spree in Isla Vista, California.

Brenton Tarrant: Entitled, 'The Great Replacement,' this manifesto, heavily couched in irony and posed as a conversation between Tarrant and the reader may be understood as a call to arms directed in the first instance, at white Australians and New Zealanders, and more generally towards whites around the world.

Male Supremacy

Men Going Their Own Way (https://www.mgtow.com/): This is a loosely affiliated group of men who have decided to isolate themselves from women. Most seem to be heterosexual divorcés who have given up on the possibility of amicable inter-gender relations.

Lads Society (https://www.ladssociety.com/): This is a masculinist and nationalist group that has engaged in harassment of African Australians, among other minorities. They portray themselves as champions of traditional values and have a strong emphasis on individual self-improvement and individual responsibility (though the responsibility is to a narrowly conceived 'real' Australia). The group has since disbanded and reformed as the National Socialist Network, which actively uses a fascist vocabulary and symbology.

Men's Rights

Australia's Men's Rights Association (AMRA) (http://australianmensrights.com/Mens_Rights_Agency-Australia.aspx): This is an advocacy group that promotes men's rights in Australia. They pay special attention to laws, regulations and social norms that they perceive as unjust towards men (e.g., domestic violence, divorce, child support etc.).

Men's Rights Agency (https://mensrights.com.au/): This group is very similar to the AMRA and focussed on father's rights.

Corpora were collected from 26 October 2019 to 19 December 2019. These corpora are not perfectly comparable because they differ in the amount of editorial control exercised by their authors or owners. For example, the authors of the manifestos exercised complete editorial control over their wording and publication. By contrast, the Lads Society features several authors, and the website for Men Going Their Own Way enables comments from pseudonymous users. In addition, the timing of their production differs in important ways: the manifestos are meant to explain particular acts of violence, whereas the other four corpora are more general reflections on and discourse about society. Despite these differences, the size of the corpora makes it possible to draw some illuminating comparisons. Table 3.1 represents the word count of each corpus.

We approached these corpora using both pre-built and custom dictionaries of Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC, see Pennebaker and Chung (2011) and Pennebaker et al. (2015) for more details). LIWC works by counting the number of words belonging to various categories in a text. For instance, LIWC combs through a text to examine how many first-person singular pronouns (e.g., *I, me, my*), how many first-person plural pronouns (e.g., *we, us, our*) and how many articles (e.g., *a, an, the*) are used per 100 words. Beyond these so-called *function words*, LIWC has dictionaries for words that indicate complexity of thinking (e.g., *nevertheless, whereas, but*), asking questions (e.g., *who, what, why*) and a range of psychological processes that includes positive and negative emotions, discrete emotions such as anger and sadness and drives for affiliation, achievement, power, reward and risk.

Table 3.1 Summary word counts for six corpora

Corpus	Word count
Elliot Rodger	105,946
Brenton Tarrant	17,045
Men Going Their Own Way	960,565
Lads Society	13,943
Australia's Men's Rights Agency	423,533
Men's Rights Agency	705,257
Total	**2,226,289**

Over the last few decades, Pennebaker and his collaborators have shown that this method can reveal quite a bit about individuals, their relationships and the groups to which they belong. In the context of this study, it is highly relevant that Pennebaker and his colleagues have done consulting work for American police and Homeland Security to try to predict the likelihood that various groups will engage in violence to advance their causes. Independent researchers have also used LIWC to study the language used by Islamist terrorist groups (Vergani & Bliuc, 2018).

One useful functionality of LIWC is the ability to create and share custom dictionaries for categories of interest. Recent work in social and political psychology suggests that when groups engage in violence, they often believe that they are doing the morally right thing (Fiske & Rai, 2014). A popular framework for understanding and comparing the moral values of individuals and groups is Moral Foundations Theory (Haidt, 2013). Moral Foundations Theory posits that there are five moral domains to which people are sensitive, and that different people (and groups) focus more on some domains than others. The domains include *care, fairness, loyalty, authority* and *sanctity*. The first two domains (care and fairness— sometimes called the *individualising* domains) tend to be associated with left-wing and educated people and groups. By contrast, the other three (loyalty, authority and sanctity—sometimes called the *binding* domains) tend to be associated with right-wing and uneducated people and groups. Each domain is bipolar, with the positive pole indicating a range of virtues and the negative pole indicating a range of vices. For instance, virtues related to care include *kindness, compassion* and *empathy*, whereas vices related to care include *cruelty* and a disposition to cause *harm*. Research suggests that groups with heightened emphasis on the binding domains display greater liability to violence—including both punishment of in-group deviants and attacks on outsiders viewed as threats (Leidner & Castano, 2012). Frimer et al. (2019) have created a custom LIWC dictionary that contains words associated with both poles of all five dimensions (meaning it contains ten sub-dictionaries).

Additionally, we created four custom LIWC dictionaries that are keyed to specific aspects of masculinity. Based in tandem on research by philosopher and social critic Kate Manne (2017) and sociologist RW Connell (1995), we conceptualise masculinities in terms of hegemony and subordination along three dimensions: intra-gender, inter-gender and inter-group. More specifically, many men evince intense concern for (what they

take to be) their position in male dominance hierarchies. Some are (or see themselves as) hegemonic with respect to other men, whereas others are (or see themselves as) subordinate to other men. Likewise, many men are (or see themselves as) hegemonic or subordinate with respect to women. Finally, many men perceive their group as hegemonic or subordinate with respect to other groups, especially racial, ethnic and religious groups.

To study the language used to talk about such (perceived) dominance hierarchies, we developed custom LIWC dictionaries for the categories of *hegemonic masculinity*, *subordinate masculinity*, *misogyny* and *xenophobia*. The first two dictionaries include terms that are used to describe men: the hegemonic masculinity dictionary includes words that refer to men who are (perceived as) hegemonic in relation to other men, whereas the subordinate masculinity dictionary includes words that refer to men who are (perceived as) dominated by other men or by women. Note that these words are not necessarily used reflexively: a man who feels subordinate might, for instance, complain about the 'Chads' (dominant men) in his community. The misogyny dictionary includes terms of abuse that are sometimes hurled at women in these corpora. Finally, the xenophobia dictionary includes terms of abuse that are sometimes hurled out perceived outsiders in these corpora, along with words and phrases that refer to intergroup domination and subordination (e.g., 'white genocide').

The dictionaries were developed via a two-step process. First, we brainstormed lists of words and n-grams that seemed, intuitively, to be distinctively associated with the four categories of interest. Second, one of the authors read through the corpora and noted words and n-grams that seemed to be associated with the same categories. The manifestos and Lads Society corpus were read in full. Approximately 10% of each of the other corpora was read. For more details, see Alfano et al. (forthcoming).

Results

The results section is subdivided into three parts. First, we present summaries of the corpora under study in the form of word clouds, topic models and a dendrogram. Next, we use the built-in LIWC dictionaries to begin analysing the corpora. Finally, we use custom dictionaries to explore the role of moral foundations and masculinity in the corpora.

Corpora Summaries

In this subsection we use the quanteda package for R (Benoit et al., 2018) to provide summaries of each corpus in the form of word clouds (Fig. 3.1), followed by a dendrogram that clusters the corpora based on similarity (Fig. 3.2). In the word cloud, which shows the top words for each corpora, word size represents prevalence in the corpus, with larger words being more prevalent than smaller ones. To aid legibility, text colour divides words from each different corpus. The most prevalent words are also placed in the centre of each cloud, with less prevalent words at the periphery.

Fig. 3.1 Word cloud representing the six corpora. Word size represents prevalence

As this word cloud makes clear:

- Brenton Tarrant is obsessed with intergroup relations of dominance and subordination.
- Eliot Rodger's manifesto is focused on specific individuals and personal relationships.
- Men Going Their Own Way tend to focus on inter-gender relations generally, and less on specific individuals or hierarchical relationships between groups.
- The Lads Society manifests an obsession with order and white ethno-nationalism.
- Australia's Men's Rights Agency focuses primarily on legal and legislative regulation of the family.
- The Men's Rights Agency also focuses primarily on legal and legislative regulation of the family.

Altogether, these corpora represent a range of topics and underlying interests and concerns. For example, the Tarrant manifesto is primarily about race, culture and violent intergroup conflict. By contrast, the Rodger manifesto is much more focused on a small number of individuals (especially Rodger's parents and friends) and (potential) sexual relationships. The Men Going Their Own Way corpus evinces less emphasis on specific individuals and more on broad generalisations about men and (even more so) women. Next, the Lads Society corpus seems to resemble the Tarrant manifesto in its emphasis on intergroup conflict, paired with intense focus on hierarchy and social order. Finally, the men's rights corpora look very similar, with two primary focal points: family relations and the law.

These impressions are borne out by the dendrogram pictured in Fig. 3.2, which clusters the corpora hierarchically based on their similarities and differences. The men's rights corpora are quite similar to one another and very different from the other four corpora. The Lads Society and Men Going Their Own Way corpora are most similar to each other and quite similar to the Tarrant manifesto. The Rodger manifesto appears, at least in this context, to be one-of-a-kind.

Analysis Using Built-in LIWC Dictionaries
We now turn to more fine-grained analyses of the corpora under study, beginning with first-person pronouns. Two indicators that LIWC tracks are the frequencies of first-person singular and first-person plural
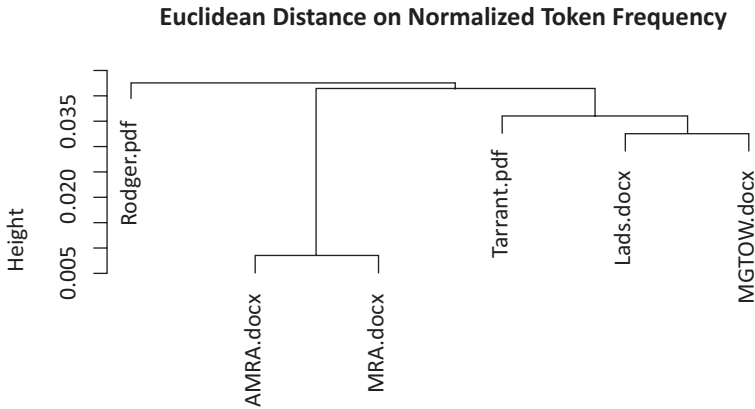
Euclidean Distance on Normalized Token Frequency

Fig. 3.2 Dendrogram of the corpora under study. Greater vertical distance represents greater dissimilarity

pronouns. One might intuitively think that use of the first-person singular would be associated with narcissism and high status. However, Pennebaker has consistently found across many studies that people who are self-conscious, low status, depressed or socially isolated, use the first-person singular more. In addition, frequent use of the first-person plural is associated in some cases with high status (e.g., the so-called *royal 'we'*) or of strongly identifying with one's group. Unfortunately, LIWC is not able to distinguish these two uses of the first-person plural. Table 3.3 represents the frequency of both types of pronouns in each corpus under analysis, along with their ratio.

Table 3.2 shows values for 1st-singular and 1st-plural represent the per cent of total words; values for the ratio greater than 1 indicate greater individual self-focus, which is associated with self-consciousness, low status and depression, whereas values less than 1 indicate greater identification with one's group, and potentially also greater confidence, status and arrogance.

The corpora associated with Elliot Rodger and Men Going Their Own Way stand out as intensely individually self-focused. At the opposite extreme, these results suggest that members of the Lads Society are high-status, confident and/or identified with their community. Whereas the Tarrant manifesto is heavily focused on the first-person plural, the Rodger manifesto is highly focused on the first-person singular. In this sense, the

Table 3.2 Frequency and ratio of first-person singular and first-person plural by corpus

Corpus	1st-singular	1st-plural	Singular/plural
Brenton Tarrant	1.34	1.43	0.93
Elliot Rodger	8.55	0.62	13.80
Men Going Their Own Way	2.80	0.50	5.65
Lads Society	0.65	2.97	0.22
Australia's Men's Rights Agency	0.63	0.32	1.97
Men's Rights Agency	0.76	0.44	1.71

Tarrant manifesto resembles the Lads Society corpus while the Rodger manifesto resembles the Men Going Their Own Way corpus. To illustrate, contrast the following examples (relevant terms are highlighted in boldface):

> Brenton Tarrant: "**We** must crush immigration and deport those invaders already living on **our** soil. It is not just a matter of **our** prosperity, but the very survival of **our** people."

> Elliot Rodger: "As **I** made my way back from school one day during the first week, **I** stopped at a stoplight in Isla Vista when **I** saw two hot blonde girls waiting at the bus stop. **I** was dressed in one of **my** nice shirts, so **I** looked at them and smiled. They looked at **me**, but they didn't even deign to smile back. They just looked away as if **I** was a fool. As **I** drove away **I** became infuriated. It was such an insult. This was the way all girls treated **me**, and **I** was sick and tired of it. In a rage, **I** made a U-turn, pulled up to their bus stop and splashed **my** Starbucks latte all over them."

> Lads Society: "National Socialism is the worldview of Truth. Another word for Truth is Nature. By Truth or Nature, **we** are referring to the Natural laws of the universe. **We** affirm that there are Natural laws that make up reality, an example being gravity. **We** have decided to obey these laws as **we** know that **we** will be punished if **we** do not; if you deny the Truth of gravity, and decide to jump off a cliff without a means of slowing your descent, then you will be punished with death."

> Men Going Their Own Way: "**I'm** new to the site so **I'm** just now learning the ropes. **I** thought **I'd** tell you guys this site feels like it was made for **me**. **I** just wish **I** found it sooner. **I** recently went through a traumatizing experi-

ence with a woman. For so long **I've** been seeking the companionship and approval from these parasites, but no more. **I** must improve **myself** for **myself** from now on. **I** must go my own way."

Next, we address several indicators of mental health and illness. In his previous work using LIWC, Pennebaker has found that people who have the best mental health outcomes display a particular profile: they tend to use many positive emotion words, a middling number of negative emotion words and many words associated with cognitive processes that help people to make sense of their lives and the world (e.g., words related to insight and understanding, as well as words that represent causal and inferential connections). Table 3.4 represents the frequencies of each of these types of words.

Values in Table 3.3 represent the per cent of total words. The cognitive process words category includes the following sub-categories: insight, causation, discrepancy, tentativeness, certainty and differentiation.

By these measures, most groups look similar. The two male supremacist groups talk more than the others about cognitive processes. To illustrate, consider these examples from Men Going Their Own Way and the Tarrant and Rodger manifestos:

Men Going Their Own Way: "She may, of course, go on to obtain various degrees and diplomas. These increase her market value in the eyes of men, for men **believe** that a woman who can recite things by heart must also **know** and **understand** them."

