

Analysing the linguistic features of the manosphere
as hate speech

Alexandra Krendel

Department of English Language and Linguistics

Lancaster University

A thesis submitted to Lancaster University for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics

December 2021

Abstract

In this thesis, I analyse the language used within the online anti-feminist network called the manosphere, to determine whether such language can be classified as gendered hate speech. To do this, I establish the features of manosphere language on Reddit, and compare them to both established features of hate speech and how gender is represented in general corpora of English. Firstly, I analyse the representation of gendered social actors across the five main sub-groups of the manosphere (men's rights activists, men-going-their-own-way, pick-up artists, involuntary celibates, and proponents of Red Pill ideology) using a corpus-based approach. I do this to determine what representations are consistent across the manosphere. I then focus on one sub-group, *The Red Pill*, which serves as an ideological hub for multiple manosphere sub-groups. I use a corpus-assisted discourse approach to investigate the appraisals made about gendered social actors, to reveal beliefs that a corpus-based methodology may miss. Finally, I use an approach based on speech act analysis to consider the relationships between people who post on *The Red Pill*, to examine how manosphere sites may function as an enticing community.

Based on the findings of these three studies, I argue that manosphere conceptualisations of gender dynamics are an extension of mainstream conceptualisations. The use of manosphere-specific language to depict women as dehumanised and immoral highlights that the manosphere is demonstrably more sexist than depictions of women in normalised media. Furthermore, the extent to which *The Red Pill* exhibits traits of a typical men's self-help group, and the way regular users align themselves with high-status users, suggest that such communities encourage engagement and seek to evade the image associated with established hate groups. I conclude that manosphere depictions of women can indeed be classified as hate speech in an academic sense, but not necessarily in a legal sense.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Veronika Koller, for her brilliant mentoring, advice and feedback throughout my whole PhD process. I feel very lucky to have had such a brilliant supervisor, who has encouraged me to both work hard on my thesis and develop more broadly as an independent researcher. She has always read all the drafts I've thrown at her, provided such detailed feedback and reassured me that I could do this more times than I can count! Veronika has also shown me how important it is to believe in oneself and look after oneself when undertaking academic research, which I am still trying to internalise. I feel privileged to have worked with someone who is simultaneously so knowledgeable, patient and kind (not to mention a fantastic baker). Our regular meetings over the past three years have been a lifeline to me, and there is no way I could have written this thesis without her. I hope that one day, I can be as brilliant a researcher as Veronika.

Next, I would like to thank Dr Mark McGlashan for his ongoing support and friendship, as he has been both a brilliant co-author to work with and something of a cheerleader! Together with Veronika and fellow PhD student Jess Aiston, we make such a brilliant MANTRaP team, and I sincerely hope that we will all work together for many more years to come.

I would also like to thank everybody who has commented on various iterations of my work throughout the PhD process. In particular, I am grateful to Dr Claire Hardaker for her comments on my confirmation panel document. Her advice and feedback have forever shaped the way I think about the practical applications of hate speech research, as well as the public facing side of disseminating my research findings. I am also grateful to the peer reviewers who read the papers which make up Chapter 5, 6 and 7 of my thesis. Their feedback was invaluable for shaping and improving my research for all three chapters.

Next, I would like to express how grateful I am to the whole Department of Linguistics and English Language at Lancaster University, for welcoming this southerner with open arms. From the first day I started, people in the department have been so welcoming and friendly. Having my office on C floor and making so many friends there has made this PhD process fun and exciting. I am particularly thankful to the PhD students of the department, who I hope to remain friends with for a very long time. Our chats in the corridor, our lunches together, and sessions working together on the sofas in the break room made the PhD process feel like a group experience. On top of that, I learn something new at Lancaster every day – I am forever in awe at the intelligence and wisdom of everybody in the department, both staff and students. I am thankful for the wealth of expertise on corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis at Lancaster, and it has been such an honour to be affiliated with such a prestigious and friendly department. I would also like to thank the Research Training Programme at Lancaster University, for running so many courses which proved useful for my research. This included courses on thesis writing, designing doctoral research, ethics applications, using ATLAS.ti, and feminist theory.

I would also like to thank the Language, Gender and Sexuality special interest group in the British Association for Applied Linguistics for inspiring me to develop as a language and gender researcher. I have attended many inspiring talks they have hosted over the past three years and met lots of brilliant researchers through the group. I am especially thankful to Dr Lucy Jones for encouraging me to pursue the hate speech angle of my PhD research.

I am also thankful to several other researchers who have been a pleasure to meet and who have welcomed me into the academic community with open arms. To Dr Daria Dayter, Dr Sofia Rüdiger, and Dr David Wright, thank you for undertaking such interesting linguistic work on the manosphere and for being so welcoming and lovely to a new researcher. I am also grateful to Dr Irene Zempi and Dr Jo Smith for taking such an interest in my research in 2019, and encouraging me to contribute to their criminology book on misogyny as hate speech. This was central to developing how I think about hate speech, and it was inspiring to work alongside so many feminist researchers.

I would also like to mention Dr Charlotte Taylor and Dr Roberta Piazza from the University of Sussex, who taught me during my BA and MA there. It is them I have to thank for igniting my interest in critical discourse analysis in the first place, and Charlotte in particular for introducing me to corpus methods and analysing online discourse. It seems like only yesterday I was in their lectures, and I hope this thesis does them proud.

I cannot write this acknowledgements section without giving a huge mention to my fiancé, Eddy. Eddy has been so supportive of my undertaking of this PhD from the beginning, by encouraging me to move up to Lancaster when the thought of that decision made me quake in my boots. He has listened to me describe the minutiae of my work almost every day, and has been a cheerleader to me every step of the way. He didn't even complain when I woke up at 3am once, fretting over the Public Order Act. Every day, he reminds me that sweet, kind, lovely, feminist men are indeed out there, and I am beyond lucky to share my life with one.

I must also thank my friends for cheering me on while I undertook the PhD. I would like to mention my friends from the University of Sussex Science Fiction and Horror society, who are my closest friends in the whole world, and who made sure I rested and looked after myself while working. I would also like to mention my friends from the University of Sussex Physics department, with whom I share a group chat which is active 24/7. They never fail to make me laugh and our group chat has kept me sane throughout the PhD process. A big big thank you to the friends I have made up here in Lancaster, in particular those in the department, and those I met through the University's board game society and Dungeons and Dragons society. Those games helped to turn off my mind after looking through the extreme sexist data in this thesis, and I am eternally grateful for that distraction.

I must also thank my old boss, John Monoyioudis, who encouraged me to apply for the PhD while I was working as a technical co-ordinator for a toiletries development lab (while I was in the middle of making a batch of shower gel, if memory serves). In fact, the entire Dev Lab team cheered me on as I wrote my application, and without that encouragement, it may have taken me a lot longer to start!

I would also like to thank my parents and my siblings for being so supportive of my PhD work. Being far from home has been difficult all round (even more so during the COVID-19 lockdowns), but I am lucky to feel so supported by my family during this process. Their pride in me and their pep talks over the past three years have helped me get through tough times.

Lastly, it would be remiss of me to not mention various takeaway food outlets around Lancaster that absolutely had a hand in me maintaining my sanity as I undertook this work. Thank you to Aquila Pizzeria, as well as the Sultan's and Go Burrito outlets on Lancaster University campus. This PhD was fuelled by an inordinate amount of carbs.

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Alternative Format Permission Form	viii
Declaration	ix
Authorship statement for Chapter 5: The representation of gendered social actors across five manosphere communities on Reddit. (<i>Corpora</i>)	x
List of figures	xi
List of tables	xii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Research context.....	2
1.2 Research aims, questions and objectives	4
1.3 Structure of the thesis.....	7
Chapter 2: Literature Review	10
1. What constitutes hate speech?	10
1.1 Legal definitions of hate speech	10
1.2 Academic approaches to hate speech	15
1.2.1 The consequence-based approach	16
1.2.2 The content and linguistic feature based approach	19
2. Resistance to women and feminism online	22
3. The Manosphere	26
3.1 Men’s Rights Activists	30
3.2 Men Going Their Own Way.....	35
3.3 Pick-Up Artists	38
3.4 Involuntary celibates.....	43
3.5 The Red Pill.....	48
Chapter 3: Data and Ethics	54
1. Reddit	54
2. Ethics.....	58
2.1 Researcher safety.....	58
2.2 Obtaining informed consent	61
2.3 Anonymising the data	64
2.4 Reflexivity and potential researcher bias.....	66
Chapter 4: Theoretical Approaches	67
1. (Feminist) Critical Discourse Studies	67
2. Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies	77