Table 3.3 Frequency of positive emotion, negative emotion and cognitive process words

Corpus	Positive emotion	Negative emotion	Cognitive process words
Brenton Tarrant	2.64	3.30	9.74
Elliot Rodger	3.16	2.32	9.25
Men Going Their Own Way	2.97	2.14	10.49
Lads Society	2.49	1.66	10.04
Australia's Men's Rights Agency	2.14	2.78	8.40
Men's Rights Agency	2.07	2.94	8.54

Brenton Tarrant: "Whilst we may use edgy humour and memes in the vanguard stage, and to attract a young audience, eventually we will need to show the reality of our thoughts and our more serious intents and wishes for the future. For now we appeal to the anger and black comedic nature of the present, but eventually we will need to show the **warmth** and genuine **love** we have for our people."

Elliot Rodger: "My life turned into a living hell after I started desiring them when I hate puberty. I desire them intensely, but I could never have them. I could never have the experience of holding hands with a beautiful girl and walking on a moonlit beach, I could never **embrace** a girlfriend and feel her **warmth** and **love**, I could never have passionate sex with a girl and drift off to sleep with her sexy body beside me. Women deemed me unworthy of having them, and so they deprived me of an **enjoyable** youth, while giving their **love** and sex to other boys."

In addition, there seem to be differences in the use of positive and negative emotion words among these groups. However, negative emotions are quite diverse, including both high-arousal approach emotions such as anger and low-arousal withdrawal emotions such as sadness. To shed further light on the emotional states of these groups, we examine three distinct negative emotions in the corpora: anxiety, anger and sadness. Anxiety is an anticipatory emotion. It prompts attentional narrowing on (potential) future risks and harms, as well as motivation to seek relief from perceived threats (Derryberry, 2001). Anger, by contrast, is more focused on the present. It is also more active and typically involves an approach-orientation that leads the angry person to confront whomever they are angry with. Finally, sadness is a more passive, past-oriented emotion. It responds to the loss of someone or something valuable. Table 3.5 represents the frequencies of each of these three types of words.

Values in Table 3.4 represent the percent of total words.

These numbers help to shed more light on the emotional tone of each corpus. Whereas the Tarrant manifesto stands out for being overwhelmingly angry, the Rodger manifesto (while still angry) expresses a good deal more sadness. To illustrate, consider the following examples:

Brenton Tarrant: "The only muslim I truly **hate** is the convert, those from our own people that turn their backs on their heritage, turn their backs on their cultures, turn their back on their traditions and become blood **traitors** to their own race. These I **hate**."

Table 3.4   Frequency of anxiety, anger and sadness

Corpus	Anxiety	Anger	Sadness
Brenton Tarrant	0.39	1.92	0.51
Elliot Rodger	0.43	0.87	0.67
Men Going Their Own Way	0.30	0.79	0.39
Lads Society	0.25	0.68	0.29
Australia's Men's Rights Agency	0.31	0.93	0.34
Men's Rights Agency	0.33	1.03	0.35

Elliot Rodger: "I felt so **heartbroken** that I left the two of them and **cried** to myself, ruining my whole experience at the museum. *How could girls check out Addison but not me?* I asked myself repeatedly as I tried to hide my **tears** from people who walked by me. I walked out to the edge of the grant terrace of the museum, looking out at the city lights of Los Angeles as well as the stars above. In that moment, I fell into a sort of **despair**-ridden trance."

Men Going Their Own Way: "One morning, a woman comes downstairs, to the kitchen, to find her husband **crying**, inconsolably, over his coffee. Worried, she tries everything to find the reason for his upset. Finally, the husbank takes a short break from his **grief**, and asks his wife 'Do you remember when your father caught us fooling around, with your panties around your ankles? … and he told me that if I didn't marry you, he would have me arrested and sent to prison?' The wife smiled, and said 'Yes, I could never forget that!'. The husbank began **sobbing** again, even louder than before."

Next, we examine words that represent social relations. In particular, LIWC has dictionaries for family (e.g., *daughter, uncle*), friends (e.g., *buddy, neighbour*), women (e.g., *girl, mom*) and men (e.g., *boy, dad*). Table 3.5 represents the frequencies of each of these four types of words.

Values in Table 3.5 represent the per cent of total words except for the ratio: when the ratio is greater than 1, there are more references to women than to men, whereas when the ratio is less than 1, there are more references to men than to women.

Across the board, the men's rights groups have a lot to say about family and gender, as well as (to a lesser extent) friends. While they talk more than most of the other groups about women, they focus even more on men. Men Going Their Own Way displays a slightly different pattern: they have relatively little to say about family but are intensely interested in friends and gender. In addition, and perhaps ironically, they focus more on women than on men. To illustrate, consider the following examples:

Table 3.5 Frequency of family, friend, female and male references, along with female: male ratio

Corpus	Family	Friend	Female	Male	Female: male
Brenton Tarrant	0.20	0.04	0.13	0.32	0.42
Elliot Rodger	1.02	0.42	1.35	1.46	0.92
Men Going Their Own Way	0.59	0.33	1.76	1.52	1.16
Lads Society	0.21	0.13	0.43	0.77	0.56
Australia's Men's Rights Agency	2.35	0.30	1.45	2.21	0.66
Men's Rights Agency	2.02	0.27	1.52	2.14	0.71

Table 3.6 Frequency of body, health, sexuality and eating words

Corpus	Body	Health	Sexuality	Eating
Brenton Tarrant	0.31	0.48	0.13	0.07
Elliot Rodger	0.33	0.84	0.28	0.39
Men Going Their Own Way	0.52	0.70	0.37	0.37
Lads Society	0.41	0.74	0.08	0.25
Australia's Men's Rights Agency	0.19	0.57	0.17	0.08
Men's Rights Agency	0.22	0.62	0.25	0.11

Australia's Men's Rights Agency: "Coercion into sexual intimacy under threat; whether it be to end the relationship or marriage, to withhold your rights during Property Settlement or to abuse the **children** including threats to seek intimacy with your **daughter** or **son**."

Men Going Their Own Way: "In a span of about three years virtually all gone … **neighbor buddy** died, probably my best **friend**."

Next, we turn our attention to words related to various aspects of embodiment. LIWC has four separate dictionaries of such words that represent bodies generally, health, sexuality and eating. Table 3.6 represents the frequencies of each of these four types of words.

Across the board, Men Going Their Own Way seems to be concerned with all aspects of embodiment. By contrast, the Lads Society seems to pay a lot of attention to all aspects of embodiment *except* sexuality. The high value of the men's rights groups on the health dimension seems to be driven by the fact that they frequently talk about the 'red pill', and *pill* is one of the words in the health dictionary; this result should therefore be disregarded as an artefact of the methodology. To illustrate, consider the following examples:

Men Going Their Own Way: "I'm not **bald**, but thinning. I cut off my almost **waist** length **hair** earlier this year to go back to a crew cut that was easier to take care of. My **beard** is **chest** length."

Men Going Their Own Way: "If an average girl works hard enough, she will be able to have a **one-night stand** with a '**hot**' guy every now and then because he happened to be **horny** and wanted an **easy lay**. The girl then thinks that she actually can get such a man to commit to her for the long term, and so doesn't give the average guys a chance, holding out for the type of **stud** that she had a brief **sexual** encounter with in the past."

Men Going Their Own Way: "I wouldn't waste the money hiring a cleaning lady and I don't **eat** out every **meal** because **cooking** and cleaning are so easy…why would I want an over priced wife to **cook** and clean for me?"

Next, we consider the drives that seem to motivate each group and individual. These include affiliation, achievement, power, reward and risk. In her work for the US Department of Homeland Security, Allison Smith has found that those who display high focus on *both* affiliation and power are the most likely to engage in collective action in support of their goals (Pennebaker & Chung, 2011, p. 281 endnote; see also Pennebaker & Chung, 2008). Table 3.7 summarises these results.

Values in Table 3.7 represent the per cent of total words except for the final column, which represents the value of the affiliation column multiplied by the value of the power column.

Table 3.7 Frequency of drives to affiliation, achievement, power, reward and risk, along with the product of affiliation and power

Corpus	Affiliation	Achievement	Power	Reward	Risk	Affiliation and power
Brenton Tarrant	2.31	1.84	4.24	0.96	0.57	9.79
Elliot Rodger	2.03	1.21	2.06	1.15	0.33	4.18
Men Going Their Own Way	1.52	1.08	2.20	1.27	0.62	3.35
Lads Society	4.34	1.97	3.66	0.96	0.50	15.91
Australia's Men's Rights Agency	2.83	1.11	4.20	0.75	0.68	11.88
Men's Rights Agency	2.72	1.09	4.08	0.74	0.71	11.12

The results for the affiliation category are consistent with those found for the first-person plural category above, with the Lads Society showing the greatest sense of affiliation. The results in the final column of the table indicate that the groups most likely to engage in collective action are the Lads Society and the men's rights organisations, as well as those inspired by Brenton Tarrant. By contrast, the Elliot Rodger manifesto most resembles the corpus of Men Going Their Own Way. To illustrate, consider the following examples:

> Brenton Tarrant: "There is no nation in the world that wasn't founded by, or maintained by, the use of **force**. **Force** is **power**. History is the history of **power**. Violence is **power** and violence is the reality of history."

> Elliot Rodger: "I continued to build up my faith that I am destined to win the Megamillions jackpot. It is the future that was meant for me; the perfect, **happy** conclusion to the tragic life I've had to experience in the past. I couldn't wait to rub my **status** as a **wealthy** man right in the faces of all the people who looked down on me, and all of the girls who thought of me as **unworthy**. I mused that once I became **wealthy**, I would finally be **worthy** enough to all of the beautiful girls."

> Lads Society: "**[W]e** are the rightful heirs to **our** civilisation. For if there was not **power** in **our** ideas, why would **we** need to be shut down? If there is **power** in **our** ideas then why?"

Analysis Using Custom LIWC Dictionaries
Next, we turn to our custom dictionaries, which have been utilised at an exploratory level. As mentioned above, groups that engage in violence tend to have a very positive view of their own moral standing. Moreover, groups that place greatest weight on the binding moral foundations of loyalty, authority and sanctity display a greater propensity to violence than groups that emphasise the other two dimensions of care and fairness. To help differentiate the corpora under study, we used a custom LIWC dictionary of moral foundations to compare corpora. Table 3.9 represents the moral foundations' profiles of each corpus.

Numbers in Table 3.8 represent the percentage of words in the total corpus that refers to each foundation.

The men's rights groups place much more emphasis on the care foundation than the other eight groups, which should be unsurprising given their focus on fatherhood and fatherly care of children (especially during and after divorce). They also focus more on fairness than the other groups,

Table 3.8 Moral foundations' profiles of all corpora

Corpus	Care	Fairness	Loyalty	Authority	Sanctity
Brenton Tarrant	1.73	0.37	1.23	0.88	0.89
Elliot Rodger	0.96	0.21	0.33	0.41	0.41
Men Going Their Own Way	0.84	0.32	0.34	0.36	0.89
Lads Society	0.84	0.45	1.18	1.37	0.81
Australia's Men's Rights Agency	2.62	0.83	1.09	1.10	0.44
Men's Rights Agency	2.45	0.77	0.95	0.98	0.48

though not by as large a margin; this too makes a certain amount of sense because they often complain about what they perceive to be unjust and unfair laws and norms that favour women over men. The corpora most focused on the binding dimension of loyalty are associated with Brenton Tarrant, the Lads Society and Australia's Men's Rights Agency. The corpus most focused on the binding dimension of authority is the Lads Society. In light of the findings discussed above, this suggests that the groups most likely to engage in what Fiske & Rai (2014) call "virtuous violence" are the Lads Society and anyone inspired by Tarrant's manifesto. To illustrate, consider these examples:

> Brenton Tarrant: "Unsurprisingly, **ethno-nationalists** and **nationalists** seek employment in areas that **serve** their **nations** and **community**. I would estimate the number of **soldiers** in European armed forces that also belong to **nationalist** groups to number in the hundreds of thousands, with just as many employed in **law enforcement** positions."

> Lads Society: "Our first **loyalty** is to our direct Family, then to our **tribe** or community, then to our greater **Nation** or Ethnic group (in the case of new world Europeans such as Australians or Americans this is a Pan-European heritage) and finally for all Europeans our **loyalty** is to the Race, that is to a European World."

> Men Going Their Own Way: "MGTOW is not a group. It's a population of individuals."

In order to further investigate the role of masculinity in these corpora, we now turn to analysis using our own custom dictionaries. Table 3.9 represents the frequencies of words and n-grams associated with each category.

Table 3.9 Frequency of hegemonic masculinity, subordinate masculinity, misogyny and xenophobia

Corpus	Hegemonic masculinity	Subordinate masculinity	Misogyny	Xenophobia
Brenton Tarrant	0.22	0.05	0.01	0.56
Elliot Rodger	0.07	0.27	0.02	0.00
Men Going Their Own Way	0.15	0.24	0.17	0.02
Lads Society	0.46	0.06	0.04	0.04
Australia's Men's Rights Agency	0.08	0.02	0.02	0.00
Men's Rights Agency	0.09	0.02	0.02	0.00

In line with the analyses above, the Tarrant manifesto and—even more so—the Lads Society corpus demonstrate intense focus on dominant masculinity. By contrast, the Elliot Rodger manifesto demonstrates heightened focus on subordinate masculinity. As measured by our new custom dictionary, the Men Going Their Own Way corpus is unique in showing a high focus on both dominant and subordinate masculinity, as well as being by far the most misogynistic. Finally, the Tarrant manifesto is the most xenophobic. We anticipate future iterations of the custom dictionaries will be more calibrated to xenophobic language. To illustrate, consider the following examples:

> Brenton Tarrant: "**Mass immigration** will disenfranchise us, subvert our nations, destroy our communities, destroy our **ethnic binds**, destroy our cultures, destroy our peoples. Long before **low fertility levels** ever could. Thus, before we deal with the **fertility rates**, we must deal with both the **invaders** within our lands and the **invaders** that seek to enter our lands. We must crush immigration and **deport** those **invaders** already living on our soil. It is not just a matter of our prosperity, but the very survival of our people."