3. Face and identity in interaction	81
Chapter 5: Study 1 – The representation of gendered social actors across five manosphere communities on Reddit. (<i>Corpora</i>).....	87
Abstract	1
Keywords:.....	1
1. Introduction	1
2. Corpus-based research on gender representations	3
2.1 Corpus linguistic research into the manosphere	3
3. Data Selection and Collection	4
4. Methodology	6
4.1 Identifying shared key-key-words across five manosphere communities.....	6
4.2 Identifying c-collocates	9
4.3 Categorising c-collocates.....	10
5. Results	11
5.1 Essentialist dichotomies	13
5.1.1 Representations of homogeneous groups.....	14
5.1.2 Comparisons of, and relations between, male and female social actors	15
5.2 Representation of <i>women</i> and <i>girls</i>	17
5.2.1 Sexual objectification	17
5.2.2 Emotionality	17
5.2.3 Ethnicity and age.....	18
5.2.4 Heterogeneous representation of girls.....	18
5.3 Representation of <i>men</i> and <i>guys</i>	19
5.3.1 Dating and relationships	19
5.3.2 Personality and heterogeneity.....	19
5.3.3 In-group interactions and advice	20
6. Conclusion	21
References.....	22
Transition I – From corpus-based key-key-words and c-collocates to transitivity and appraisal analysis	86
Chapter 6: Study 2 – The men and women, guys and girls of the ‘manosphere’: a corpus-assisted discourse approach. (<i>Discourse & Society</i>).	89
Abstract	1
Content Warning.....	1
1. Introduction	1
2. Background	2
2.1 <i>TRP</i> and the “manosphere”	2

2.2 Gendered social actors in general corpora of English.....	4
2.3. Research questions	4
3. Methodology.....	5
3.1 Data collection	5
3.2 Data analysis	8
4. Results.....	9
4.1 Women/woman	11
4.1.1 Negative construction as immoral, deceptive, incapable, and insignificant	11
4.1.2 Dehumanisation and objectification.....	12
4.1.3 Negative construction as irrational and unhappy.....	12
4.2 Girl(s).....	13
4.2.1 Negative construction as immoral, deceptive, unhappy, and insignificant.....	13
4.2.2 Objectification.....	14
4.2.3 Agentive in dating contexts.....	14
4.3 Men/man	14
4.3.1 Construction as victims of women and society.....	14
4.3.2 Construction of how men are believed to be appraised by out-groups.....	15
4.3.3 Construction as immoral (with perceived reason).....	16
4.3.4 Differing approaches to female social actors.....	16
4.4 Guy(s)	17
4.4.1 Specific scenario use	17
4.4.2 “Nice guys”	17
4.4.3 Relational contexts.....	17
5. Discussion and conclusion.....	18
Acknowledgements.....	19
Declaration of conflicting interests.....	19
Funding.....	19
References.....	19
Autobiographical note	20
Transition II – From appraisal analysis to in-group speech act analysis.....	90
Chapter 7: Study 3 - Self-help and masculinity: speech acts in an online men’s group.	
(Pragmatics and Society).....	92
Abstract.....	1
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Men, self-help, and self-disclosure	3
2.1 TRP.....	4

3. Data selection, collection and preparation	7
4. Methodology	8
5. Results and discussion.....	11
5.1 Face-enhancing and face-threatening speech acts.....	11
5.2 Other speech acts.....	16
6. Conclusion	21
Funding information	22
Acknowledgements	22
References	22
Chapter 8: Discussion and conclusion	93
1. Summary of research findings	93
1.1 Corpus-based analysis of five manosphere subreddits.....	93
1.2 Sexism in <i>The Red Pill</i>	96
1.3 Speech acts between users in <i>The Red Pill</i>	101
2. Hate speech in the Reddit manosphere.....	105
3. Mitigating the manosphere phenomenon.....	108
3.1 Deplatforming	111
3.2 Education	119
4. Limitations of this research and directions for future research	122
References.....	126

Alternative Format Permission Form



Linguistics and English Language
Postgraduate Research Degrees FORM:

PERMISSION TO SUBMIT A THESIS IN ALTERNATIVE FORMAT

Name of Candidate: Alexandra Krendel
Date of Registration: 1/10/18
Registration Number: 32101271
Division and Faculty: Linguistics, FASS
Research Degree Title: PhD in linguistics by Research Only
Date: 29/10/19
Thesis due for Submission: 30/9/2021

This is to confirm that the above named student has been granted permission to submit a PhD thesis in Alternative Format.

Name of Supervisor 1: Veronika Koller
Signature:

Name of Supervisor 2: _____
Signature: _____

Signature of HoD, or Director of Studies:

DATE of FORM SUBMISSION: 30/10/19

NB: A copy of this form must be held in the Linguistics and English Language Department's Postgraduate Office, and a copy must be submitted with the thesis.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for the award of a higher degree elsewhere. The thesis does not exceed the permitted maximum word length of 80,000 words. As Chapter 5 involved multiple authors, I have included a signed authorship statement which outlines the contributions of each co-author to the paper. Chapter 5, Chapter 6, and Chapter 7 (the three articles which constitute the analysis sections of my thesis) have been submitted for publication in academic journals. Chapter 5 has been accepted for publication in *Corpora*, Chapter 6 is published in *Discourse & Society* and Chapter 7 has been accepted for publication in *Pragmatics and Society*.

Authorship statement for Chapter 5: The representation of gendered social actors across five manosphere communities on Reddit. (*Corpora*).

I have written the majority of the article and carried out the research behind it in collaboration with Dr Mark McGlashan and Professor Veronika Koller. I was responsible for deciding to undertake an analysis of consistent collocates, compiling the list of consistent collocates and establishing the categorisation system for these consistent collocates. Dr Mark McGlashan was responsible for collecting the corpus used to carry out this research, compiling the list of key-key-words, and writing up this process in the beginning of Section 4.1. All three authors were responsible for deciding which key-key-words to analyse in detail, reading the concordance lines to establish how the consistent collocates were used (this work was split equally), and editing the written article.

I confirm that the above is accurate.

(Veronika Koller)

I confirm that the above is accurate.

(Mark McGlashan)

List of figures

Chapter 5: The representation of gendered social actors across five manosphere communities on Reddit

Figure 1: 145 c-collocates of women	12
Figure 2: 86 c-collocates of girls.....	12
Figure 3: 104 c-collocates of men	13
Figure 4: 97 c-collocates of guys	13

List of tables

Chapter 5: The representation of gendered social actors across five manosphere communities on Reddit. (*Corpora*).

Table 1: The Reddit manosphere corpus.....	5
Table 2: Key-key male social actor terms, their frequency and dispersion (how many texts they are key in) across the corpus, and their (c-)collocates, ordered by frequency of and within terms.....	8
Table 3: Key-key female social actor terms, their frequency and dispersion (how many texts they are key in) across the corpus, and their (c-)collocates, ordered by frequency of and within terms.....	8
Table 4: Representation of gendered social actors through key-key-words (see van Leeuwen, 2008: 52).....	9
Table 5: C-collocate categorisation system.....	11

Chapter 6: The men and women, guys and girls of the ‘manosphere’: a corpus-assisted discourse approach. (*Discourse & Society*).

Table 1: <i>TRP</i> corpus breakdown.....	5
Table 2: Top 20 keywords in the <i>TRP</i> corpus.....	6
Table 3: Frequency of analysis terms per million words in the <i>TRP</i> corpus and COCA.....	7
Table 4: Tokens of social actor terms retained for analysis, by sub-corpus.....	7
Table 5: Distribution of sampled tokens of social actor terms, classified by individualisation/assimilation.....	9
Table 6: Distribution of sampled tokens of social actor terms, classified by dialogic contraction/expansion.....	9
Table 7: Distribution of sampled tokens of social actor terms, classified by whether the social actor was represented as grammatically active or grammatically passive.....	10
Table 8: Distribution of sampled tokens of social actor terms, classified by the semantic category of processes undertaken.....	10
Table 9: Number of attitudinal positioning occurrences in each social actor dataset.....	10

Chapter 7: Self-help and masculinity: speech acts in an online men’s group. (*Pragmatics and Society*).

Table 1: The ten most popular posts of the past 30 days in <i>TRP</i> , as of 15 th July 2020.....	7
Table 2: Face-enhancing speech acts found in <i>TRP</i>	12
Table 3: Face-threatening speech acts found in <i>TRP</i>	12
Table 4: Face-saving linguistic strategies in <i>TRP</i>	13
Table 5: The remaining speech acts found in <i>TRP</i>	17

Chapter 1: Introduction

There has been much discussion in academia and beyond about the topic of online hatred, online anti-feminism, and the role of social media platforms in enabling the spread of hate speech online. Part of this discussion has focussed on communities who are associated with the wider online anti-feminist phenomenon known as the manosphere. According to Ging (2017), this term was popularised by Ian Ironwood who authored *The Manosphere: A New Hope For Masculinity* (2013) and the term was subsequently adopted by manosphere users and journalists writing about the manosphere phenomenon. Marwick and Caplan (2018, p. 4) define the manosphere as a loose network of websites and groups who believe that “feminist values dominate society, that this fact is suppressed by feminists and ‘political correctness’, and that men must fight back against an overreaching, misandrist culture to protect their very existence”. The manosphere is made up of five groups: men’s rights activists, men going their own way (male separatists), pick-up artists, involuntary celibates, and those who subscribe to Red Pill philosophy. These groups are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

It is important that we develop our understanding of the manosphere phenomenon, to understand the extent to which the beliefs about gender dynamics espoused within it could encourage men and boys to feel hatred towards women and girls, discriminate against them, and/or treat them in a hostile manner (e.g. Wright, 2020). It is also possible that manosphere language has the potential to reinforce existing sexist views as opposed to creating them from scratch. The possibility of manosphere communities fostering violent attitudes towards others is not merely hypothetical. The involuntary celibate (also known as incel) community have received much attention in the media, as they have been linked to a number of violent attacks in Canada, the US and the UK. Thus, it is important to take seriously the possibility that there is a link between violence against women and girls, and holding hateful beliefs about gender dynamics. To this end, in this thesis, I wish to establish in a rigorous linguistic manner the extent to which language use in the manosphere constitutes hate speech and perpetuates harmful notions of gender relations. I also wish to investigate potential reasons for users choosing to actively participate in the manosphere to consider why these communities are appealing to these users, although the extent to which I can answer this latter question in this thesis is limited. To this end, I will investigate two aspects of the manosphere using linguistic methodologies: how gendered social actors are represented in the manosphere as a whole, and how the manosphere functions as a community in a social sense.

In this introductory chapter, I will provide my rationale for conducting this research by providing a brief overview of the research context including research gaps, and discussing my

aims for the research. I will then discuss my research questions and objectives in detail and outline the value this research brings to the field of language, gender and sexuality, and beyond. I then conclude by providing an overall outline of the thesis.

1.1 Research context

It is important to consider the manosphere phenomenon in the context of a widespread resistance to feminism both online and offline. Resistance to feminism and hate against women online has been widely documented, including gendered abuse towards women MPs in the UK (see Stuart and Phillips, 2018), women who speak out about feminist issues (e.g. Hardaker and McGlashan, 2016, on Caroline Criado-Perez), and women on dating sites (e.g. Thompson, 2018). There has also been much discussion of how a lack of regulation on social media platforms enables the spread of online hate (KhosraviNik and Esposito, 2018) and that “social networks have proliferated, diversified, and evolved at a pace which has drastically outstripped the laws developed to govern them” (Hardaker and McGlashan, 2016, p. 92). It is for this reason that the internet has been dubbed a lawless “wild west” (Citron, 2009), with feminist scholars noting the effect this has on women in particular (e.g. Powell and Henry, 2017). Both the issue of hate against women and a lack of online content moderation more widely are currently being recognised by the UK government; at the time of writing (December 2021), there are debates in the UK Parliament over whether stirring up hatred against women should be policed, and how to regulate online content platforms. Thus, research which considers online hate against women is pertinent to multiple policies being debated in Parliament.

There is also evidence to suggest that anti-feminist beliefs are becoming more popular with men and boys between the ages of 18-24. A survey conducted by the UK advocacy group Hope Not Hate (2020, p. 42) found that “more young people agree (36%) than disagree (35%) that feminism has gone too far and makes it harder for men to succeed. Among young men, 50% agree while only 21% disagree”. This is further corroborated by those with classroom experience who discuss feminism in secondary schools, and are met with hostility from young men and boys. This can result in teachers who identify as feminists, and girls who are interested in the topic of gender stereotypes, being harassed by male students (Hope Not Hate, 2020). These students also share statistics in the classroom which are commonly used within the manosphere and argue that equality between men and women has already been achieved (Bates, 2020; Hope Not Hate, 2020). Beyond schools, Bates (2020) observes that some talking points from the manosphere are becoming more mainstream in widely shared media, particularly points from the men’s rights activist and male separatist factions of the

manosphere (see Chapter 2). This is a problem because these attitudes have the potential to undermine feminist campaigns for gender equality, e.g. campaigns around domestic violence.

Furthermore, it is notable that vocabulary which is specific to the manosphere and also alt-right spaces (i.e. spaces which espouse far-right beliefs and have a relatively young following, see Section 2.3 of Chapter 2 for more details) has been used by celebrities with a great degree of public reach. For example, both SpaceX CEO and billionaire Elon Musk and Ivanka Trump, daughter of former US President Donald Trump, recently tweeted about having taken “the red pill” (The Guardian, 2020). Thus, there is evidence to suggest that the manosphere is not limited to isolated communities online and so it is imperative that we understand the beliefs which are encoded in this vocabulary.

Having situated the manosphere phenomenon as part of a wider societal backlash against feminism, I will now discuss several research gaps which this thesis aims to fill. Firstly, given the extent to which the manosphere (and the involuntary celibate community in particular) are discussed in journalistic articles (Ging, 2017), it is important to build an extensive portfolio of academic research which investigates different aspects of the phenomenon using empirical research methods. Secondly, there is a focus in both the academic literature and journalistic coverage of the manosphere on the involuntary celibate subsection of the manosphere. This is arguably because it has been linked to violent attacks and is thus viewed as an extremist group. While this research is undoubtedly important, there is a relative dearth of research which considers the other groups of the manosphere, and indeed the similarities which unite these groups. It is important to research these connections because there are nuances to the beliefs of the manosphere which go beyond the involuntary celibate community, and it is important to consider a range of harmful dynamics discussed in the manosphere aside from the mass murder and terror incidents which have been widely reported on. Although there is academic research on the other subsets of the manosphere, there is relatively little on the manosphere phenomenon as a whole (although Lilly, 2016; Ging, 2017; Jane, 2018; and Ribeiro et al., 2020, are notable exceptions). By focussing on the beliefs which unite all five subsections, this thesis aims to establish the theoretical underpinning shared by the entire manosphere.

Thirdly, although much past literature comments on the content of various manosphere groups, there has not yet been a consideration of whether this content amounts to hate speech. I argue this perspective is central for determining whether such speech could incite violence against others, and determining whether it is appropriate for social media platforms

to host such content. Fourthly, there is a dearth of information about how manosphere spaces function as social communities and what social factors could be involved in making these communities appeal to their users. Such information is useful for considering the appeal and reach of the manosphere, and what strategies would be appropriate for mitigating the manosphere phenomenon.

It should also be noted that although much past academic literature on the manosphere considers the representation of gender, this is rarely done using linguistic methodologies. This is a problem because although this literature has established what hateful views are expressed, relatively little research has been dedicated to determining how these views are formulated. Having this linguistic focus enables us to establish how to recognise how language is used to express manosphere beliefs, in a systematic manner which goes beyond a case study approach. It also enables the comparison of manosphere language to the criteria of hate speech which have been identified in the past legal and academic literature (see Chapter 2). A linguistic focus also ensures that the language features identified in the research are reflective of what is present in the dataset and appropriately contextualised, unlike approaches such as machine learning and topic modelling, which do not consider the context in which language is used. Lastly, this thesis aims to contribute to the field of language, gender and sexuality, as well as language and new media, by using three linguistics methodologies to analyse the manosphere phenomenon as it manifests on Reddit.

Having established the research gaps which this thesis intends to fill, I will now state my research aims, questions and objectives.

1.2 Research aims, questions and objectives

In terms of scope, this thesis will focus on how the manosphere represents gendered social actors on the mainstream website Reddit, whether or not these representations constitute hate speech, and the social functioning of the Reddit manosphere. All three studies consider the language present within the Reddit manosphere, and together, aim to consider this phenomenon in terms of the “text” produced in the manosphere as well as how it functions as a social “place” (see Androutsopoulos, 2013, on text and place, also Chapter 4 of this thesis). The reason I consider Reddit as opposed to stand-alone manosphere websites or alt-tech platforms such as Gab or Telegram, which have less stringent content moderation policies than mainstream platforms, is because it is important to investigate the anti-feminist language and communities which are hosted on the same website as many mainstream communities, on a platform which has approximately 430 million monthly users (Dean, 2021). Doing so will establish how anti-feminist views can be expressed using both community specific jargon as

well as other language features which can appeal to the wider Reddit audience beyond the manosphere groups (subreddits).

In Chapter 5, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 of this thesis, I will answer the following research questions:

1. How are male and female social actors represented in the manosphere?
 - 1a. To what extent and in what ways are these representations homogenous and different from one another?
2. How does *r/TheRedPill* function as a community?
 - 2a. To what extent and in what ways do users in *r/TheRedPill* provide support for one another?
 - 2b. To what extent and in what ways do *r/TheRedPill* users act in relation to one another in a manner which could lead to user retention?

In Chapter 8, using the findings from the preceding chapters, I will answer the following research questions:

3. To what extent can the representations of gender within the manosphere be classified as hate speech?
 - 3a. Can these representations of gender be classified as hate speech in a legal sense, in that there are calls to abusive action, or incitement of violence, discrimination, or hatred?
 - 3b. Can these representations of gender be classified as hate speech in an academic sense, in that gendered social actors are dehumanised and there is incitement of hatred and other negative emotions towards these gendered social actors?
4. Should steps be taken to mitigate the effects of the manosphere and, if so, what form should these take?

These questions will be answered by investigating how gendered social actors are represented across the five main manosphere subreddits (see Chapter 5) and in one subreddit in particular: *r/TheRedPill* (Chapter 6 and Chapter 7). *r/TheRedPill* was selected because it captures the ideological basis for the wider manosphere and thus can be used to establish beliefs about gender dynamics across the whole manosphere. Solely focussing on other communities (e.g. only men's rights activists or only involuntary celibates) would have been insufficient to capture the hateful beliefs that the communities share. Utilising datasets of varying sizes allowed me to analyse gender dynamics using more quantitative methods such as key-key-

word (Scott, 1997) and consistent collocate (Baker et al., 2008) analyses, as well as more qualitative ones such as appraisal analysis (Martin and White, 2005).