> Elliot Rodger: "My father drove up to Santa Barbara to meet me a few days later. The two of us went to have lunch at a restaurant in the Camino Real Marketplace, an area that I often frequented. When we sat down at our table, I saw a young couple sitting a few tables down the row. The sight of them enraged me to no end, especially because it was a dark-skinned Mexican guy dating a hot blonde white girl. I regarded it as a great **insult** to my dignity. How could an **inferior** Mexican guy be able to date a white

blonde girl, while I was still suffering as a **lonely virgin**? I was ashamed to be in such an **inferior** position in front my father. When I saw the two of them kissing, I could barely contain my rage. I stood up in anger, and I was about to walk up to them and pour my glass of soda all over their heads. I probably would have, if father wasn't there. I was seething with **envious** rage, and my father was there to watch it all. It was so **humiliating**."

Men Going Their Own Way: "Being so closely affiliated with MGTOW on Youtube, people identifying as '**incel**' usually get exposed to MGTOW and end up on soft-mgtow channels like TFM or Sandman… if they're inquisitive enough, they get tired of the cheap content and search for the original content by Barbar and Stardusk.…they continue down the rabbit hole going through phases of MGTOW growth: exposure, **red-pill** acquisition, understanding **hypergamy** & evo-psych, then **red pill** rage, then internalization, **black pill** acceptance, self-actualization. The **incel** fad-trend is another symptom of how the MGTOW message is growing larger sociologically."

Lads Society: "What we got wrong about the '**Chad/Sperg**' ratio' was that we believed we needed both **Chads** and **Spergs** in order to have a functioning movement. There was differences between States, and some managed to have a 'culling of the **Spergs**' while in others the **Spergs** outnumbered the **Chads** and eventually the **Chads** stopped bothering to attend **holocaust revision** society. What we must do differently this time is realise that we must embody the old ways. We must not be of **Chad** or **Sperg** alone, but that every man must take the best qualities of both and live the **14 words**, becoming the **Warrior** Poet, the Scholar **Athlete**, the **Freeman**, the **Übermensch**, the **Hyperborean** … the **Chad Sperg**."

As these examples illustrate, gender and race are tightly intertwined strands in the language and attitudes of these individuals and groups. Even the Rodger manifesto, which does not register as highly xenophobic when using word counts, evinces an obsession with racial and ethnic hierarchies, with white blondes at the top and people with darker skin tones and hair colour below. Likewise, the Tarrant manifesto, which does not register as highly misogynistic when using word counts, evinces an obsession with women as bearers of children. The Men Going Their Own Way corpus includes many terms and phrases related to subordinate masculinity and misogyny, whereas the Lads Society corpus includes many terms and phrases related to dominant masculinity. This ties into broader international studies that assert the intersection of far-right and anti-women attitudes (DiBranco, 2017; Roose, 2020).

Conclusion

Our digital ethnography and LIWC analysis have found a number of trends between violent extremist groups. Groups on the far-right, men's rights groups and Islamist organisations all valorise a concept of hegemonic masculinity, which is grounded in the normative domination of women and other men perceived as threats. These groups establish a belief that there are a range of values (e.g., logic, reason, conflict, individualism, strength and valour) that are inherently masculine, articulating a belief in a 'natural order' that strictly defines differences between men and women.

These groups, however, valorise a belief in hegemonic masculinity from a perceived position of subordination, which manifests in particular responses grounded in anger and resentment at perceived domination by other men. They also articulate a belief that masculinity has been attacked by feminism, social justice movements and multiculturalism. This aligns with a belief that Western society has been attacked in general and is in a moment of cultural decline. While Islamist groups position themselves as subordinated due to discrimination against their religion, they do not align as strongly with the belief in subordinated masculinity, with inherent differences between men and women remaining assumed, natural and continuing in these groups.

In addition to this, our LIWC analysis found prominence of both misogyny and xenophobia across each of the associated groups. Misogyny is grounded in resentful or outright hateful attitudes and actions towards women, especially those who are perceived as withholding men's entitlements (i.e., feminists). Xenophobia manifests in fearful and vengeful reactions to (perceived) invasion by foreigners and other outsiders (especially people of colour). Both the misogyny and xenophobia of these spaces align with a positionality of subordinated masculinity, in which men perceive that they have become a subordinated group through changing social structures. This, as identified in the LIWC analysis, manifests in anger and sadness, as well as (for some groups) a drive to bind together to reinforce or reclaim their perceived natural hegemonic masculine position in society.

This research therefore provides a valuable basis on which to understand the masculine positioning of violent extremist organisations. In the next chapter, we examine the relationship between these narratives and the views of masculinity from a broader population of men—analysed through a representative survey and interviews with 41 men in the state of Victoria, Australia. We conduct this analysis to identify the potential susceptibility of men to the narratives described in this chapter.

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The Intersection of Extremist and Normative Masculinity

Abstract This chapter focuses on exploring the intersection between mainstream (normative) conceptions of masculinity (derived from an international survey and 41 in-depth interviews with Australian men) and the conceptions evident in violent extremist groups and networks. This is based on a representative survey of Australian men on attitudes about masculinity and interviews with 41 men across regional, outer suburban and inner suburban Victoria from a variety of social backgrounds. We ask, what are the overlaps, and contrasts, between the notions of manhood and gender roles among men in general and those who join violent extremist groups? We explore from both an empirical and theoretical level how extremist framing of masculinity is tailored to draw men into their orbit.

Keywords Masculinities • Violence • Emotion • Anger • Misogyny • Trust

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on exploring the intersection between mainstream (normative) conceptions of masculinity or 'what it is to be a man', including how one situates oneself in relation to others and the conceptions evident in violent extremist groups and networks. The purpose is to

understand, at an exploratory level, the degree of alignment, or not, between these two conceptions of masculinity, and in turn the recruiting potential of violent extremist groups.

Method

This chapter is based on two research methods. First, we conducted a representative survey of Australian men's attitudes towards a number of contentious political and social subjects, which relate strongly to dominant narratives of violent extremist organisations. The survey design was conducted between Dr Joshua Roose, Professor Bryan S. Turner and researchers from Ipsos Australia who provided access to their global advisor panel, with the survey conducted in July 2019 with men aged 18–74 in 28 countries. This chapter focuses upon the Australian sample.

The sample of men numbered at 480, though different questions resulted in different answer rates. Data is weighted to match the profile of each population. Survey data offers an important dimension to this project, providing a large-scale representative sample of the attitudes of Australian men, across the age spectrum on key questions related to this study. These questions, presenting a range of political statements, were presented in a randomised order and framed as a series of propositions with respondents invited to respond on a Likert scale comprising 'Strongly agree', 'Agree', Neither', 'Strongly Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree'. The precision of Ipsos online polls is calculated using a credibility interval with a poll of 1000 accurate to ±3.1 percentage points and of 500 accurate to ±4.5 percentage points.

Second, we conducted interviews with 41 men from a variety of social backgrounds across regional, outer suburban and inner suburban Victoria.[1] The interviews were conducted at the height of a state-wide COVID-19 hard lockdown of Victoria, limiting all individuals to within 5 km of their home and requiring that, where possible, individuals worked from home. Consequently, all interviews were conducted by Skype or Zoom. Whilst the interview team had initial reservations, online interviews provided

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[1] We define the terms 'inner suburban', 'outer suburban' and 'regional' based on distance from the Central Business District of the capital city of Victoria, Melbourne, which is also the state's largest city. We have defined inner suburban to be those suburbs within 15 km of the Melbourne CBD, and outer suburban to be those that are further than 15 km away. Regional areas are those that extend beyond the recognised Melbourne Metropolitan Boundary.

unique insight into the lives of participants in locations where they felt most comfortable.

Through this data, we ask, what are the overlaps, and contrasts, between the notions of manhood and gender roles among men in general and those who join violent extremist groups? We explore from both an empirical and theoretical level how extremist framing of masculinity is tailored to draw men into their orbit.

We start the chapter by examining respondents' views on a range of propositions related to social and political issues. These propositions were asked in both the survey and interview, and so we analyse these two together. We then analyse men's relationship to anger and hatred, as well as their view on what it means to be a man—questions asked only in interviews. We then conclude by providing an analysis of what we call 'normative masculinity' in Australia, defined in reference to the results of the representative survey, elaborated upon in interviews and with reference to the experience of the research team embedded in the research context, analysing how this relates to violent extremist narratives about masculinity.

Views on Political Issues

In both the survey and interview we asked participants for their views on eight different political and social propositions, across five different themes. These questions were designed to echo the rhetoric of violent extremist organisations and reveal important insights into the dimensions of masculinity central to this project and enable insights into normative social attitudes amongst Australian men. The propositions, with associated themes, are as follows:

Attitudes to Women

- Women deserve equal rights to men
- Rights for women have gone too far
- A baby boy and girl have the same worth

Trust in Institutions

- The legal system is neutral and fair
- Most politicians care about me and my future

Social Trajectory

- My employment and income are stable and secure

Attitudes to Minorities

- Minorities undermine or threaten national unity

Attitudes to Violence

- Violence can never be justified to achieve political change

Attitudes to Women

Bearing in mind the scholarship finds that hostile sexist attitudes towards women and support for violence against women are the factors most strongly associated with support for violent extremism (see Kelly, 2017; Johnston & True, 2019; Stern, 2019; Blee, 2020; DiBranco, 2020; Grant & MacDonald, 2020; Wilson, 2020), participants were asked to comment on the same propositions as those asked in the survey: that women deserve equal rights to men, that rights for women have gone too far, and that a baby boy and girl have the same value.

Women Deserve Equal Rights to Men
The first proposition measures a baseline on notions of gender equality or what might be considered hard-line misogyny (see Bates, 2020). In a society where formal equality is legislated, it would be expected that answers would be strongly weighted towards 'Agree'. Those disagreeing with this proposition—especially those strongly disagreeing—may be considered to have an ideological orientation that informs their answer. Table 4.1 provides the results of the question 'women deserve equal rights to men', demarcated by age group.

As the above table demonstrates, the vast majority of men (83.9%) agree with the proposition 'women deserve equal rights to men', while 4.7% disagree. Men aged under 35 are most likely to disagree with the proposition, followed by men aged 35–54. Importantly, 5.9% of men aged under 35, and 5.5% men aged 35–54, disagree that women deserve equal rights. Whilst a small number, if extrapolated to the broader community, these figures nonetheless add up significantly. Older men, they are less likely to disagree and more likely to agree with the proposition, with just 2% of men aged 55+ disagreeing that women deserve equal rights.

Table 4.1 Survey results for the statement 'women deserve equal rights to men'

	Under 35 years	35–54 years	55+ years	Total (based on [n])
Strongly agree	52.8%	55.6%	46.5%	52.3%
Agree	26.6%	28.8%	42.3%	31.6%
Neither	14.7%	10.1%	9.2%	11.4%
Disagree	4.5%	3.9%	1%	3.4%
Strongly disagree	1.4%	1.6%	1%	1.3%
Net agree	79.4%	84.4%	88.8%	83.9%
Net disagree	5.9%	5.5%	2%	4.7%
Column n	157	200	134	491

Our interview data finds similar results. Of the 41 individuals interviewed, the vast majority ($n = 35$) unconditionally supported the proposition that women deserve equal rights to men. Alex, an unemployed single man in the 18–34 age range living out of a van across Melbourne, stated simply, "Yeah for sure, it shouldn't even be a question". Another man, Zeb, a single, 18–34-year-old man, living in the inner city, was similarly emphatic, stating, "True. Feels trivially obvious." The majority of men in the survey and interviews do not align with the 'hard misogyny' that underpins this statement.

However, some individuals ($n = 6$) qualified their responses. Jacob, a single pensioner aged in the 55+ range from regional Victoria, stated, "Yes, but sometimes there are times when equal pay isn't fair because women can't do all the same physical things". Jacob here reiterates a belief, common within men's rights and manosphere communities, that there are inherent differences between the capabilities of men and women, particularly in workplaces. These differences are justified as being inherent and natural, with traditionally coded 'masculine professions' seen as more highly valuable to society than 'feminine professions' (LaViolette & Hogan, 2019).

Another participant, Nick, a 30-year-old single man in suburban Melbourne, similarly qualified his answer using language similar to men's rights and manosphere groups, stating, "Yes, but equal rights comes with equal responsibility followed by equal repercussions". Through his qualification, Nick implies that women have not adopted the responsibilities that come with their new-found rights, echoing beliefs that women are irresponsible and are taking advantage of changing social circumstances (potentially at the expense of men) (Maddison, 1999; Krendel, 2020).

Table 4.2   Survey results for the statement 'rights for women have gone too far'

	Under 35 years	*35–54 years*	*55+ years*	*Total*
Strongly agree	15.8%	12.8%	11.8%	13.6%
Agree	21.1%	17.4%	16.4%	18.4%
Neither	23.9%	28.6%	31.2%	27.7%
Disagree	27%	25.2%	25.2%	25.8%
Strongly disagree	12.2%	16%	15.4%	14.5%
Net agree	36.9%	30.2%	28.2%	32%
Net disagree	39.2%	41.2%	40.6%	40.3%
Column *n*	152	198	131	481

Rights for Women Have Gone Too Far

The second proposition captures what might be considered 'soft misogyny' (soft prejudice) (Dunlap, 2015, p. 778): the notion, common in the 'manosphere', that there is now an imbalance and that women have more rights than men (e.g., Schmitz & Kazyak, 2016; Ging, 2017). This is a common complaint amongst men's rights groups and those opposed to affirmative action programmes for women's representation in the workforce (Kimmel, 2017). Table 4.2 shows the results for the question 'rights for women have gone too far'.

Unlike the previous proposition that 'women deserve equal rights to men', attitudes on whether 'rights for women have gone too far' are more divided. In total 32% of men in the survey agree with this statement, while only 40.3% disagree. Similar to the previous proposition, young men aged under 35 years of age are most likely to believe that rights for women have gone too far. Almost 37% of men aged under 35, and three in ten men aged 35–54 and 55+ years believe that 'rights for women have gone too far'. Importantly, 15.8% of men aged under 35 strongly agree with this notion.

Of the 41 interviewees, the majority (*n* = 30) disagreed with the proposition that rights for women have gone too far. Oscar, a married man in the 55+ age range from regional Victoria and on an average income,[2] stated, "Rubbish. How many women run companies?" However, some of the men who disagreed (*n* = 6) took the opportunity to criticise feminism.

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[2]We used census data to define below average, average and above average income for the time period: https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/earnings-and-work-hours

Charlie, in the 18–34 age range, in a relationship and with a bachelor's degree living in the inner suburbs on an average income, claimed, "Human rights no. Family matters, allegations of sexual abuse, yes." This reiterates beliefs in many men's rights, manosphere and far-right groups that the rise of feminism has disadvantaged men in these arenas (Maddison, 1999).