In this thesis, I investigate the representations of male social actors as well as female ones for three reasons. Firstly, providing a direct comparison between male and female social actors highlights the extent to which they are represented differently. Secondly, it is important to consider how they are represented in relation to one another, and so it would have been impossible to consider one without the other in these datasets. Thirdly, whereas the female social actor representations can give us information on whether manosphere beliefs about women in particular constitute hate speech, considering the male social actor representations can indicate how both in-group and out-group men are represented. This has implications for assessing the risk that the manosphere poses to both men and women, and could also indicate which mitigation strategies would be more necessary and effective than others.

Furthermore, considering how the manosphere functions as a social space investigates the notion that there are aspects of the community aside from the beliefs the community holds about gender dynamics that could encourage others to participate in the community. For example, some past researchers have suggested that parts of the manosphere are viewed as self-help groups by their users (Dishy, 2018; Mountford, 2018), although discussion of the social aspects of manosphere groups by linguists are limited to the pick-up artist subsection of the manosphere (see Dayter and Rüdiger, 2016, and Rüdiger and Dayter, 2020). Past scholars who are interested in hate communities online also argue that analysing the social dimension of potentially hateful groups is paramount for determining their potential appeal to others (e.g. De Koster and Houtman, 2008; Bowman-Grieve, 2009; see Chapter 2 for more detail). While this is something I considered important to address in this thesis, due to methodological constraints (see Chapter 3), the extent to which I can answer this question with certainty is limited.

The purpose of answering these questions is to examine how gender is discussed in the manosphere as a whole, how users relate to one another, and to determine whether the beliefs about gender dynamics shared in the manosphere are sufficiently hateful (and also potentially appealing to both manosphere users and external readers) to warrant the recommendation of mitigation tactics such as deplatforming. These recommendations are of course provisional, as it is impossible to deliver a policy brief within the confines of a PhD thesis, especially given the supra-national reach of the Reddit platform. For this reason, I aim to consider what can be achieved to mitigate the effect of the manosphere in the UK context.

It should be noted that the present research is a synchronic analysis of the Reddit manosphere, and so diachronic changes in language use are not considered. Furthermore, due to the linguistic focus of the research, no network analyses between manosphere users or communities are conducted, although this is done to great effect in other literature (e.g. Ribeiro et al., 2020).

Before presenting the structure of my thesis, I would like to briefly explain my rationale for submitting my thesis in alternative format. Firstly, by submitting my work to academic journals and receiving reviewer feedback, I was able to incorporate a range of academic perspectives into my work throughout the entire PhD process. Secondly, writing my thesis in alternative format enabled me to begin disseminating my peer-reviewed research findings to not-for-profit organisations in the UK (see Chapter 8) while still working on my PhD. Thus, I was able to begin effecting positive change before the full thesis was submitted.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

Having given the motivations for my PhD research and outlined my research aims, questions and objectives in this chapter, the rest of the thesis is structured as follows. In Chapter 2, I provide an overview of the past literature on what constitutes hate speech from both legal and academic perspectives, and describe the types of gendered abuse that women face online. I then discuss the past literature on the five groups of the manosphere: men's rights activists, men-going-their-own-way, pick-up artists, involuntary celibates, and the Red Pill. Although the analysis presented in this thesis will be linguistic in nature, this is not to say this thesis will be limited to a discussion of linguistic theories. On the contrary, I take the lead of KhosraviNik and Esposito (2018), who argue that research on gender-based hostility should take an empirical text-based approach but also be interdisciplinary in nature to contextualise the analysis. This means that I have situated my studies of online hate against women using literature from linguistics, legal studies, media studies and gender studies. This has enabled me to critique the manosphere language with a feminist approach.

In Chapter 3, I describe the nature and history of the Reddit platform, from which I collect data, and I discuss the ethical considerations which affected the data collection, data analysis and data presentation and dissemination aspects of my research. In Chapter 4, I discuss the theoretical approaches which underpin the thesis, namely feminist critical discourse analysis, corpus-assisted discourse studies, and face and identity in relation to others. In Chapter 4, I provide the theoretical justifications for the methodologies I chose to use in my three studies. Due to the alternative format of the thesis, I did not have space to include these justifications in the three research papers.

In Chapter 5, I present my first study, which is titled 'The representation of gendered social actors across five manosphere communities on Reddit'. This is a corpus-based analysis which examines the shared language between the five manosphere groups. This study examines the gendered social actor key-key-words (Scott, 1997) across these groups, and the consistent collocates (Baker et al., 2008) which co-occur with these key-key-words (see Chapter 5 for a detailed definition of these terms). This study has been accepted for publication in the corpus linguistics journal *Corpora*, and will be published in summer 2022. In Chapter 6, I present the second study, which is titled 'The men and women, guys and girls of the 'manosphere': A corpus-assisted discourse approach'. This study focuses on the Red Pill subsection of the manosphere and undertakes a more detailed analysis of gendered social actor representation. This is done by establishing the most common gendered social actor keywords and then undertaking a transitivity analysis (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2013, p. 179-259), appraisal analysis (Martin and White, 2005), aspects of social actor analysis (van Leeuwen, 2008), and a collocate analysis of these keywords. This study was accepted for publication in the critical discourse analysis journal *Discourse & Society*, and was published in July 2020. In Chapter 7, I present the final study, which is titled 'Self-help and masculinity: speech acts in an online men's group'. This study analyses how the Red Pill functions as a community by considering the extent to which it shares linguistic characteristics with men's online self-help groups. To do this, I inductively determine the speech acts which characterise a set of popular posts and comments, and consider the extent to which these speech acts correspond to face-enhancement, face-threat and face-saving (Locher and Watts, 2005) and different impression management strategies (Jones and Pittman, 1982). This article has been accepted for publication in the pragmatics journal *Pragmatics and Society*. I am the sole author of the two studies outlined in Chapters 6 and 7, and I am the first author of the study in Chapter 5 (see accompanying statement of authorship at the end of Chapter 4). Thus, the work that I present as the original research contribution in this thesis is indeed my own.

It should be noted that Chapter 6 was the first to be published because the study therein was originally intended to be a pilot study for the PhD, before I decided to undertake the PhD by Alternative Format. The majority of the work for Chapter 6 was done in the first year of the PhD (2018-2019). After making this decision, I next opted to do a study which complemented Chapter 6 by utilising a much larger dataset to look at representations of the same gendered social actors (i.e. the corpus-based work in Chapter 5). This work began in the second half of 2019 and carried on through 2020. For my last study, I sought to explore the social elements of the manosphere in order to consider a different facet to the other two studies (i.e. the

pragmatics work in Chapter 7). This work began in the summer of 2020 and carried on through 2021.

Lastly, in Chapter 8, I synthesise the findings of Chapters 5, 6, and 7, and consider the extent to which the manosphere language analysed in this thesis can be classified as hate speech. I then use my findings to suggest ways to potentially mitigate the influence of the manosphere phenomenon, and conclude by presenting limitations of the current research and directions for future research.

Before beginning my next chapter, I would like to provide a statement on some of the language used in this thesis. I use in-group description terms such as men's rights activists, pick-up artists and involuntary celibates because these are the ones the groups in question use to describe themselves. In using these terms, I by no means seek to endorse the negative attitudes and behaviours that they encode. Additionally, throughout this thesis, I refer extensively to relations between heterosexual, cisgender male and female social actors, with very little attention given to non-binary and gender non-conforming individuals, as well as people under the LGBTQIA+ umbrella. This reflects what is present in my datasets, and is in no way intended to insinuate that LGBTQIA+ identities are less valid than heterosexual cisgender ones. Indeed, the focus on heterosexual cisgender individuals in the manosphere reflects the extent to which their understanding of gender and sexuality is outdated and limited. I should also note that in this thesis, in alignment with West and Zimmerman (1987), I use the term "gender" to mean behaviours that individuals display in their interactions with others which perform a particular gender identity. This is distinct from "sex" which categorises individuals based on their genitalia and/or chromosomal typing. Thus, gender expression is taken to mean the results of actions that individuals perform, as opposed to being an innate quality.

Throughout this thesis, I distinguish between sex and gender, although there is no evidence to indicate that the manosphere users whose language I analyse make this distinction themselves. Lastly, I would like to provide a content warning for this thesis, as harassment, sexual assault and domestic violence are referenced throughout, and suicide and homophobia are referenced in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this literature review, I will give an overview of three topics. Firstly, I will explore the existing literature and legislation on hate speech and hate crime, to establish both legal and academic definitions of hate speech. I will also consider the linguistic features of hate speech established in the past literature. Secondly, I will discuss the context behind the type of hate relevant to this thesis, namely online hostility towards women and feminism more generally. Thirdly, I will consider the manosphere phenomenon in more detail, and present its five constituent parts.

1. What constitutes hate speech?

1.1 Legal definitions of hate speech

To avoid giving an overview of all current hate speech legislation and to consider the legislation which would be simplest to apply to online language, only supra-national hate speech legislation will be considered. Following this, I will consider how online hate speech has been treated in the UK context.