A small number of interviewees agreed with the proposition that rights for women had gone too far (*n* = 4). Of those that agreed, they viewed the treatment of cases in family courts, allegations of sexual abuse and entitlements such as maternity leave as areas where rights may have gone too far. One participant also argued that while rights for women haven't gone too far, "political discussion has". They said, "Esp [especially], in corp [corporate] world, HR teams going mad about celebrating women in leadership. Comes from political element, left wing, support for minorities, gay, women, refugees etc." This suggests a sense of aggrieved entitlement and belief that men are being left behind, again, similar as to that found in men's rights and manosphere groups (Schmitz & Kazyak, 2016; Ging, 2017).

A Baby Boy and Girl Have the Same Worth

The proposition that a baby boy and a baby girl have the same worth, like the proposition that "women deserve equal rights to men", tests for hard prejudice (Bates, 2020). Whereas 'women' suggests perceptions towards adult females, for whom some men may hold particular antipathy, the concept of a 'baby' suggests a level of innocence and any prejudice here would suggest particularly deeply ingrained ideological or cultural views on the worth of females. Table 4.3 shows the results for the question 'a baby boy and girl have the same worth'.

Men in the survey overwhelmingly agreed with the proposition that 'A baby boy and girl have the same worth', with 87% agreeing and 5% disagreeing. As the above table demonstrates, men aged under 35 are most likely to disagree with the proposition, followed by men aged 35–54 and 6.5% of men aged under 35 and 5.2% of men aged 35–54 disagree that a baby boy and girl have the same worth. Contrastingly, men aged 35–54 were significantly more likely to strongly agree that a baby boy and girl have the same worth. Taking into account the average age of fatherhood in Victoria of 33.3 years, these are prime child-rearing years and the period of time in which men are most likely to be actively involved with daughters (notwithstanding that this is certainly no impediment to misogyny).

Table 4.3 Survey results for the statement 'a baby boy and girl have the same worth'

	Under 35 years	35–54 years	55+ years	Total
Strongly agree	54.9%	72%	64.5%	64.1%
Agree	26.5%	16.3%	29.2%	23.2%
Neither	12.1%	6.5%	4.7%	8%
Disagree	4.3%	3.1%	0.8%	2.9%
Strongly disagree	2.2%	2.1%	0.8%	1.8%
Net agree	81.4%	88.3%	93.7%	87.3%
Net disagree	6.5%	5.2%	1.6%	4.7%
Column *n*	155	197	131	483

Interview respondents also emphatically agreed with this statement, with all participants indicating agreement with this statement. Responses included "absolutely. No question there for me. No doubts." and "Yes. No brainer."

Some however stated that in other cultures and for other people, it might not be the case that a baby boy and girl have the same worth. Jep, a 75-year-old married man living in inner suburbia, said, "Definitely. We aren't in India, or Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, etc." Jep articulates a belief in distinct cultural differences in the way that societies value baby girls, emphasising stereotypes in particular of South Asian nations as discriminating against girls. He does so with a belief in anti-sexism, condemning other places that do not hold onto the supposed anti-sexist values of the Western world.

It should be noted here that this could have been the reasoning behind some of the negative answers in the survey, with participants potentially answering not necessarily through a personal belief that girls do not have the same value as boys, but rather as a statement of current social circumstances. However, in the context of the survey we believe that at least some of the negative answers do suggest a values statement from participants.

Trust in Institutions

Trust in institutions was measured by trust in the legal system and in elected politicians. There was no specific definition preferred; individual interviewees were invited to apply their initial conception. In liberal

Western democracies, political participation primarily occurs through engagement in these institutions, for example, through voting (compulsory in Australia) or running for office. Engagement with the legal system could occur as part of an individual's job, serving as a juror, as a support for a family member or friend or due to a personal civil or criminal matter. The lower the level of confidence in these systems therefore, it may be surmised, the more likely it is that individuals and groups may turn to alternate platforms to resolve issues.

It is worth noting that mistrust in institutions does not inherently mean a connection to violent extremism. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, for example, is based in arguments about the structural racism with the legal and justice system, critiquing the legal system as neither neutral nor fair. Yet it would be folly to suggest that this means that this movement is based in violent extremism. We therefore look at these questions in conjunction with others asked throughout this section, seeing mistrust as one potential element of a connection to violent extremist ideologies, but unlikely to be the only driving motivator.

The Legal System Is Neutral and Fair

The legal system may be seen to comprise state and federal laws and the judicial process through which they are enacted. Whilst the independence of the judiciary is a key element of the Rule of Law, confidence in the legal system is a broader political issue that can shape the extent to which individuals are likely to participate and make use of the system when required to protect their rights. Table 4.4 shows the results for the question 'the legal system is neutral and fair'.

Thirty percent of men in the survey agree with the proposition that 'the legal system is neutral and fair', while 39% disagree. Young men aged under 35 are at least twice as likely to express confidence in the legal system (45.6%) than men aged 35–54 (22.2%) and men aged over 55 years (22.4%). However, importantly, 31% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed across all age brackets. As men get older it may be hypothesised that negative direct experiences of the legal system (cost, a losing outcome or vicarious witnessing of a negative outcome) deplete their confidence.

In interviews ($n = 41$), the vast majority disagreed ($n = 35$) with the proposition that 'the legal system is neutral and fair'. The primary themes were a perceived bias in outcomes towards the more powerful or wealthy party ($n = 26$). Ethan, a retired white-collar worker from inner suburban

Table 4.4 Survey results for the statement 'the legal system is neutral and fair'

	Under 35 years	*35–54 years*	*55+ years*	*Total*
Strongly agree	15.4%	4.1%	5.1%	8.3%
Agree	30.2%	18.1%	17.3%	22.1%
Neither	29.5%	31.9%	30.3%	30.6%
Disagree	16.5%	27.8%	24.3%	23%
Strongly disagree	8.4%	18.1%	23%	16%
Net agree	45.6%	22.2%	22.4%	30.4%
Net disagree	24.9%	45.9%	47.3%	39%
Column n	157	198	133	488

Melbourne in the 55+ age range, stated: "it is distorted because of the cost. If you are well off, you can afford a better class of law."

A small number of interviewees (*n* = 3) were particularly vigorous in their condemnation of courts on the grounds they believe they discriminated against men. George, a divorced blue-collar worker living in inner suburban Melbourne on a higher-than-average income in the 35–54 age range, proclaimed: "I disagree. I was in the family court re my daughter. It is not favourable to men. It is extremely biased against men. It is destroying men. It is causing men to commit suicide." These men therefore align to beliefs in the men's rights movement (Maddison, 1999) that feminism has taken over institutions such as the legal system, leaving men disadvantaged as they do.

Most Politicians Care About Me and My Future

The proposition that 'most politicians care about me and my future' seeks to measure confidence in the current system of governance. In this case, the question focuses on 'politicians' rather than institutions. Trust in politicians has been found to be waning significantly across many Western democracies (see, e.g., Hay, 2007; Mair, 2013; Humphrys et al., 2020)—a trend which researchers have described as 'anti-politics' (Mete, 2010). Again, we do not suggest that distrust in politicians means immediate alignment with violent extremist ideas, as this is a growing trend amongst large swathes of the population. However, the lower the level of confidence in politicians, the more likely it is that alternative means will be sought to both articulate grievances and seek social change. These trends therefore potentially link with other beliefs to connect to violent extremist ideologies. Table 4.5 shows the results for the question 'most politicians care about me and my future'.

Table 4.5 Survey results for the statement 'most politicians care about me and my future'

	Under 35 years	_35–54 years_	_55+ years_	_Total_
Strongly agree	9.9%	2.6%	0%	4.4%
Agree	22%	8.3%	6%	12.5%
Neither	24.2%	18.8%	23.8%	22%
Disagree	22.5%	30.7%	32.4%	28.3%
Strongly disagree	21.4%	39.6%	37.8%	32.8%
Net agree	31.9%	10.9%	6%	16.9%
Net disagree	43.9%	70.3%	70.2%	61.1%
Column n	154	195	132	481

Overall, 61% of men in the survey disagreed with the proposition that 'most politicians care about me and my future', with just under 17% agreeing. Young men aged under 35 (31.9%) are almost three times more likely as men aged 35–54 (10.9%) and more than five times more likely than men aged over 55 years (6%) to agree that politicians care about them and their future. This is outweighed by those who disagree. Just under 44% of young men aged under 35 disagree that politicians care about them and their future. This is significantly increased as men get older with 70.3% aged 35–54 and 70.2% over 55 years disagreeing. Most relevant to our study are the percentages that strongly disagree with the proposition. Almost 40% of men aged 35–54 and almost 38% of men aged over 55 strongly disagree with the proposition. This aligns with other research in this arena (Hay, 2007; Mair, 2013; Humphrys et al., 2020), which indicates a substantial loss of trust in the capacity of the political process to represent the interests of citizens and the likelihood that at least some will look to alternative avenues of political expression.

In interviews, the proposition that 'most politicians care about me and my future' revealed similarly negative results. The vast majority, 33 of 41 respondents, disagreed. Luke, a white-collar worker in a relationship from outer suburban Melbourne on an above average income in the 35–54 age range, stated from his perspective that "Most pollies [politicians] go into it for ego purposes, to have their status increased in society, potentially the financial benefits as well. It privileges people that have narcissistic traits." Luke therefore reinforces a belief that politicians are selfish and are not interested in the concerns of regular people. A much smaller number (_n_ = 8) agreed with the proposition. Of those that did, Seb, a married

white-collar worker from outer suburban Melbourne on a higher-than-average income, stated, "I agree. There are a lot out there interested in getting voted in again, but most pollies go into it to make a difference."

Social Trajectory

My Employment and Income Are Stable and Secure

Even amidst low unemployment, the employment market is increasingly defined by insecure and precarious work. Significant scholarly effort has been dedicated to researching the impact of the changing employment market on blue-collar men in particular (Lamont, 2000; McDowell, 2003; Standing, 2011; Gest, 2016), though this has also reached into the professions where contract-based work has become pervasive. The traditional conception of masculinity has focused on the male breadwinner role. Whilst this has changed over time, normative conceptions of masculinity nonetheless frame men as wage earners. A failure to follow this trajectory (and downward slippage) may lead to anger, anxiety, alienation and anomie (Standing, 2011).

On the proposition that 'my employment and income are stable and secure', it is important to consider from the outset that these have been the most impacted by COVID-19. Interviews took place during the middle of the lockdown when many had either lost jobs and, depending on their industry, were on Jobseeker[3] payments or no support at all. Data may therefore deviate from the norm; however, it is still unknown what impact the pandemic will have on income and job security in the long run. Table 4.6 shows the results for the question 'my employment and income are stable and secure'.

A total of 43.5% of men in the survey agreed with the proposition 'my employment and income are stable and secure', while 25.2% disagreed. Men aged under 35 (53.2%) were significantly more likely to consider their employment to be stable and secure than men aged 35–54 (42.5%) and men aged over 55 (31.6%). Men aged under 35 are less likely to have experienced or witnessed redundancies as full-time workers and may also feel more confident navigating the 'new economy' defined by contract and casual work, though this may also be due in part to perceived cultural characteristics of the 'millennial' workforce (Fishman, 2016). A significant

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[3] Jobseeker is an unemployment benefit in Australia.

Table 4.6 Survey results for the statement 'my employment and income are stable and secure'

	Under 35 years	*35–54 years*	*55+ years*	*Total*
Strongly agree	19.5%	14.2%	7.7%	14.4%
Agree	33.7%	28.3%	23.9%	29.1%
Neither	27.5%	29.2%	39.7%	31.3%
Disagree	10.7%	13.6%	10.7%	11.8%
Strongly disagree	8.6%	14.7%	18%	13.4%
Net agree	53.2%	42.5%	31.6%	43.5%
Net disagree	19.3%	28.3%	28.7%	25.2%
Column n	157	198	129	484

portion of respondents were ambivalent, with over one in three men answering 'Neither'. This was highest amongst men aged over 55 (39.7%). Men aged over 55 (18%) were. Over twice as likely as men aged under 35 (8.6%) to strongly disagree that their employment is stable and secure.

Interviewees (n = 41) were split. Just over half (n = 21) responded that their employment and income are stable and secure. Ryan, a married blue-collar worker in the outer suburbs on an average income in the 18–34 age range, stated he did feel secure: "I agree. I am lucky being able to have a good enterprise agreement.[4] Some worry about redundancies coming, but I've managed to work full time through this." Just under half (n = 20) felt that employment and income were not secure or were unsure. Sam, in a relationship and living in regional Victoria on a disability pension in the 18–34 age range, responded contrastingly: "No. I have long term fears about my pension not being provided." Patrick, a married blue-collar worker in Melbourne's outer suburbs on an average income in the 35–54 age range, stated, "I disagree. Look what's happened with COVID-19. There is no such thing as stable. There's moments and times of stability but things are always moving."

Attitudes to Minorities

Research finds that anti-migrant attitudes are a key element of violent extremism (see Vieten & Poynting, 2016; Dennison & Geddes, 2019; Lewis et al., 2019; Mudde, 2019; Mondon & Winter, 2020). Participants

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[4] An enterprise agreement is an agreement between an employer and a group of employees, typically through a trade union, that provides terms and conditions of employment.

were asked about attitudes to minorities to test the prevalence of such sentiment in the broader community.

Minorities Undermine or Threaten National Unity

A key element of nationalist sentiment is grounded in boundary marking and the perceptions that ethnic, racial and religious communities undermine or threaten an abstract conception of national unity. This is expressed through the belief in the 'great replacement' (Ferber, 2000; Köttig & Blum, 2017; Davey & Ebner, 2019) popularised in far-right literature, including the Brenton Tarrant Manifesto. This is the idea that minority groups are replacing white people in Western society. Such sentiment is fertile terrain for groups acting outside the formal political system seeking to stoke resentment and build their support base. The proposition 'minorities undermine or threaten national unity' tests potential susceptibility to such ideas. Table 4.7 shows the results for the question 'minorities undermine or threaten national unity'.