Supra-national definitions of hate speech consider hate speech laws as an exemption to laws protecting the right to free speech. Internationally, hate speech is addressed in Article 29 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948, shortened to UDHR), which states that:

in the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.
(United Nations, 1948)

Like the UDHR, the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966, shortened to ICCPR) discusses the right to freedom of expression in its Article 19, paragraph 2, followed by paragraph 3, which emphasises that this freedom is to be rescinded if national security or morality is at stake, and Article 20, which outlaws "advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence". Much like the United Nations UDHR and ICCPR, the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR, Council of Europe, 1950) discusses hate speech as a vague exception to free speech laws, as detailed in its Article 10, paragraph 2:

the exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security,

territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary. (Council of Europe, 1950)

However, these definitions do not give examples of what constitutes hate speech, and only mention hate speech as a potential exception to free speech rather than a problem in its own right. Furthermore, these definitions are arguably too vague to enforce legally, as concepts such as morality are inherently subjective.

Acknowledging the vagueness of the above considerations of hate speech, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (United Nations, 1969, shortened to ICERD) directly asserts that hate speech is a problem in its own right. They call for parties to “take measures against any dissemination of ideas of caste superiority and inferiority or which attempt to justify violence, hatred or discrimination against descent-based communities”. In 2013, the committee acknowledge that such dissemination can occur online, and explicitly recommend that states take action against this “in whatever forms it manifests itself, orally or in print, or disseminated through electronic media, including the Internet and social networking sites” (United Nations, 2013). However, this Convention solely focuses on racial discrimination, and does not consider other groups with protected characteristics. Furthermore, the 2013 ICERD recommendation outlines five contextual factors which should be taken into account when deciding whether to punish hate speech by law: the content and form of the speech; the economic, social, and political climate prevalent at the time, including existing patterns of discrimination; the position or status of the speaker; the reach of the speech; and the objectives of the speech. Although this recommendation explicitly mentions content and form, the only detail given for this is “whether the speech is provocative and direct, in what form it is constructed and disseminated, and the style in which it is delivered”, which does not specify exactly what form and style constitute legally punishable hate speech.

Similarly, the Rabat Plan of Action (2012, organised by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) was written as an addendum to Article 19 by the ICCPR, and suggested implementing a six-part situation-specific threshold test for identifying online hate speech. This threshold test considers: the context, speaker, intent of the speaker, content and form of the speech, extent of the speech act (defined as the publicity and reach of the hate speech), and the likelihood that the speech would lead to action against the target group (2012, p. 11). However, the information on this six-part test constitutes a single page, and does not

elaborate on the linguistic features of hate speech, despite using the terminology of Austin (1962) and Searle's (1969) speech act theory. Furthermore, as Baider (2020) notes, such a context-driven approach to classifying online hate speech has been broadly disregarded in international approaches to online hate speech since the proposal of the Plan (although the 2013 ICERD recommendation is a notable exception).

It is notable that Europe and the US take very distinct approaches to hate speech. Indeed, the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers (1997) recommend defining hate speech more broadly than the UDHR, ICCPR, and the ECHR, as:

covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin. In this sense, hate speech covers comments which are necessarily directed against a person or a particular group of persons. (Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers, 1997)

Additionally, UNESCO's (2015) report on countering hate speech online notes that numerous European countries explicitly outlaw hate speech, and take an approach to monitoring hate speech which outlaws specific content. For example, Holocaust denial is a criminal offence in Germany, and Google search results in Germany that deny the Holocaust are removed. However, Germany is unique in implementing this approach.

Contrastingly, the US holds a more lenient attitude to what constitutes hate speech in comparison to many European countries. The US approach is heavily informed by the case of *Brandenburg v Ohio* (1969) and by extension the First Amendment of the US Constitution, which prevents the government from making laws which prohibit freedom of speech. In *Brandenburg v Ohio*, "mere advocacy" of hateful views in the form of participation in a racist and anti-Semitic Klu Klux Klan rally was not deemed criminal behaviour, as it was not "directed to inciting imminent lawless action and likely to incite or produce such action" (1969). As Banks (2010) notes, the US has set the precedent for what constitutes incitement in supra-national hate speech legislation, as many of the servers for online platforms are physically based in the US. Thus, the legal threshold for what constitutes incitement in the US is higher than that across the EU.

Further considering the international implications that US legislation has, Banks (2010) also notes that due to Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act (1996), which is US Congress legislation, internet service providers are not held criminally responsible for the

speech of their users. As a result, these sites have been reluctant to regulate much of the content that gets posted. Indeed, despite platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube having terms of conduct which discourage hateful language from its users, these terms are widely considered to be not fit for purpose, as much hateful content is not removed in a timely fashion or indeed at all in some cases (e.g. House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2017). However, individual countries have their own approaches to monitoring and allowing such content. I will now consider the UK context in more detail, as this is the context I am writing in.

The UK government's Online Harms White Paper (2019) notes that social media platforms need to be held more accountable for hateful content expressed on their sites. The subsequent Draft Online Safety Bill (2021) is currently being debated in the UK Parliament, and will determine the practicalities of moderating such content. Historically in the UK, several laws have been used to prosecute people for hate speech online. For instance, 34-year-old Jonathan Jennings posted hateful messages and videos online on YouTube and Gab, in which Jennings said he would be first in line to murder Jeremy Corbyn if he became Labour leader, endorsed there being a "burn a mosque" day and said that Hitler "had been born 100 years too early". He was charged in Swansea Crown Court with six offences of sending electronic communications, letters or other articles which are indecent, grossly offensive, threatening or false with intent to cause distress or anxiety (under the Malicious Communications Act, 1988), and four charges of publishing/distributing written material which is threatening/abusive/insulting with intent/likely to stir up racial hatred (under the Public Order Act (1986)). Jennings was jailed for 16 months in August 2018 (Forrest, 2018). Similarly, 24-year-old Liam Stacey was jailed in 2012 for 56 days for posting racist remarks on Twitter about black footballer Fabrice Muamba, and he was charged under the Public Order Act (1986) (Morris, 2012).

More recently, multiple people were arrested in the summer of 2021 after posting racist abuse on Twitter about three black footballers: Marcus Rashford, Bukayo Saka, and Jadon Sancho. The majority of these arrests were on suspicion of the accused breaching either the Malicious Communications Act (1988) or Section 127 of the Communications Act (2003) (Lee, 2021), although one individual was arrested on suspicion of breaching the Public Order Act (1986) (Gardner, 2021). However, although there have been several high-profile cases in the media where celebrities had been sent offensive Twitter messages, these arrests do not always lead to a prosecution. In 2012, the then Director of Public Prosecutions, Sir Keir Starmer, noted that when considering offensive messages, "the question for the Crown Prosecution Service is not

whether it was offensive, but whether it was so grossly offensive that criminal charges should be brought” (Starmer, 2012). Overall, this demonstrates that a multitude of laws are used to police online hate speech, and these laws are applied inconsistently. It should also be noted that, considering the sheer amount of abuse posted online (e.g. The Pew Research Center, 2021), prosecutions are rare.

Furthermore, Section 127 of the Communications Act (2003) has been applied in cases where feminist campaigners have been harassed on social media, such as when Caroline Criado-Perez and MP Stella Creasy both voiced support for a campaign to have Jane Austen’s portrait on a banknote (see *R vs Nimmo and Sorley*, 2014). This criminal harassment consisted of targeted rape threats and death threats (see Hardaker and McGlashan, 2016). Section 127 states that “a person is guilty of an offence if he: a) sends by means of a public electronic communications network a message or other matter that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character”. However, it is notable that examples of the Communications Act (2003) being applied to gender-based hostility are rare.

Indeed, it should be acknowledged that none of the above definitions of hate speech specify that hate against women should be covered under hate speech legislation, and that gender is not considered a protected characteristic in the UK, be it England and Wales (Crown Prosecution Service, 2021), Scotland (The Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill, 2021), or Northern Ireland (Public Prosecution Service Northern Ireland, 2021). Although there were growing calls for misogyny to be classified as a hate crime in England and Wales (e.g. Zempi and Smith, 2021), this motion was rejected in December 2021 (Law Commission, 2021). However, the Law Commission (2021, p.16) have recommended that offences which concern stirring up hatred (i.e. under the Public Order Act, 1986) be extended to cover hatred on the basis of sex or gender, as they only presently cover hatred on the basis of race, religion, and sexual orientation. This recommendation was made “in response to the growing threat of ‘incel’ ideology, and its potential to lead to serious criminal offending” (2021, p.15). This would include online abuse against women which leads to “serious psychological harm”, according to the Joint Committee on the Draft Online Safety Bill (2021, p.165), but these new policies have not yet been implemented. As for the rest of the UK, an independent review of hate crime legislation in Northern Ireland recommends adding sex and gender to the list of protected characteristics (Department of Justice, 2020, p. 19). An amendment to hate crime law that would have classed women as a protected group in Scotland was defeated in March 2021 (The Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill, 2021), although misogynistic abuse may be made

an offence in its own right in Scotland. Thus, progress towards classifying women as a protected group is not uniform across the jurisdictions.

Having considered supra-national hate speech legislation and legislation in the UK, I will now consider the differences between online and offline hate speech, and introduce past literature from the field of law. This literature categorises hateful speech in two ways: in terms of consequences (inciting violence, inciting discrimination or inciting hatred in others), and in terms of content (if the content and linguistic features of the speech are sufficiently hateful to constitute hate speech).