The survey found that a plurality (42.7%) of men agreed with the proposition 'minorities undermine or threaten national security', while 31.7% disagreed. Men aged over 55 (46.5%) and men aged 35–54 (45.5%) are significantly more likely than young men aged under 35 (36.5%) to agree with the proposition. The figures are high, indicating significant antiminority sentiment in the wider community. Significantly, just over one in seven (13.8%) men aged under 35 strongly agrees with the proposition. This rises to almost one in four (23%) for men aged 35–54 and one in four (24.9%) for men aged over 55. Significantly, almost half of men aged over 35 and over one-third of men aged under 35 agree with the proposition

Table 4.7 Survey results for the statement 'minorities undermine or threaten national unity'

	Under 35 years	*35–54 years*	*55+ years*	*Total*
Strongly agree	13.8%	23%	24.9%	20.3%
Agree	22.7%	22.5%	21.6%	22.4%
Neither	26.3%	25.1%	25.6%	25.6%
Disagree	17.8%	11.5%	13.6%	14.3%
Strongly disagree	19.4%	17.9%	14.3%	17.4%
Net agree	36.5%	45.5%	46.5%	42.7%
Net disagree	37.2%	29.4%	27.9%	31.7%
Column *n*	151	191	132	474

that minorities undermine or threaten national unity. Older men thus show more anti-migrant attitudes, potentially indicating a nostalgia for an earlier era or may continue to carry anti-migration attitudes that pre-date Australian multiculturalism brought in from 1972 onwards and pre-dated by the 'White Australia Policy'.[5] The belief that multiculturalism undermines national unity has been successfully captured in contemporary populist and far-right extremist narratives alike (Brown, 2019).

Responses ($n = 41$) in interviews to the proposition that minorities undermine or threaten national unity were divided. In a slight difference from the survey a small majority ($n = 23$) disagreed with this statement. Louis, unemployed in the 18–34 age range and living in the inner suburbs, reiterated a common belief in Australia as being a multicultural society, stating, "No; Australia's national identity is based on minorities". Luke, a white-collar worker in his 40s living in outer suburbia, qualified his position, stating that it was possible, but that was true of any group: "No. They are an important part of diversity and culture. If they undermine people's rights/safety, they can, but that can be the same of any group."

Just under half of the interviewees ($n = 18$) agreed with the proposition. A cursory analysis reveals that these were more likely to reside in the outer suburbs of Melbourne. Those who most clearly agreed with the proposition matched with the survey data in their older age profile (35+). Thomas, single and employed as a white-collar worker in the outer suburbs in the 34–55 age range, claimed, "Yes that's true: it's harder to talk seriously about how we are in this together if we don't understand each other". Ethan, in his 70s, in a relationship and living in the inner city, emphasised a belief that some minorities don't properly assimilate into Australian society, agreeing with the proposition by saying, "Certainly minorities that don't integrate in the country aren't as valuable or useful to the country or themselves. … My views is, a country like oz [Australia], hasn't got the capacity to take the refugees of the world, therefore needs to, for the best of migrant community and country, get as many ppl that will contribute as possible."

However, answers were often nuanced and not always directed at racial minorities. Some referred to vested political interests ($n = 3$) or differentiated between individuals and the wider minority community ($n = 3$).

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[5] The Immigration Restriction Act (1901) known colloquially as the 'White Australia Policy' limited migration to 'white' majority countries. It was officially ended in 1973.

Others indicated a belief that minorities do undermine or threaten national unity, but paradoxically believe that is a good thing. Jack, who is in his 20s and lives in inner suburbia, said, "Yes, they do, but I like that they do. For me the world we live in is we are all just human beings, not nationals. Minorities break up the status quo, which I like. They bring diversity, life experience. etc." Others indicated similarly, suggesting that minorities challenged notions of nationalism and the associated problems with that ideology.

Data is therefore mixed, with some taking the question to mean the impact of ethnic minorities, while others point to political or even violent extremist minority groups. Others saw this undermining from minorities as instinctively negative, while thought it has a positive effect. While proportions agreeing with this statement are high therefore, suggesting a potential area of alignment with violent extremist groups, this is at times nuanced.

Attitudes to Violence

The final proposition related to attitudes to violence, and the use of violence as a means for achieving political and social change. Orientations to violence are widely recognised as salient for grasping the appeal of right-wing extremist groups to men (see Meadowcroft & Morrow, 2017; Baele et al., 2019; Grant & MacDonald, 2020; Marcks & Pawelz, 2020).

Violence Can Never be Justified to Achieve Political Change
Political change in democratic nations is typically associated with the ballot box and the process of voting. This is intricately tied up in a belief in the legitimacy of the outcome. Whilst Australia has experienced terrorism and political violence, these are the exception to the rule that Australia remains a relatively very peaceful and stable democracy. It would be expected that the majority of respondents would support the proposition that 'violence can never be justified to achieve political change'. Table 4.8 shows results for the question 'violence can never be justified to achieve political change'.

In the survey 70% of men agreed with the proposition that 'violence can never be justified to achieve political change', while 13% disagreed with the statement. Men aged over 55 (76.9%) were the most likely to agree with the proposition, followed by men under 35 (67.8%) and men aged 35–54 (66.1%). Inversely, men aged 35–54 (16%) and men aged

Table 4.8 Survey results for the statement 'violence can never be justified to achieve political change'

	Under 35 years	35–54 years	55+ years	Total
Strongly agree	32.5%	37.8%	42.5%	37.2%
Agree	35.3%	28.3%	34.4%	32.4%
Neither	18.6%	17.9%	15.4%	17.5%
Disagree	10.2%	11.6%	5.3%	9.4%
Strongly disagree	3.4%	4.4%	2.4%	3.5%
Net agree	67.8%	66.1%	76.9%	69.6%
Net disagree	13.6%	16%	7.7%	12.9%
Column n	155	196	133	484

under 35 (13.6%) were almost twice as likely as men aged over 55 (7.7%) to disagree with the proposition. A small minority strongly disagreed with the proposition, suggesting an ideological perspective on the issue. This was strongest amongst men aged 35–54 (4.4%), compared to those under 35 (3.4%) and those aged over 55 (2.4%).

Results were more split in interviews ($n = 41$), with over half disagreeing with the proposition ($n = 24$). Interviewees took this question in a number of different directions, with many in particular looking at violence as a potentially justified means to overthrow violent regimes. Max, a married former white-collar worker in the 35–54 age range from regional Victoria, stated simply, "I disagree. Some dictatorships require action to be removed." Connor, from inner suburban Melbourne on an above average income and associated with a far-left wing political group, stated, "I disagree. The State thinks it has a monopoly on violence. In the face of that violence, it can be necessary to use it back."

Just under half agreed with the proposition ($n = 17$). Jai, a single blue-collar worker from the outer suburbs of Melbourne on a below average income in the age range 18–34, stated, "violence should not be tolerated. We need to take steps to ensure bad things cannot happen again." Older men (aged 35–54 and 55+) were, as in the survey, more likely to disagree with the proposition.

We also asked a follow-up question of interviewees about when they viewed violence as permissible. Interviewees primarily framed violence as acceptable in the contexts of self-defence ($n = 26$), protecting others ($n = 17$) and as necessary if preventing violence ($n = 10$). The sporting field ($n = 9$) was the only place some interviewees considered violence to

be appropriate. In support for the notion of violence as permissible in self-defence, Joseph, a white-collar worker from regional Victoria in the 35–54 age range, stated simply, "under very exceptional circumstances; if someone threatens your family then it's acceptable". Tyler, a white-collar worker aged in the 18–34 age range, earning an average income and based in inner suburban Melbourne, stated, "yes, against people that commit violence against you". Violence is therefore less seen as acceptable as a proactive measure, but instead when participants felt they needed to defend themselves, or others, from violent acts from others. However, many progenitor and terrorist organisations frame their battles in righteous terms and as defending the in-group against the aggressive out-group. Such appeals could resonate with these men, particularly when combined with personal experiences.

Summary

Our survey reveals important insights into the social attitudes of Australian men on key issues relevant to this project. It also reveals what appear to be paradoxical positions and key fault lines in Australian masculinities. Data found in the survey was primarily backed up with interviews, which then provided additional context on each of these questions. Below we provide a summary of views from men from each age group, before later in this chapter describing an overall picture of what we describe as normative masculinity—the way the majority of men perceive what it is to be a man including how they situate themselves in relation to others—around these political views.

Men Aged 18–35

Men in this age range are typically students, apprentices or trainees at the younger end of the spectrum through to transition to early career men who may be have or be starting to have children by the end of the spectrum. Given that they have grown up in a world where women benefit from greater rights and gender equality programmes are more prevalent in schools and workplaces, it would be expected that young men would display a more favourable disposition towards women than the older generation. Whilst displaying greater trust in the legal system, politicians, employment trajectories and support for minorities, young men appear to be demonstrating a manifestation of hegemonic masculinity in their views and attitudes towards women's rights and female members of society.

There is a clear fault line between the largely more progressive and trusting views of young men and their attitudes towards, and thus likely treatment of, women. This requires further exploration beyond the scope of this study. This suggests an increased susceptibility to narratives from extremist groups, emphasising traditional hegemonic masculinity with defined roles for women.

Men Aged 35–54
Men in this age range are typically mid-career in their chosen professions and given the average age of parenthood for Victorian males (33), likely to be new fathers through to parents of young adults by their mid-50s. The attitudes of men in this range typically constituted a midpoint between what might be considered the restlessness and idealism of youth and conservatism and self-assuredness of old age. The only significant stand out for this age range was it having the highest percentage of any age range that disagreed with the proposition that 'violence can never be justified to achieve political change'. It may be that during this period of time men are most concerned with safety and security of families and thus more likely to embrace peaceful approaches, though this is purely speculative. From a theoretical perspective, men in this age cohort are most likely to embody a hegemonic masculinity due to their position in the workforce and may view younger men in an oppositional sense as potential threats to safety. Numerically the largest cohort, the influence of men this age is likely at its greatest in the workplace, at home and in wider society.

Men Aged over 55
Paradoxically to young men aged under 35, men over the age of 55 had significantly more positive views of women's rights than the younger men surveyed. However, men in this age range also displayed significantly less trust than younger men in the legal system and politicians and were more likely to view themselves in a precarious labour market position than younger men. These men were most likely to view minorities as undermining or threatening national unity, though were also least favourably disposed to the use of violence to achieve political change. This cohort is primarily made up of the 'Baby Boomer' generation, who have embodied hegemonic masculinity in Australia for several decades from the Prime Ministership and senior political office to leaders of the public service and the CEO's of major corporations. This group of men also witnessed

generationally defining social events including second-wave feminism and the end of the Vietnam War, which may provide some reasons for their social attitudes.

Emotion

In this previous section of this chapter, we examined men's responses to a range of political propositions in both the survey and interviews. The next two sections examine data solely from interviews—first looking at men's relationship to anger and hatred, and then looking at a question related solely to masculinity, in which we asked men what they believe it means to be a man.

Social movements and protest actions succeed best when they provide affective high points, amplifying political discourse so it is "awash with emotion" (Kemper, 2001, 58). Emotion therefore is a key mechanism through which extremist groups mobilise and use masculinity as a recruitment mechanism (e.g., Rafail & Freitas, 2019), calibrating their messages particularly to arouse key responses including anger and hatred. As Deem (2019) points out, extreme right-wing discourse works according to affective economies of transgression. For example, in the Swedish neo-Nazi movement, Westberg (2021) found white supremacist discourse to be persuasive, not because of "rational" argument and ideas, but because it provoked a strong emotional response.

In particular, emotional intensities of anger and hatred have been identified as core components that draw some white men in late modernity towards affinity with the far-right (Picciolini, 2018; Westberg, 2021). White supremacist discourse amplifies the anger and disappointment some white men feel in conditions of precarious late modernity (Standing, 2011). When a man is moved by the imagined plight of himself and others like him, he is susceptible to the embrace of hypermasculinity, anti-elitism, misogyny and white supremacy; he is ripe for emotional recruitment into the network (Westberg, 2021). Emotions "play a critical role" in motivating misogynistic and right-wing extremist support (Salmela & von Scheve, 2017, pp. 4–5). By separating from women and mobilising the competitive patriarchal discourse that operates between men, misogynistic and right-wing extremist groups facilitate physically aggressive "acts of manhood" (Schwalbe, 2014) that prefigure violence.

Interviews included questions about how men understood and relate to several emotional states. We focused questions on seven emotions: anger,

sadness, anxiety, vulnerability, shame and humiliation (asked together), resentment and hatred. For each we asked participants what the emotion meant to them, for example, "What does anger mean to you?" This open-ended question allowed participants to explore the emotion in ways most relevant to them. Individuals took this question in different directions—including talking about their own experiences, how their relationship to these emotions have developed over time, whether they view emotions as healthy or not and the means in which they manage (or not) these emotions. We also asked participants follow-up questions based on these answers, the most common being to ask participants the last time they felt said emotion. This allowed for further exploration of individuals' experiences. For this section of this chapter we look at responses to two emotions—anger and hatred—which, as we discuss, are two key emotions mobilised by extremist groups.

Anger

Interviewees were asked an open question about what anger meant to them. Anger was defined as a strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure or hostility. As Schieman (2010) has noted, anger is a "highly social emotion" that in turn may elicit a social response, including, but not limited to, violence. Common elicitors of anger involve actual or perceived insult, injustice, betrayal, inequity, unfairness, goal impediments, the incompetent actions of another and being the target of another person's verbal or physical aggression (Berkowitz & Harmon-Jones, 2004; Izard, 1991). One of the most prominent reasons for anger involves direct or indirect actions that threaten an individual's self-concept, identity or public image (Cupach & Canary, 1995); insults, condescension and reproach represent these threatening actions (Canary et al., 1998). We do not seek here to measure anger, but instead to better understand its manifestations.

Research in political psychology has shown that anger influences people's political choices. Rico et al. (2017) found that angry voters were more likely to vote for anti-establishment parties, using this vote to punish the political status quo. Researchers have found similar trends in the UK Brexit vote, with anger being positively associated with support for leaving the EU (Roose, 2020), while fear was more closely associated with the option of renegotiating the UK's relationship with the body (Vasilopoulou & Wagner, 2017). Vasilopoulos et al. (2018) studied the relationship between fear and anger in reaction to the 2015 Paris terror attacks. They

found that an angry response to these attacks was more strongly associated with voting for the far-right party the Front National, while a fearful and anxious response was more closely associated with voting against Front National. Aligned with it being a more social response, therefore (Schieman, 2010), anger can be felt as empowering, with people who feel angry also feeling themselves "becoming stronger (higher in potency) and more energized in order to fight or rail against the cause of anger" (Shaver et al., 1987, p, 1078). Moreover, people often report that they feel powerful and potent when they experience or express anger (Berkowitz & Harmon-Jones, 2004). Anger helps people move against others or unfavourable social conditions.