1.2 Academic approaches to hate speech

Before discussing the consequence-based and content and linguistic feature based approaches to hate speech, I will discuss whether online and offline hate speech should be conceptualised in a similar fashion. Eichhorn (2001) argues that hateful speech online should not be taken as seriously as hateful speech offline, as there is a greater opportunity for counter speech online, and hateful websites can be avoided. However, Eichhorn's (2001) statement presupposes that users will come across counter speech. This is not the case on sites such as Reddit, where users curate their feed to include content which they are personally interested in. Furthermore, this argument ignores the cumulative effect that unregulated and unremoved hate speech online can have on marginalised communities, such as self-censoring behaviours (Mantilla, 2013; Jane, 2014a; Megarry, 2014; Manne, 2018). This is supported by Powell and Henry (2017), who conducted a 5,000 participant survey in which people discussed the prevalence of online verbal harassment, image-based sexual harassment and the effects of online sexism. They found that being a victim of online harassment can lead to self-censoring behaviours both online and offline, and to taking precautions against potential future harassment such as changing what one posts online, and if they choose to post at all.

Furthermore, Brown (2017) posits that online hate is dangerous for four reasons specific to the online context. These are: ease of access to online hate groups, the anonymity of users posting hateful content, the size of the potential audience for such content, and the fact that the online context gives people the opportunity to experiment with producing hate speech for the first time in the heat of a moment, and by doing so, interact with like-minded people. Indeed, the social aspect of hateful online communities should not be underestimated. In fact, both De Koster and Houtman (2008) and Bowman-Grieve (2009) note the importance of social interaction on Stormfront, as members find validation from others, and members who experience social isolation offline consider the community to be a refuge. Interactions between older and newer members also induce newer members into the community, and

encourage them to express their opinions on relevant topics and to participate in offline activism in some cases (although De Koster and Houtman (2008) assert that this is rare). Similarly, in their interviews with former right-wing extremists, Gaudette, Scrivens and Venkatesh (2020) found that they agreed that the internet played a pivotal role in their radicalisation. This is because they were able to access extremist content (either by finding it themselves online, or being directed to it from elsewhere) as well as a network of like-minded people to feel connected to. Additionally, Wojcieszak (2010) found that participation in online hate groups strengthens the hateful opinions first held when beginning participation on hate sites.

Based on these considerations, I argue that hate speech online should not be considered lesser than hate speech offline, as it has the ability to target more of a vulnerable group than individual instances offline, and the online medium serves as a readily available source of information for those new to hate communities.

1.2.1 The consequence-based approach

I will now discuss consequence-based approaches to hate speech which assert that, to qualify as hate speech, the speech must be directed at a member of a marginalised group, constitute incitement to violent action, constitute incitement to discrimination against the targeted group, or lead to hatred of the target group being incited in others (Sorial, 2015).

Firstly, considering targeting members of marginalised groups, past hate speech definitions have emphasised that the speech must be “directed against a member of a historically oppressed group” (Matsuda et al., 1993, p. 36). Thus, if hateful opinions are expressed out of earshot (or sight online), this cannot be considered hate speech. Richardson-Self (2018) agrees with this definition in her consideration of applying hate speech categorisations to speech concerning women. She uses Manne’s (2018) definitions of sexism and misogyny to determine what constitutes hate speech in this context. Manne (2018) defines sexism as the discriminatory beliefs about women that individuals hold, whereas she defines misogyny as seeking to enforce these beliefs by aiming to silence its victims. However, she also observes that sexist beliefs can lead to misogynist behaviour. Using Manne’s (2018) distinction, Richardson-Self (2018) argues that sexist speech (e.g. suggesting that women are weaker than men) is not hate speech but misogynist speech is (e.g. threatening a woman with violence for not conforming to feminine standards), as it seeks to coerce its target to behave differently.

Turning to what constitutes incitement, academic definitions of hate speech acknowledge that incitement can be defined in multiple ways. For instance, it is unclear whether incitement, as it

is referenced in legal definitions of hate speech, solely refers to speech “directed to inciting imminent lawless action” as outlined in *Brandenburg v Ohio* (1969), or if incitement also includes speech which constitutes calls to violence or advocates hatred (UNESCO, 2015). For instance, Mafeza (2016, p. 118) defines hate speech as “all forms of expression which spread and promote hatred, incite or induce others to commit violence or genocide against a group of people based on their racial, national, ethnic and religious affiliation”. Thus, Mafeza (2016) acknowledges that language which results in either violence or hatred against a group can be classified as hate speech, but does not consider gender to be a motivation for hate speech. UNESCO (2015) also consider multiple interpretations of incitement by defining hate speech in two ways: targeting members of an out-group to dehumanise them (echoing Matsuda et al., 1993, and Manne, 2018, on the targeting criterion), and reinforcing hateful views within an in-group. However, this definition does not specify what constitutes a hateful view, nor does it consider linguistic features of hate speech other than dehumanisation.

Also considering these multiple definitions of incitement, Waldron (2012) argues that hate speech serves two functions: harming the dignity of the targeted group, and to signal to like-minded people that one shares hateful beliefs with them. Firstly, considering dignity, Waldron (2012) defines this as a person’s basic entitlement to be seen as an upstanding member of society regardless of demographic and before any personal action is considered. He posits that dignity is harmed in four ways: when hate speech is presented through factual claims, a whole group of people are condemned via character generalisation or through dehumanisation, and finally slogans are used to condemn the group. Based on this, he argues that laws such as ICCPR’s Article 7 and ECHR’s Article 3, which protect people from having their status as people diminished, should protect others from dehumanising hate speech. Furthermore, Croom (2013) notes that dehumanising particular groups has historically led to individuals justifying abuses against these groups. Additionally, dehumanising women has been linked to being more willing to sexually harass and assault them, and to report negative attitudes about female victims of assault (Rudman and Mescher, 2012). Dehumanising people has been linked to having a lack of pain empathy for those people (Murrow and Murrow, 2015). Thus, this is a key linguistic feature of hate speech to consider. However, as argued by Manne (2020) and Over (2021), a dehumanisation-centred approach may be overly simplistic, as groups can become targets of hate without being conceptualised as sub-human or non-human. Thus, the other aspects of dignity harm that Waldron (2012) considers should not be ignored.

Furthermore, the latter half of Waldron’s (2012) definition of hate speech emphasises the importance of making connections with those who share hateful beliefs (echoing De Koster

and Houtman, 2008; Bowman-Grieve, 2009; and Gaudette, Scrivens and Venkatesh, 2020) and thus empowering them to continue spreading such beliefs. This signalling of hateful beliefs does not necessitate the speech in question being directed at a member of the target group. Such an approach is also supported by Allport (1954), who asserts that there is a five-point cline for how prejudice is enacted and develops into stronger forms: antilocution (negative speech/hate speech about an out-group), avoidance, discrimination, physical attack, and finally, extermination. Thus, antilocution against women in closed groups may lead to stronger forms of prejudice, although the inevitability of such a cline across all individuals and cultures should not be overestimated. Still, evidence for the extermination of women can be found in the practice of sex-selective abortion and female infanticide, such as in China and India (Davis, 2012), and in femicide, which is a phenomenon that can be observed worldwide (World Health Organisation, 2012). However, it should be noted that the end goal of misogyny is not the extermination of all women, but rather the compliance of women in a system which subjugates them and denies them equal power to men. Additionally, we can observe that speech need not be directed at an individual to evoke changes in behaviour, as a dominant culture of misogynist behaviour both online and offline can result in women self-censoring regardless of whether they have been individually targeted.

Waldron (2012) argues that the “hate” in hate speech could refer to the feeling the speaker intends on evoking in others, meaning that ideological recruitment would come under his definition of hate speech. Similarly, Sorial (2015) argues that definitions of incitement should include stirring up feelings of hatred as well as inciting discrimination and violence, thus incorporating advocacy into her definition. However, this idea of the hate emotion being integral when defining hate speech has since been critiqued by Manne (2018), who argues that those who utter misogynist speech need not necessarily hate women but instead feel entitled to certain behaviours from women. Thus, it may not be hate that is expressed and incited by hate speech, but rather anger, fear, entitlement, or many other emotions.

Furthermore, whether or not someone agrees with the hateful language they are exposed to, psychological research demonstrates that simply being exposed to hateful language can affect the way we treat others. Fasoli et al. (2015) tested the effects of exposure to homophobic epithets, category labels and general insults on participants, and found that exposure to homophobic language led to animal characteristics being ascribed to LGBT people and to physical distancing from them. Experimenting with sexist language (regardless of personal beliefs) can also lead to negative evaluations of women (Fox et al., 2015): 172 participants used either an anonymous or non-anonymous Twitter account to use a sexist hashtag, by

either creating a post using it or by retweeting an existing post. Participants then completed a survey and a hiring simulation where they evaluated CVs by both men and women. The authors found that anonymous participants reported more hostile sexist beliefs (beliefs which frame women as inferior to men, according to Glick and Fiske, 1996) such as women being perceived as less intelligent than men than non-anonymous ones. The authors also found that composing sexist tweets made participants evaluate female employees as less competent than those in the retweeting condition. This suggests that having the space to experiment with sexist language online, regardless to internal emotion state, can lead to negative evaluations of women.