Violent extremist organisations therefore work to mobilise anger in their narrative as a key recruitment tool. Groups express anger at the state of the world—for example the far-right express anger at the perceived takeover of mainstream institutions from SJWs or 'social justice warriors'. As our LIWC analysis found, for example (see Chap. 3), anger is the most prominent emotion across both far-right terrorist manifestos and the websites of men's rights groups. Being more focused on the present, anger is active, with violent extremist organisations and individuals using angry rhetoric to steer them towards action against a blameworthy 'Other'. A prominence of anger in individuals therefore can indicate potential susceptibility to extremist narratives.

In interviews ($n = 41$) anger was one of the most common emotions men said they had regular experiences with ($n = 35$). Over half ($n = 18$) experienced anger weekly, with over a quarter ($n = 9$) experiencing anger monthly. A variety of responses emerged that reveal important insights into how narratives might resonate. As the question was open-ended more than one response per individual was recorded where appropriate.

A sense of being personally slighted by others ($n = 22$) was the largest response recorded. This included a lack of respect ($n = 9$), being challenged ($n = 5$) and being lied to ($n = 3$) or having a commitment broken ($n = 3$). Tim, a blue-collar worker from regional Victoria on a lower than average income in the 18–34 age range, claimed, "I reckon if someone embarrassed me, made fun of me I'd probably get angry. Embarrassment a big one; sometimes I would express it by getting back at those people." The next largest response was linked to deficit, either a lack of ability or a lack of control ($n = 21$). Not meeting one's self or other's expectations was a significant contributor to anger ($n = 14$), followed by a lack of control ($n = 4$). Bill, a divorced white-collar worker from regional Victoria on

an above average income, considered, "I probably get angry at myself. That I have made bad choices. They are the things that make me most angry."

While the role of emotion in the formation and enactment of masculinities has been explored across different contexts (River & Flood, 2021; Skinner, 2021), only recently have scholars started to look at how men's reaction of anger to a perceived lack of respect may influence them towards engagement in far-right extremism (Grant & MacDonald, 2020; Westberg, 2021). Anger at personal circumstances appears to be transferred to social issues. Just over a third of interviewees (34.15%, n = 14) said they were often angered by issues at the societal level. Injustice (n = 8) and the perceived ignorance of others (n = 4) were the primary explanations here. Isaac, unemployed (due to COVID-19), in a relationship, living in regional Victoria and in the 18–34 age range, stated, "It comes up when there's injustices in the world or in people that I see". The comment points to instances where men perceive injustice and are angered by apparent inaction to redress that injustice. As Rafail and Freitas (2019) point out, those perceptions of injustice may be fostered by social media interactions. Overall, the interview data suggested that men's anger was aroused first by personal circumstance and second by a deeper-seated sense of societal injustice.

Anger is therefore common amongst interviewees. While this does not inherently mean these men will turn towards violent extremism as a solution to this anger, it suggests potential susceptibility to messages with this tone and content. This is likely particularly true for those who indicated anger at societal-level issues (n = 14). While often these men expressed anger at injustices that would be perceived to be perpetuated by extremist organisations (such as racism and sexism), others indicated a sense of anger at their own position in society and perceived injustices against them as individuals and as men. This small minority of men arguably present the potential biggest risk of susceptibility to angry violent extremist narratives.

Hatred

If anger is a strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure or hostility, hatred is an extremely strong feeling of dislike. A significant body of research explores hate speech, its manifestations and effects (see Bilewicz & Soral, 2020; Paz et al., 2020). However, while there is an assumption that sympathy for the far-right is driven by hatred, this has not been fully explored to date.

As Ahmed (2004, p. 49) identifies, "hate is an intense emotion". Baird and Rosenbaum (1992, p. 9) describe this hate as a version of "seeth[ing] with passion against another human being". Hate here is individual, a response to individual slights. Close to half (43.90%, *n* = 18) of informants identified with hate in this way, linking hatred to the experience of personal injustice or maltreatment by another. For example, a blue-collar worker said, "I'm not a hateful guy. [But] I hate bad people, that degrade you at work" (Sean, 18–34, partnered, regional, blue-collar worker). Cooper (35–54, relationship status unspecified, inner suburbs, white-collar worker) is a high-income earning company manager in a wealthy inner suburb. He outlined his experience: "Generally it's when I give someone else the power over me. It is deep victim stuff. I've definitely felt it [hatred]."

However, while hate is often directed towards individuals (with the words "I hate you"), this is then transferred to groups. As Ahmed (2004, p. 49) describes, "hate may respond to the particular, but it tends to do so by aligning the particular with the general". Hate represents a process of taking individual examples and turning it into a general example. Ahmed (2004, p. 49) argues, "'I hate you because you are this or that', where the 'this' or 'that' evokes a group that the individual comes to stand for or stand in for". In violent extremist organisations therefore, hate follows on from a process of 'othering', one which consists of two deeply interlinked components (Harmer & Lumsden, 2019). First it requires the creation of an in-group, one which clusters around a shared sense of self, as well as a joint sense of community. On the other side of the ledger is the creation of the 'Other', a process which is frequently based in ideological processes, which work to identify those traits that are considered bad, and in turn to apply those traits to the outside group.

Some men in our research identified with hate in this way, with an experience of injustice leading to hatred sometimes linked to collective resentment, a group sense of victimisation or disempowerment. For example, Yul (35–54, married, outer suburbs, white-collar worker) stated, "when an expectation isn't fulfilled, you get resentment, then it can build into hatred. If groups or people over time are not respected, given freedom, slowly they will come to hate against the dominant groups." While not all experiences of hatred are likely to lead towards attachment to violent extremist ideas, those that transfer their individual hate to hatred of a collective and a sense of being part of an in-group being attacked by an outside other are arguably the most susceptible to this messaging.

In summary, the emotions of anger and hatred were identified personally by many interviewees. Most who spoke about it linked their strong negative feelings to a lack of respect in one form or another. McCauley and Moskalenko (2008, 418) point out the importance of personal grievance as a motive for political radicalisation that may lead to the conduct of violence. This is particularly relevant when personal grievance is transferred to the general—that is, when anger or hatred moves from being directed at individuals to social groups. Some men interviewed therefore present emotional cues that suggest potential susceptibility to violent extremist messaging and recruitment.

What It Means to Be a Man

Finally, a question was posed to interviewees ($n = 41$) about 'what it means to be a man in Australia in 2020'. Traditional male roles are often emphasised by progenitor and extremist groups as part of a broader narrative about return to past glory. This is closely linked to the theme of restoration, explored in Chap. 2, which suggests that violent extremist action is the only way to restore a lost patriarchal social order. This theme of restoration is associated with narratives of gendered decline, which for both Islamist and far-right groups are figured in terms of the 'clash of civilisations'. We therefore asked men about their own sense of what it means to be a man in order to understand the appeal to individuals of this particular picture of manhood.

Responses were often highly nuanced. Some men distinguished between traditional stereotypes of Australian manhood (as a breadwinner, suppressing emotions, being dominant, playing sports and being aggressive) and the importance of acting with integrity and being respectful and caring ($n = 17$). Tim, a blue-collar worker from regional Victoria on a below average income, stated simply, "Just being a good bloke. Treating everyone as equal and being fair. Being a genuine good person makes being a good man." The emphasis on equality here is notable, suggesting an active attempt at resisting more hierarchical versions of masculinity. Some men ($n = 11$) considered there was a lack of clarity about male roles or a diversity in them. Steve, an unemployed university student from inner suburban Melbourne, stated that "it differs from person to person and over time. Stereotypical definitions have eroded."

More broadly, the vast majority of men were largely supportive of playing an equal role in the domestic sphere ($n = 36$), believing that domestic

work should be negotiated or equal. Almost three-quarters of men ($n = 29$) believed that the breadwinner role in the house should be either equal, negotiated or taken up by whoever makes more money. This aligns with research that endorses the strategy of changing perceptions from men about their role in the domestic sphere away from those promoted by violent extremist organisations, although some research has suggested that this has not resulted in active changes in men's behaviour (de Boise, 2015).

Another question we asked was, 'What makes a man powerful?' As we identified in Chap. 2, linked to sexual and reproductive anxiety is an appeal to masculine potency and virility, common in both Islamist and far-right messaging. Both Islamist and far-right messaging promote the values of male vitality, fitness and strength, suggesting such ideals are essential for men to address individual problems and to act as protectors of themselves, women and society more generally. We asked this question therefore to identify any alignment between men's perception of power and this notion of potency.

Responses to this question were nuanced across a large majority of interviewees. Just under half of respondents claimed power comes from within and is based on confidence and integrity ($n = 17$). Joseph, a white-collar worker living in a regional area, said, "when he has integrity; has goals he is trying to achieve, and really strives for them; follows through in what he says". Others who spoke along this thread suggested a nuanced version of what it means to be powerful, moving beyond traditional notions of masculinity. George, for example, a 50-year-old blue-collar worker, who is divorced and lives in the inner city, said, "their heart; I used to think it was strength when I was younger, but have realised it's about man connecting to his heart, love".

In addition to this, a similar number of respondents equated power with status or influence ($n = 15$) and a slightly smaller group associated power with wealth and success ($n = 11$). While also nuanced in these responses, some of these men associated with more traditional understandings of manhood in these responses. Rohan, a married 41-year-old man living in outer suburbia for example, said, "one is physical build; one is traditionally man is main breadwinner; thinking ability, decision making". Rohan here connects to a range of normative masculine ideals, ones associated with physical strength (Underwood, 2018; Underwood & Olson, 2019), breadwinning and rationality (Roberts, 2013). These men present the most likely targets for violent extremist messaging, which could potentially appeal to this notion of potent men.

In these answers there was some recognition of a gap between what 'society' thinks and what the respondent thought personally. Darcy, a 57-year-old living in outer suburbia spoke about traditional notions of power, stating "a weapon; being a man; being strong; their attitude—might have a neg attitude toward women and kids, so they control them, which is another way of having power". Through speaking about men in the third person, however, Darcy identifies a difference between how he perceives other men to view power and how he perceives it himself. This presents a strategic distance from normative notions of masculinity and likely the negative associations with it.

Interview participants ($n = 41$) were also asked specific questions as to sites of masculinity formation and key role models. On the question as to 'where men become men' ($n = 37$), life milestones and rites of passage ($n = 23$) were identified as key processes. Ryan, as referred to earlier, a blue-collar worker in outer suburban Melbourne, states this succinctly: "At the age of 18, you're allowed to get your driver's license, can go to the pub, and legally vote. From a trade point of view, when you're finished your apprenticeship, you become a trades *man* [emphasis added]." Relationships with others ($n = 22$) were key factors. Fixed settings ($n = 18$) including sports clubs, workplaces and the military were also identified as key sites.

Asked about role models ($n = 33$), respondents almost unanimously ($n = 30$) responded that their parents were critical in shaping them as men. Peers (including friends and siblings) were considered important by over a third ($n = 13$). Public and popular culture figures were also considered important by a third of interviewees ($n = 11$). Importantly, only a small number referred to work mentors and bosses ($n = 8$) and teachers ($n = 7$) as role models. This is important, suggesting that traditional hierarchical relationships grounded in institutions such as schools and the workplace are not as relevant as they once might have been in shaping young men. It may be that the hollowing out of workplaces and education in the pursuit of free market efficiencies leaves possible mentors either too time or resource poor to reach out. Alternatively, young people may look to social media and other alternative sources for role models, or both.

The significance of respect and recognition were also explored. A sense of societal respect and recognition are key elements of developing a sense of upward social trajectory amongst young men, contributing to an increased propensity to engage in constructive social activity (Roose, 2012, 2016). Over three quarters of respondents ($n = 32$) considered

these important or very important. A small number stated that self-respect was more important (n = 5) whilst a very small number stated that it was unimportant (n = 3). Zeb, a single white-collar worker from inner suburban Melbourne in the 18–34 age range, stated, "Yes, it's important. I get angry and sad and disappointed when people treat me as though I don't matter." Isaac, in a relationship, unemployed and from regional Victoria, stated, "There's a base level. Everyone likes to be respected. I have my right as a human. Everyone has their egos."

Normative Masculinity and its Relationship to Violent Extremism

In broad analytical terms, therefore, normative masculinity so far as this study indicates, appears to view women as deserving of equal rights to men, to (narrowly) disagree that rights for women have gone too far and to consider that a baby boy and baby girl have the same worth. Normative masculinity, particularly as men get older, views the legal system and politicians with distrust and (narrowly) considers employment and income to be stable and secure. Normative masculinity in Australia is more likely to agree than disagree that migrant undermine or threaten national unity, though stands largely against the notion that violence can be justified to achieve political change. This, it should be noted, is not at odds with the literature review's attention to the deeper patriarchal societal structures in which violent extremism is located, but does demonstrate that broadly speaking, the majority of Australian men stand opposed to prejudice against women and violence even as they benefit from firmly embedded patriarchal structures. Views towards minorities are particularly concerning and may be a key point of leverage for extremist narratives.

Interviews reveal that Australian men are commonly angry, but at the same time, have a complex relationship with this emotion, particularly as it relates to a perceived imbalance of power in their lives. Men in this research indicated that they got angry due to being personally slighted, a lack of respect, being challenged, being lied to or having a commitment broken. While mostly related to personal issues some expressed anger at a societal level, with participants indicating anger when they perceived injustice and an apparent inaction to redress that injustice. Similar trends can be found for hatred. While men indicated less of a connection to hatred than to anger, the majority indicated that hatred came from personal slights and indiscretions. However, some similarly transferred this to a

broader sense of hatred, directed to larger social groups. The threats associated with both of these emotions come from when individual instances are transferred to the general. While this was rarely the case for the majority of men, some indicated engagement with anger and hatred in this way, with these men being the most susceptible to violent extremist narratives.

On the question of what it means to be a man, however, dominant conceptions of masculinity are not highly homogenous, with men expressing a range of different viewpoints. Some men worked to distinguish between traditional stereotypes of Australian manhood (as a breadwinner, suppressing emotions, being dominant, playing sports and being aggressive) and the importance of acting with integrity and being respectful and caring. More broadly, the vast majority of men were largely supportive of playing an equal role in the domestic sphere, believing that domestic work should be negotiated or equal. This counteracts the traditional and patriarchal ideals of masculinity espoused by violent extremist organisations. Finally, on the question of what makes a man powerful, responses also varied—with men claiming that it comes from a sense of confidence and integrity, status and influence, and wealth and success.

Putting aside any judgements about this particular picture of masculinity, the key thing to note for violent extremism research is that the views of the majority of men do not align with rhetoric espoused by violent extremist groups, meaning they are unlikely to be convinced by the messaging of these groups.