Although Waldron (2012) details various potential linguistic features of hate speech, such considerations are rare in consequence-based approaches to hate speech. I will therefore now consider a content-based approach to hate speech, which takes into account the content and linguistic features of such speech.

1.2.2 The content and linguistic feature based approach

Studies of the linguistic features of offline hate speech are rare. For instance, Culpeper, Iganski and Sweiry (2017) use a dataset of religiously-aggravated hate crime cases from the Crown Prosecution Service to consider the linguistic difference between what is prosecutable hate speech and what is not. They found that threats and insults which seek to coerce others to behave in a certain way are forms of hateful language which one can be prosecuted for, whereas other forms such as pointed criticisms demonstrate “advocacy” which one cannot be prosecuted for. However, Culpeper, Iganski and Sweiry (2017) noted that the boundary between advocacy and incitement is blurred.

Furthermore, it would be untrue to say that all threats constitute hate speech, as this ignores instances where threats of violence are issued sarcastically. This is well illustrated by the case of Paul Chambers who, on Twitter in July 2010, posted the message “Crap! Robin Hood airport is closed. You've got a week and a bit to get your shit together otherwise I'm blowing the airport sky high!!” (see Kelsey and Bennett, 2014). While this was dismissed as a joke by the airport staff, Chambers was charged under the Communications Act (2003) for this tweet, although this was overturned following a successful High Court appeal and much support from celebrities on Twitter. Indeed, Kelsey and Bennett (2014) consider that the overturning of Chambers’ charge was directly influenced by a large audience of Twitter users expressing “synoptic resistance” (i.e. the many resisting the influence of the few), and thus demonstrate that rulings on what constitutes hate speech in terms of content can be overturned following widespread public backlash.

Much linguistic research into hateful speech online has been conducted on xenophobic, racist and anti-LGBT websites, where members of the target group were not addressed (e.g. Lorenzo-Dus and Macdonald, 2018, on online Jihadist propaganda magazines; Meddaugh and Kay, 2009, Brindle, 2018, and de Gibert et al., 2018, on the neo-Nazi forum Stormfront; Ruzaitė, 2018, in a Lithuanian corpus of online anti-LGBTQ user-generated comments; Baider, 2018, in online anti-LGBT Greek Cypriot comments). In all of these studies, hateful speech was expressed via: an endorsement of essentialised and traditional gender roles; victim-victimiser reversals in which powerful groups see themselves as victimised by protected groups; dehumanisation; and out-groups being described in terms of burden, immorality, eliciting disgust, and as a threat to individual and communal security. Although some of these features may not constitute hate speech in their own right (i.e. endorsing traditional gender roles and victim-victimiser reversals), they can be deemed hateful when combined with other linguistic features, and when considered in a context of historical group discrimination. The linguistic features of hate speech discussed in these studies lead us to a broader definition of the phenomenon than the definitions which focus on speech constituting a legal offence. For this reason, Ruzaitė (2018) (among others, e.g. Özarıslan, 2014) differentiates between hate speech and hate crime, in that hate crime can be linked to explicit calls to violent action and prosecutable offences, whereas hate speech more broadly encompasses hateful language which does not necessarily necessitate legal action.

Furthermore, some academic literature which focuses on the content of hateful language (including Sharma et al., 2018) includes a wider range of groups in their list of potential hate speech victims than the Crown Prosecution Service does. For instance, Cohen-Almagor (2011) argues that expressing a wider range of discriminatory beliefs (such as those based on sex and gender) constitutes hate speech. Lillian (2007) specifically focuses on hate speech against women and argues that anti-feminist literature which stereotypes women as emotional and irrational, and feminist women in particular as extremist, totalitarian, and dangerous, should be considered hate speech. On this basis, Lillian (2007) argues that sexist depictions of women in mainstream media should be classified as hate speech. Ruzaitė (2018) also argues that sexism should be classified as hate speech, and recommends defining hate speech as including sexist/racist slurs, defending hateful opinions, and attacking and negatively stereotyping a minority.

However, classifying hate speech using a strict list of offensive words by identifying slurs (e.g. Ruzaitė, 2018) or by utilising a computational bag of words approach (e.g. Burnap and Williams, 2015 analysing hate on the basis of ethnicity and religion on Twitter) ignores how

context can influence how such words are used. Indeed, Croom (2013) acknowledges that while it is useful to consider the contexts in which slurs have been historically used, slurs are also used as reclaimed terms and as terms of endearment amongst peers. Furthermore, researchers such as Meddaugh and Kay (2009) and Sorial (2015) observe that it is not appropriate to only define the most explicit language as hate speech. For instance, considering online Holocaust denial literature, Sorial (2015) notes that the anti-Semitic and racist contents of this literature constitute hate speech, despite much of the language taking the form of a debate and an academic argument. She goes on to suggest that presenting hate speech in this deceptively formal and educated manner could make hateful opinions more acceptable to others and thus normalise hateful views. Similarly, Meddaugh and Kay (2009) found in their analysis of Stormfront posts that racism was often couched in pseudo-scientific terms designed to appeal to a wide audience. Meddaugh and Kay (2009) still classify such racist language as hate speech, despite it not taking the form of explicit vitriol.

In their discussion of hate speech, Sharma et al. (2018) describe such speech as “harmful” as opposed to hateful, which arguably suggests a consequence-based definition rather than one based on content. However, Sharma et al. (2018) take a content-based approach by defining online harmful speech in three ways, depending on the presumed hateful intent of the speaker. Class I (the most serious class) aims to incite hatred and violence, and is either public or directed at the group in question. Examples of Class I harmful speech include propaganda, condoning violence towards others, and speech which is racist and/or sexist. Class II harmful speech is defined as verbal duelling, “accusing, threatening and using aggressive/provocative language for disagreeing” and insults which are highly provocative when addressing an individual, but do not mention violence. Lastly, Class III harmful speech is mildly provocative speech targeted at an individual which is most likely to be characterised as trolling, irony or sarcasm. Although these linguistic categories were demonstrably visible across approximately 9000 tweets in that study, it may be a misnomer to describe such categories as based on speaker intention. After all, without asking the speaker directly (and possibly not even then), we cannot know the motivations for posting such messages, although we can infer their intended effect. Furthermore, Sharma et al. (2018) do not specify the linguistic features which constitute hateful disagreement, verbal duelling and provocative insults, which limits the extent to which these categories can be applied by others.

Having presented the above arguments, I now posit the two definitions of hate speech I will use as the basis for answering Research Question 3 of this thesis. Firstly, there is legally prosecutable hate speech (e.g. under the Malicious Communications Act, 1988, or Section 127

of the Communications Act, 2003), which constitutes threats and insults targeted at a member of a protected group, on the basis of the victim's membership to that group. This also includes incitement to violence, discrimination, and hate (or fear or entitlement or anger) towards the group (e.g. under the Public Order Act, 1986), the judgement of which will depend on the content and reach of the speech, status of the speaker, and the impact it has on the target. I argue that gender, specifically hostility against women, should be added to the list of protected characteristics for these offences, due to the historical discrimination and abuse that women have faced in the past and continue to face in the present. Secondly, there is hate speech which is not directed at a member of the target group, but still constitutes hateful beliefs towards certain groups (including women). This can be defined as promoting beliefs, be it online or offline, which stereotype and condemn groups which have been historically discriminated against, and encouraging others to hate or otherwise hold animosity towards these groups. This can take the form of dehumanisation, condemning character generalisations (for example, in terms of burden, immorality, disgust, and threat), slogans, slurs, and otherwise indicating such groups are inferior to other groups. Such speech could be prosecuted under the Public Order Act (1986) although the appropriateness of legal sanctions in such a context is ambiguous. Both of these hate speech definitions exclude instances where the speaker produces such speech in a context which indicates the speaker does not mean what they say, and no violence, discrimination or hatred is incited (e.g. the Chambers case), although this is notoriously difficult to determine.

In this section, I have given an overview of the literature on online hate speech from the viewpoint of the US and some European countries. This overview echoes Perry and Olsson's (2009) sentiment that hate websites cannot be considered a solely national phenomenon based on server location, due to the international accessibility of these websites and the international links shared within them. I have also considered how hate speech is treated in the specific UK context, as this is the context I am writing in. I have then considered that incitement, which is a key concept in defining hate speech, can refer to inducing hate of a target group in others, have considered what constitutes hateful language in terms of content, and considered that women can be victims of hate speech. To further investigate whether such a classification is appropriate, in the next section, I consider how women are harassed online, and the prevalence of online anti-feminism.