The primary concern to emerge from a CVE perspective relates, on the one hand, to the view of young men towards women's rights and freedoms, and, on the other hand, of those of older Australian men towards minorities. Most concerning of all, however, are the small minority who actively stand against wider societal values, the 'silent 5%': those who stand strongly against women's rights, have little trust in institutions or politicians, believe their job and income to be unstable and insecure, view minorities as undermining or threatening national unity and believe violence can be used to achieve political change. The proportion of men ticking all these boxes cannot be precisely ascertained, though it may be estimated, based on the survey and interview data, to comprise about 5% of the male population. This group is a minority, but cumulatively across an entire city, state or province, may number in the hundreds of thousands. It is this group in particular, it is hypothesised, who may be drawn to extremist movements displaying an exaggerated hypermasculinity in their recruitment narratives.

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CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Implications

Abstract The final chapter returns to the key research questions outlined in Chap. 1 and will synthesise key findings into an accessible conclusion that identifies key intervention points for policy makers. We also explore implications for government policy, lessons for policy makers and practitioners (including law enforcement) and areas for future investigation.

Keywords Masculinity • Violent extremism • Terrorism • Schools • Alternative narratives • Policy

INTRODUCTION

Violent extremist organisations represent an ongoing threat around the world. In addition to the violence inflicted by Islamist terrorists in the past decades, over the past five years the far-right and male supremacist groups have emerged as a significant and growing threat. There has been a growing number of terrorist attacks and mass shootings such as those committed by Anders Breivik in Norway, Elliot Rodgers in California, Brenton Tarrant in Christchurch and Patrick Crusius in El Paso, amongst many others. These groups are continuing to develop and grow in the context of the economic downturn, COVID-19 lockdowns and in the aftermath of

the pandemic, and are increasingly linking with anti-vaccine and conspiracy and other anti-science movements in ways yet to be fully understood.

It is notable that all the attacks listed above were conducted by men, and as our research has found, violent extremist groups are largely composed of men and primarily target men as potential members. They appeal to men's sense of manhood and masculinity as a recruitment mechanism, articulating a belief that masculinity, as embodied in patriarchal structures, the family and birth rates, is under attack in modern society and these groups are the only means through which it can be restored. By contrast, our research found that far-left and environmentalist groups examined do not demonstrate a specific concern with masculinity and manhood nor do they seek to recruit on this basis. This, it should be noted, does not exclude the possibility, with a small body of research demonstrating the role of "militant manhood" (Coleman & Bassi, 2011) or "masculinist style" (Maiguashca et al., 2016) in shutting down female voices in left-wing movements.

Of significant concern is the degree of overlap between far-right and male supremacist extremist representations of masculinity and views and those of some men in Victoria, Australia, from our survey and interviews. Anti-women and anti-minority attitudes and a favourable disposition to violence as a legitimate form of political action combined with a distrust in government combine amongst a minority of men to leave them particularly susceptible to extremist narratives.

In this conclusion we provide a thorough summary of our findings and detail the international consequences of our work. We then outline the implications of our findings, including recommendations for governments and policy makers to address these threats. While this research is based in Victoria, Australia, we argue that these findings and recommendations are relevant to other parts of the Western world, who face similar challenges with the rise of Salafi Jihadist, far-right and male supremacist groups, and potentially extend beyond to some contexts in developing nations.

How Masculinity Is Portrayed in Violent Extremist Movements

Depictions of masculinity documented in the project were drawn from both violent extremist sources (Islamic State Recruitment material, a far-right terrorist manifesto and incel terrorist manifesto) and from progenitor groups that have a track record of demonstrated provocative political views. All call for a reordering of society in line with their political perspectives and demonstrate an uncompromising or 'hard-line' political perspective.

Progenitor groups from men's rights, manosphere and far-right perspectives expound a narrative, whereby society should be ordered on traditional lines, with women playing the role of caregiver and housekeeper that nature has assigned to them. Masculinity—or the idea of what it is to be a man—in this context is powerful and has been recaptured from politically correct, effeminate men, with strong, fit and virile men resuming their roles as protector of women (from the 'other'), breadwinner, provider and heads of household. In the case of men's rights groups, it may be added, it means regaining power from an inherently biased, anti-male and anti-father judicial system. Far-right groups also have a strong hostility to migrants, government and women.

These groups and online movements as well as Christchurch terrorist Brenton Tarrant emphasise an ethos and offer a solidaristic bond to potential members. Framing their language in a disproportionately male tone and emphasising a righteous anger at the state of the world and, in the case of men's rights groups, at women, their narratives are calibrated to reach men at an emotional and experiential level, capturing experiences of shame, humiliation and anger, and providing them with an alternate framework for both interpreting the world and acting to change society.

Elliot Rodger's manifesto stands as documentary insight into the mindset of a violent incel who enacted terrorist violence motivated by extreme hatred of women. Rodger offers a narrative of a deeply wounded masculinity shaped by women's continuous rejection and a plan for the annihilation of the female gender. Masculinity in this context is framed as omnipotent and righteous, bringing punishment to those women (and to a lesser extent, the men that have sexual access to them) who have slighted and rejected him. Shame, anger and humiliation are key motivating factors. It is known that others have drawn inspiration from Rodger and committed similar terror acts globally.

Islamist progenitor groups displayed significantly more refinement than men's rights and far-right groups in their communication of ideas and presentation of masculinity. The subordination of women to the domestic sphere within Islamist religious practice is already normative, to some extent freeing activists from talking about it. This did not prevent the Salafi Jihadist Islamic State movement from forcefully advocating the practice of women raising the next generation of jihadists nor from enslaving non-Muslim women. However, within Australian groups, gender segregation was presented as natural. Islamist masculinity in progenitor groups was grounded in solidaristic bonds, a sense of belonging and

reinforcement by reference to scripture. Anger at the treatment of Muslims is mobilised in messaging and appeals are made to individual experiences of discrimination and racism. Men were described as the rightful head of the household, the main breadwinner and decision maker for families. Islamic State recruitment material took this significantly further, framing Muslim men as righteous warriors fighting a war of self-defence against hostile and corrupt leaders in the Muslim world and the West.

Left-wing and environmentalist progenitor groups examined have, by comparison, little interest in advocating a particular form of masculinity, at least in their recruitment material and efforts. The socialist group examined emphasises direct action and ultimately revolution, which requires a conception of masculinity grounded in social action and being prepared to 'man the barricades'. However, literature examined also presents a concern with women's rights and support of feminism as an accompaniment to recruiting (and emancipating) the working class. The environmental group examined was gender neutral in its presentation of material.

Across the extremist groups examined, therefore, some broad patterns emerged in their constructions of masculinity, enabling clustering into three broad categories. These are: (1) men's rights, male supremacists and the far-right; (2) socialist and environmentalist groups; and (3) Islamist groups.

Men's Rights, Male Supremacist and Far-Right Groups

A concern with masculinity is central across these groups. Men within these groups construct a narrative grounded in a masculinity subordinated to a system run by liberal elites that disproportionately favours women and minorities. Violence in this context is framed as an act of self-defence. Both anger and masculinity are pervasive themes and used to mobilise potential recruits and current members to action as they seek a return to an imagined past grounded in the superiority of white men.

Far-Left and Environmentalist Groups

Masculinity is rarely addressed in the corpora or websites of these groups. Both demonstrated very high levels of anger (Extinction Rebellion recording the highest score in its corpus), although gender and a sense of personal subordination are not features of this. Extinction Rebellion frames its activism as non-violent direct action, whilst Socialist Alternative is unclear in this regard, though revolution is unlikely to be entirely

non-violent. There is, rather, a focus on achieving structural change with the capitalist system seen as a root cause of environmental degradation and inequality.

Non-violent Islamist Progenitor Groups

Islamist groups held a paradoxical position. Muslim men occupied a hegemonic position within their practice of Islam with women segregated and adopting domestic responsibilities. However, they perceive themselves to occupy a subordinated position in wider society as Muslim men. Gender segregation and male supremacy were, in effect, taken for granted. Violence was framed by *Hizb ut-Tahrir* as something enacted against Muslims. The establishment of a caliphate, like socialist revolution, constitutes a fundamental reordering of society and is unlikely to be accomplished without violence, but this is not explicitly stated or supported by *Hizb ut-Tahrir* or Socialist Alternative.

Terrorist Actors

Compellingly, masculinity and extreme levels of anger were key features of all corpora associated with terrorist actors in the study. In Brenton Tarrant's manifesto and Islamic State recruitment material, men are positioned as warriors or 'partisans', acting to defend their in-group against a hostile other. In Elliot Rodger's incel manifesto, subordinated men are represented as victims of women who refuse to have sex with them and thus deserve death and collective extermination. It is through the act of terrorism that men reassume hegemony.

Links Between Violent Extremist Groups and Normative Masculinity

As we have previously discussed in the literature review, masculinities in CVE policy-making are often used in reductive terms, with simplistic accounts of often focused on 'wounded' or 'toxic' masculinities. The literature suggests that extremist groups also seek to exploit a deeper societal-level misogyny, in doing so, potentially reaching a larger audience. In our research, we sought to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of masculinities and the extent to which they are embedded in a deeper societal prejudice against women.

Our research provides a thorough analysis of this 'normative masculinity', conducted through a representative survey. Interviews with 41 men

in the state of Victoria, Australia, on these themes provided deeper insights. In broad analytical terms normative masculinity, the way the majority of men perceive what it is to be a man including how they situate themselves in relation to others, appears to view women as deserving of equal rights to men, to (narrowly) disagree that rights for women have gone too far and to consider that a baby boy and baby girl have the same worth. There are strong currents of soft prejudice, particularly amongst younger men, though these remain in the minority. Normative masculinity, particularly as men get older, views the legal system and politicians with distrust and (narrowly) considers employment and income to be stable and secure. The majority of Australian men interviewed view migrants as undermining or threatening national unity, though stand largely against the notion that violence can be justified to achieve political change.

The 'Australian man' in our study is also commonly angry, but at the same time has a complex relationship with this and other emotions. For example, while men indicated less of a connection to hatred than to anger, the majority said that hatred came from personal slights and indiscretions. The threats associated with both of these emotions come from when individual instances are transferred to the general. Most men did not report doing this; however, some indicated such instances, with these men arguably being the most susceptible to violent extremist narratives. On the question of what it means to be a man, however, there is no dominant framing of masculinity, with men expressing a range of different viewpoints. Some men distinguished between traditional stereotypes of Australian manhood with the importance of active with integrity, being respecting and caring. The majority were largely supportive of playing an equal role in the domestic sphere. This counteracts the ideals of masculinity espoused by violent extremist organisations and suggests, in a very modest manner, that equality in the home has implications for national security. Responses also varied on what makes men powerful—with men claiming that it comes from a sense of confidence and integrity, status and influence, and wealth and success.

The digital ethnography and interviews also reveal that participants felt that their construction of masculinities was primarily influenced by those closest to them. Parents, siblings and friends were particularly important contributors, with mentors including bosses and teachers also playing a smaller role at the interpersonal level. There was also an important online contributing factor. A number of men interviewed referred to key individuals that have become popular names in social media and online environments.

The limited role of institutions and non-familial role models including teachers and workplace bosses was surprising. It was to some extent expected that educational and workplace environments where individuals spend significant amounts of time and in which values would be expected to infuse an institutional culture would be greater. It is possible that this occurred at a less overt level and pervaded a cohort of school or workplace friends and colleagues. Nonetheless it indicates that parents and friendship networks are vital points at which masculinity construction (and thus resilience or susceptibility to extremist narratives) takes place. It also indicates the greater potential role that institutions can play in shaping and refining young men to engage critically with extremist narratives, be they on websites, on social media or in personal interactions couched in anger and highly calibrated to appeal to target groups.

Whilst this work is focused primarily on those likely to be attracted to extremist narratives, it is of course important to note that they are largely in the minority. The primary concern relates, on the one hand, to the view of young men towards women's rights and freedoms, and on the other hand, of older Australian men towards minorities. We find most concerning the group we might call the 'silent 5 per cent': those who stand strongly against women's rights, have little trust in institutions or politicians, believe their job and income to be unstable and insecure, view minorities as undermining or threatening national unity and believe violence can be used to achieve political change. Figures of men ticking all these boxes cannot be precisely ascertained, though based on an analysis of the representative survey and interviews, it may be estimated to number about 5% of the male population. It is this group in particular, it is hypothesised, who would be drawn to extremist movements displaying an exaggerated hypermasculinity in their recruitment narratives.

Implications for Policy

There are strong intersections between violent extremist narratives and some minority, yet nevertheless sizeable visions of masculinity. This is particularly the case in relation to negative attitudes to women, minorities, key institutions and elected officials, support for the use of violence as a defensive mechanism and the expression of anger. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, global lockdowns and the economic depression that has followed this, we are already witnessing that this overlap is growing, which presents a significant cause for concern.

Beyond the continuing threat of Salafi Jihadist violent extremism, the far-right and some individuals attracted to supremacist movements have emerged as significant potential terror threats. These groups seek to mobilise a particular conception of manhood that stands opposed to many societal values and threatens to undermine social cohesion. We therefore conclude by providing some means forward for policy makers to reduce the threat posed by these groups.

Key Intervention Sites

This project has made clear that a sense of subordinated masculinity and associated feelings of anger and hatred are key factors shaping men's propensity for attraction to extremist groups, in particular amongst the far-right and male supremacist groups. This is not to exclude the Islamist 'lone wolf' terror threat in particular, though the Islamist groups examined may in fact serve as a mechanism rediverting young men to controversial, yet entirely legal forms of activism.

The key challenge is that the recruitment narratives employed by far-right groups intersect directly with normative conceptions of masculinity that emerged in the survey and interviews. It is at precisely these points shaping masculinity that policy interventions should occur. Table 5.1 indicates possible intervention points for each space in which recruitment narratives and normative masculinity intersect.

Those Closest to Men Exercise the Greatest Influence on Their Conception of Manhood Parents, siblings and friends emerged as those individuals most able to shape how men think of themselves and their place in society. It may be possible to provide resources or training to parents on raising healthy or respectful men, during their transition to parenting or at key milestones such as children starting school or high school. Key sites of socialisation with peers including sporting clubs and online chat forums may also provide direct access.

Online Environments Play an Increasing Role in Shaping Masculinities Men may also look online and form their sense of manhood in relation to what they are reading or watching. Social media, YouTube, online gaming and website forums are key avenues where men may interact with others; they may never otherwise meet. The plethora of information available requires innovative strategies to reach young Victorian men on their phones,

Table 5.1 Intersection of extremist and normative masculinities and key intervention points

Recruitment narratives	Normative masculinity	Possible intervention points
Restoration of past greatness	Distrust of democratic institutions and elected officials (across men interviewed)	School curriculum (citizenship)
Exclusivist states	High levels of distrust of minorities (older men 35–54 and 55+)	Workplaces and social media
Women as subordinate to men	High levels of soft prejudice to women's rights (younger men 18–34) Low levels of hard prejudice to women (highest 18–34)	Parents, peers, schools, workplaces and social media
Violence as permissible	Violence permissible if in self-defence (men 35–54 and 55+)	School curriculum, workplaces and social media
Men as victims	Job insecurity (shifting to younger workers post COVID) Distrust of courts	Creation of more secure job options, technical and further education (TAFE) and affordable university access, social media
Anger	Very commonly experienced Based primarily on personal sleights or lack of control	Parents Schools (peer programmes) Social media

laptops and gaming computers. Intensive and holistic online literacy training focusing on critical engagement with sources should be prioritised.

Schools and Workplaces Offer Important, Yet Largely Untapped, Locations to Develop Healthy Masculinities that Reject Violence What was unexpected was the extent to which traditional institutions where boys become 'men' including schools and workplaces played a significantly smaller role. To some extent this means that governments are relinquishing the task of developing healthy masculinities to families and social media and popular culture. School curricula, sporting programmes and peer education opportunities offer important sites of intervention in reaching young men and importantly, the women who will shape them as friends, co-workers and

colleagues, bosses, partners and eventually, mothers. Programmes delving into violence, masculinities and online literacy might be devised as core components of larger syllabi on citizenship. Workplace education for potential mentors of young men might also be considered.

Alternative Narratives

In this final section we suggest some means forward for addressing violent extremist narratives. One burgeoning area of research that provides some potential avenues for investigation is that of 'alternative narratives', which has been particularly focused in the area of preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE). Current literature on P/CVE focuses predominantly on counter-narratives, which are defined as intentional or direct efforts to "discredit, deconstruct and demystify violent extremist narratives through ideology, fact, logic or humour" (Biggs & Feve, 2013, p. 13). However, the effectiveness of counter-narratives is increasingly being questioned. Kimmel (2018), for example, found that groups successful in getting individuals out of violent extremist organisations often did not focus initially on ideology, as countering ideals resulting in arguments that often entrenched the views of individuals. Counter-narrative initiatives are also often funded and backed by government or other institutions that are not seen as trustworthy or legitimate to target audiences (Lee, 2019, p. 165).

There has therefore been a recent shift to focus on 'alternative narratives', which aim to reduce radicalisation by designing positive stories targeted at individuals and groups (Beutel et al., 2016, p. 35; Hemmingsen & Ingrid Castro, 2017, p. 32). Alternative narratives are "ongoing, distinct, proactive and aim to undercut violent extremist narratives by focusing on what 'we are for rather than against'" (Roose et al., 2021). Alternative narratives present positive stories about social values, openness and democracy, with the aim of presenting a different pathway which individuals can go down (Biggs & Feve, 2013, p. 13). We have already noted the potential alternatives available in regards to men's views of their own masculinity, and argue that an approach that focuses on these alternative, positive, ideas of masculinity is likely to be more effective than counter-narratives which work to directly contradict violent extremist ideas. This is not to suggest that anti-sexism or anti-racism is not a useful thing to do, but rather that it can be done through presenting alternatives rather than directly countering normative masculine ideals.

The literature on alternative narratives suggest they can be more effective than counter-narratives as they can "directly address real and perceived grievances as well as the psycho-social needs that may lead to engagement with extremist discourse" (Roose et al., 2021). As we have noted throughout this book, the complaints described by men in violent extremist organisations are based in a genuine belief in grievances about their lives. As Kimmel (2018) argues, even if we do not agree with the nature of these grievances, we must take the emotional reality for these men seriously. The influence and receptivity to violent extremist narratives are often due to broader socialisation and wider grievances regarding state policies and civil conflict (Glazzard, 2017, p. 6). Alternative narratives are effective when they acknowledge this, at some level addressing the "kernel of truth" underpinning individual and group complaints (Barzegar et al., 2016). This means recognising that complaints are genuinely felt (even if we don't agree with them) (Kimmel, 2018), and addressing them through that lens.

Alternative narratives then work to find alternative understandings of where these feelings come from, which social structures may be to blame for the problems, and the solutions available to them. To this extent, they must be closely tailored to local contexts, cultures and languages and consequently informed by local research. In the Australian, and perhaps wider Western context, this may mean painting a picture of masculinity which sees men as playing an equal role in the home with his partner, expressing concern for others and displaying a healthy distrust of power and those wielding power that does not descend into violence. Initial interventions therefore may focus on the attitudes of younger men to women, older men to minorities, framing of when violence is permissible and under what circumstance, regaining trust in institutions (through both challenging myths about the system and rebuilding parts of the system where corruption and mistrust are ripe) and elected officials, and anger management strategies.

Alternative narratives are often successful as they tap into the emotional drive behind engagement with violent extremist groups. As we have noted throughout the book violent extremist narratives are highly emotional, and particularly tap into feelings of anger and hatred. However, "emotion is an underutilised weapon for countering terrorism and violent extremist narratives" (Roose et al., 2021). Emotions are connected strongly to individual identity and can in turn lead to like-minded people gravitating towards each other, forming an "integral aspect of group political

solidarity" (Smith, 2018, p. 442). Violent extremist organisations create an emotional pull through linking how they make sense of the world with broader concepts such as justice, equality, autonomy and meaning (Smith, 2018, p. 445; Cottee & Hayward, 2011, p. 973). Alternative narratives therefore recognise the emotional pull of messaging and replicate it. This means identifying both the push and pull factors of engagement with these narratives and seeking to counteract them with different forms of engagement.

One of the key ways we can engage emotionally in this arena is through promoting alternative means of belonging for men. Kimmel (2018), for example, found that connection to violent extremist organisations was a primary motivator for young men in joining far-right white supremacist groups in Europe. Alternative narratives therefore need to focus on identity and belonging, "creating the space for those considered to be 'at risk' to explore their identities, voice their grievances through dialogue and validate their voices is viewed as way to avoid experiences of marginalisation" (Roose et al., 2021).

There are some caveats to how to best use alternative narratives as a means to address violent extremist ideologies. Research indicates that alternative narratives are not useful when targeted those who are deeply embedded in these groups, and specifically the men who are leaders in these spaces. Instead, they are most effective when targeted at individuals seen as 'fence-sitters' (Roose et al., 2021)—for example, those who are not completely embedded in manosphere groups but may sit on the edges or be tempted by their messages (Barzegar et al., 2016, p. 6; El Sayed et al., 2017, p. 33; Schmid, 2015, p. 14). We are therefore not suggesting campaigns targeted at the leaders of violent extremist organisations, but instead at those who may find some appeal in their narratives but are not committed—as of yet. However, there is a big difference between the likes of Breivik or Tarrant and a young man who feels frustrated with the world. Great care and careful calibration of messaging is vital.

Content for Alternative Narratives of Masculinity

The question emerges as to how this more nuanced understanding of masculinity can inform a more calibrated and impactful alternative narrative messaging to target those potentially susceptible to extremist framing of masculinity. One way forward is to draw on the above evidence base and future research to frame positive narrative constructions of masculinity

and to communicate these, particularly to the minority that may hold prejudicial attitudes towards women, minorities and view violence as an acceptable pathway to social change.

Here we can see frames of alternative concepts of masculinity that could be used to challenge violent extremist ideologies.

The majority of men stood opposed to hard prejudice against women and believed that relationships and home responsibilities should be negotiated as equals. This challenges a broader anti-women prejudice amongst a sizeable minority that serves as a 'gateway' to violent extremism. Likewise, survey data and interviews reveal that a small majority of men do not believe that minorities undermine or threaten national unity and believe that minorities enrich wider society.

Whilst anger, a present focused emotion, is a common trait, with over half of interviewees experiencing it weekly, for the majority it revolved around a perceived personal slight, lack of power or perceived injustice. Very few spoke about being unable to channel their anger or lashing out. Anger, properly managed, can be an impetus for positive change and indeed, some viewed anger as a positive emotion for this reason.

On an encouraging note, the majority of men interviewed had nuanced interpretations of hatred and rejected it as a force in their lives. In another positive, the majority of men rejected violence as ever being required to achieve political change and viewed violence as permissible only through the spectrum of self-defence against a threat or in sports.

In short, an ideal type of a positive and constructive masculinity that stands juxtaposed to the use of violence would see men define strength as an internal process grounded in self-confidence, acting with integrity, being respectful and caring. A man in this frame plays an equal role in the home with his partner and expresses concern for others. Whilst expressing a healthy distrust of power and those wielding power, he views violence as only acceptable as a defensive mechanism to preserve others' lives and safety.

Dissemination of Alternative Narratives

This book has identified potential key intervention points at which these alternative narratives might be targeted. Compellingly, fixed institutions don't have the power to shape men as they once did, with men showing decreased trust in government and other mainstream institutions. As the credibility of a source is found to be a "decisive factor for ensuring the

persuasiveness of any communication" (Aly et al., 2014, p. 43), literature on alternative narratives finds that programmes are more effective when conducted through grassroots initiatives, peer-to-peer communication and creative approaches (Tahiri & Grossman, 2013; Vergani et al., 2018, p. 13; Frenett & Dow, 2015, p. 24). Vergani et al. argue that governments and institutions should focus on supporting and engaging grassroots communities to develop messaging that is peer-to-peer in nature (Vergani et al., 2018, p. 11). Similarly, Barzeager et al. argue that alternative narratives are most effective when they are organic, and "are disseminated by trusted community leaders who have credibility and an understanding of the kinds of messages that will connect with at-risk audience" (Barzegar et al., 2016, p. 28). We confirm this through our own analysis, suggesting that policy makers may need to engage in creative approaches that focus on bottom-up solutions rather than top-down hierarchical approaches.

Alternative narratives therefore provide a compelling approach to address violent extremist narratives, and particularly their intersection with normative understandings of masculinity. These narratives are best targeted at those 'fence-sitters', individuals who are yet committed to violent narratives. In turn they represent a means through which to deny violent organisations the potential for growth, stymying their development. We believe the best alternative narratives available are those that already align with elements of normative masculinity, emphasising healthy masculine ideals and downplaying those that are more likely to align with violent extremist ideas.

Further Research

There are a number of areas that require further investigation. Much more work is required to understand the form and function of male supremacist groups and associated individuals in the global context. While research about these groups in online spaces has flourished, it has limitations, in particular as research is often focused on individual platforms rather than including cross-platform analysis. In addition, research often is focused entirely 'online' or 'offline' (including our own), and more work needs to be done to explore the relationship between the two.

Bearing in mind the notion that anti-women attitudes are considered a 'gateway to violent extremism', more work is required to understand why younger men who adopt largely tolerant perspectives on minorities might show significant levels of soft prejudice against the notion of women's

rights. Some material (see, e.g., Bates, 2020) indicates a growing concern about anti-feminist and anti-women prejudice growing amongst younger men and in schools. Yet little work has yet to be done to quantify this, nor to understand why this may be happening. We therefore need to conduct more work to understand the influencers of young men and why anti-feminist and anti-women messaging may be appealing to this cohort.

In addition, the impact of COVID-19 on the acceleration of violent extremism is yet to be determined, although there are some indicators. In Australia, for example, where this research team is based, we have seen a significant spike in anti-vaccination and other disinformation organisations, culminating in a number of large, sometimes violent, protests on the streets of Melbourne (where our interviews were conducted) and in the nation's capital, Canberra. In addition, this dataset offers a valuable insight into dimensions of the problem both before (literature, survey data, digital ethnography LIWC) and during the pandemic (interviews). However, more work desperately needs to be done into this arena, particularly to identify if and how the conditions of the pandemic may be pushing people to violent extremist organisations and how these organisations are tapping into these messages for recruitment.

More work is required to understand how fixed sites and institutions including schools and workplaces can increase their impact on the formation of healthy masculinities. We were surprised to find that fixed institutions are seen by men to play only a limited role in the formation of masculinities, although this is possibly linked with growing distrust of these institutions amongst many in the population. Years of state under-investment in schools and school programmes and other institutions focused upon the development of healthy and respectful masculinities may be one factor. This is a troubling trend and needs to be immediately assessed, through increased funding (after years of cuts), on the one hand, and through identifying myths associated with these institutions and addressing genuine issues associated with these institutions that foment such mistrust.

Notwithstanding Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) observation that masculinities are multiple, with internal complexities and that women play an important role in making them, more work is required to understand the influence of women and girls in families, schools, workplaces and new realms including social media platforms, in shaping male attitudes to violence and extremist narratives.

Finally, more work needs to be conducted on precisely how men engage with and interpret violent extremist material targeting their sense of manhood. While a significant amount of work has been conducted that analyses these materials, there is less research on whether they actually appeal to men outside of these circles. While we can draw some potential conclusions from our own research, more direct interventions are required in this space. This will not only allow further understanding of the impact of violent extremist narratives but also provide significant insights into the development of alternative narratives.

CONCLUSION

Masculinity is central to violent extremist recruitment narratives across the religious and political spectrum. An emerging body of research reveals that extremist groups at opposite ends of the political and religious spectrum adopt remarkably similar conceptions of 'what it is to be a man'. They idealise men as warriors, protectors and breadwinners. Extremist narratives then may be understood as appealing to an ideal type of masculinity that stands in contrast to the lived experience of many of their members, offering them a sense of respect, recognition and source of meaning otherwise absent in their lives (Kimmel, 2017; Roose, 2016, 2018).

This research provides an evidence base to understand the extent to which violent extremist narratives have a wider resonance with a broader cohort of men. From here, we identify key sites and points at which the construction of masculinity in men intersects with, stands in contrast to and challenges extremist conceptions. While programmes are often driven from government and other formal institutions, we identified that this is not necessarily a core site in the development of masculinity and that programmes should instead be driven through informal, grassroots networks, as well as family, friends and partners. More investment is needed in public institutions including schools to enable them to regain lost ground in shaping young men. We argue that rather than attempting to counteract extremist depictions of masculinity grounded in patriarchal and misogynistic framing of women and society, that alternate narratives focussed on the presentation of healthy masculinities grounded in a sense of respect and recognition are key. Ultimately, it is in the local context that both scholars and practitioners alike must tailor these approaches.

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