[2. Resistance to women and feminism online](#)

Resistance to women occupying space online has existed since the participatory web of the 1990s (Herring, 1999) and still exists in the present day. Presently, the internet can be

regarded as a male-dominated domain (Banet-Weiser and Miltner, 2016; Nicholas and Agius, 2018) and is used as a platform for both harassing women and expressing sexist opinions. Much research into the treatment of women online has investigated the disproportionate amount of online abuse (including rape threats and death threats) that women in the public eye and women MPs receive in comparison to their male counterparts, and the gendered nature of this abuse (e.g. Hardaker and McGlashan, 2016; Southern and Harmer, 2019; Amnesty Global Insights, 2017). Similarly, research has analysed the sexualised abuse that women who are not in the public eye receive on online dating platforms (Thompson, 2018), as well as the online harassment they receive by virtue of their gender (Mantilla, 2013; Megarry, 2014; Citron, 2014; Jane, 2014b; Cole, 2015; Sobieraj, 2018). This abuse takes the form of negatively evaluating women's appearance and sexual propriety, shaming, intimidating, and discrediting women, constructing femininity as a weakness, calling attention to women's bodies, name-calling, threats of sexual violence, and threats of "doxing" (revealing information about a person's offline identity such as their address without their consent). Mantilla (2013) also notes the intensity and longevity of these attacks, while Sobieraj (2018) argues that calling attention to women's bodies seeks to assert offline power associated with intimidating physical stature and physical threat online. This highlights that an approach to gender-based hostility which considers the online and offline to be completely distinct is simplistic (Jurgenson, 2012), as online expressions of sexism and misogyny are a reflection of a widespread offline culture of sexism and misogyny.

As all the scholars referenced above have noted, these online threats seek to silence both women in the public and women more generally, and social media platforms are currently not protecting women against this harassment. Indeed, online abuse encourages women to self-silence for fear of being harassed. Jane (2014a, p. 567) asserts that sexist "e-bile" "is likely reducing the inclusivity of the cybersphere", and notes that women who have been targeted by e-bile experience feelings of irritation, anxiety, sadness, loneliness, and vulnerability (2014b, p. 536). These studies highlight that there is currently a culture of hostility against women online, and the resulting avoidance strategies developed by victims of gender-based hate mirror the ones used by the offline gender-based hate victims discussed in Nielsen (2004) and Powell and Henry (2017).

Resistance to feminism can also be found online, although it should be noted in many cases feminism is represented as a misandrist movement which seeks to give women more power in society than men, as opposed to a movement dedicated to gender equality. Arguably, those who resist feminism online interpret feminism in this former sense, an attitude which is

perhaps becoming prevalent in the mainstream (Bates, 2020). This anti-feminist attitude is widespread on websites such as Urban Dictionary (Ging et al., 2019), YouTube (Trott, 2020), Reddit, and others. For example, Garcia-Favaro and Gill (2016) analysed a corpus of 5,140 online comments on news websites discussing the 2013 Lose The Lads' Mags campaign in the UK. Using a post-structuralist feminist critical discourse analysis approach, they found four recurring arguments in the comments: that there are gendered double standards in that men are now being objectified more than women, that male (hetero)sexuality is under threat, that feminism is unconcerned with equality but out to hurt men, and that there is a war on the "normal bloke" (i.e. that men cannot resist looking at sexualised images of women but are nevertheless expected to resist this). Feminists were also represented as extremists via terms such as "fascists", "Stalinists" and "feminazis" (2016, p. 390). Garcia-Favaro and Gill (2016) interpret this reaction to this campaign as a post-feminist movement (McRobbie, 2008) as opposed to an anti-feminist one, in that it presupposes that men and women have reached a stage of equality and that this is positive. However, the main argument is that the feminist movement has achieved its goals (i.e. gender equality), and that any further feminist campaigning is rooted in misandry.

McRobbie's (2008) concept of post-feminism is an inherently neo-liberal one in that women are encouraged to see themselves as empowered and liberated individuals (e.g. able to focus on their careers over families), but are still discriminated against as a group (e.g. via the gender pay gap). Contrastingly, anti-feminism has been defined by Faludi (1991) as a media-manufactured backlash movement which argues that feminism is a negative movement which harms women and/or men. For instance, Faludi (1991) cites an alleged infertility epidemic and no-fault divorces negatively affecting women's finances as examples of faux-outrages which were perpetuated in the media and popular culture. Kimmel (1987) also notes that anti-feminism portrays feminism as defying nature, and thus essentialises different sex roles for men and women. Although anti-feminism and post-feminism can be defined in isolation from each other, Ging (2019) notes an overlap between post-feminism and anti-feminism. For example, if women are perceived to hold more power than they genuinely do (as is the case in a post-feminist society), this leads to resentment from men and a resistance to feminist policies which work towards equality for women.

Although online anti-feminism is arguably a reflection of offline anti-feminist sentiment, it has been historically associated with geek communities online. Perhaps the most infamous online anti-feminist movement, known as GamerGate, occurred in August 2014, in which game developers Zoe Quinn and Brianna Wu, and feminist media critic Anita Sarkeesian, were the

victims of an ongoing online harassment campaign which included rape threats, death threats and doxxing. This was done under the guise that Quinn, Wu and Sarkeesian were threatening the ethical integrity of games journalism, although these claims were baseless. Braithwaite (2016) posits that GamerGate manifested as a result of threatened geek masculinity, which Kendall (2011) defines as white, intellectual, weak, uncool, and lacking in sexual success, in direct contrast to men who are black, physically strong, and ascribed coolness and sexual success. Thus, women were perceived to threaten the technological domains that were previously perceived as solely masculine territory.

This definition of geek masculinity exists in contrast to hegemonic masculinity, which is defined by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) as the most honoured way of performing masculinity at any given time, and which seeks to subordinate women and other masculinities to gain societal power. This has historically included features such as heteronormativity, economic freedom, physical strength, and sexual prowess. This definition accounts for different performances of masculinity having different values across communities. It should be noted here that hegemonic masculinity is distinct from toxic masculinity, which is characterised by extreme competition and greed, lack of consideration for the feelings of others, a need to control others, violence, and subjugation of women, feminine characteristics, and non-dominant masculinities (Kupers, 2005). The term “toxic” is used to reflect the harm that these characteristics cause to both the individual and others around them. This supports Coston and Kimmel’s (2012) findings that different subsets of men (homosexual men, men with disabilities, and working-class men) align to hegemonic masculine ideals (such as demonstrating sexual prowess) when they feel their masculinity is at stake. Geek masculinity can be conceptualised as simultaneously complicit in maintaining hegemonic masculinity, while being seen as inferior to it (a concept referred to as hybrid masculinity by Bridges and Pascoe in 2014).

This section demonstrates that anti-feminism online has been mainstreamed to an extent, be it in geek communities or the internet more generally. This manifests in two ways: either women are explicitly targeted, or women are discussed in disparaging ways but are not direct targets of harassment. The next section focuses on the latter, and specifically considers the anti-feminist network known as the manosphere. The manosphere is the modern online manifestation of offline men’s movements and anti-feminist movements which preceded the manosphere by decades if not centuries. By looking specifically at the manosphere, I seek to establish the extent to which this network dedicated to anti-feminist content can be considered an extreme phenomenon in that its content constitutes hate speech, or whether

the manosphere is simply an extension of existing popular anti-feminist sentiment and thus is no more extreme than mainstream depictions of gender relations.

3. The Manosphere

Broadly, the manosphere refers to a loose network of websites who post anti-feminist content which claims that “feminist values dominate society, that this fact is suppressed by feminists and ‘political correctness’, and that men must fight back against an overreaching, misandrist culture to protect their very existence” (Marwick and Caplan, 2018, p. 4). Marwick and Caplan (2018) note that the manosphere is characterised by feelings of insecurity and victimisation, which in turn justifies the “networked harassment” (Banet-Weiser and Miltner, 2016) of feminists online. This notion of manosphere insecurity is in turn supported by Blais and Dupuis-Déri (2012), who note that anti-feminist movements gain popularity when feminists make gains in society and achieve visibility, suggesting that it is a fear that men are losing societal powers which motivates these movements. Blais and Dupuis-Déri (2012, p. 25) refer to this backlash movement as masculinism and argue that it is defined by a belief that men are in crisis due to feminist gains in society, and that the solution is to denounce feminism and to uphold ideals of masculinity which are rooted in subjugating women and men who do not conform to their ideals (see Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Thus, masculinists support taking action to defend male privileges in society. Furthermore, masculinists use evolutionary psychology literature to argue that men and women are innately different and naturally predisposed to taking distinct roles in society (i.e. women as carers and mothers), an idea which feminism has sought to deconstruct.

Utilising Papacharissi’s (2014) notion of affective publics, Ging (2017) notes that the manosphere is broadly a connective movement, which is characterised by gathering many emotionally charged individual stories to develop a narrative without focusing on specific individuals within a community. This is opposed to a movement focused on collective action which campaigns towards common goals and often rallies around community leaders. Furthermore, Ging (speaking on the Tech Against Terrorism podcast in 2020) observes the importance of the social aspect of the manosphere for many users, and argues that the manosphere should be conceptualised as both a movement (focussed on sexist ideology) and community (focussed on creating opportunities for social acceptance and bonding between users).

Based on a content analysis of 38 of manosphere websites, Ging (2017) identifies five groups within the manosphere: men’s rights activists (hereafter referred to as MRAs, who argue that men are discriminated against in wider society), Men Going Their Own Way (hereafter referred

to as MGTOWs, male separatists), pick-up artists (hereafter referred to as PUAs, who use formulaic tactics known as “game” to seduce women), traditional Christian conservatives, and members of gamer/geek culture. She separately acknowledges involuntary celibates (also known as incels). As well as noting the MRA and PUA subsections of the manosphere, Jane (2018) also notes the presence of sub-cultural trolls, which she defines as libertarians who use appeals to free speech to justify creating and engaging with sexist, racist, sadistic and otherwise politically incorrect content. However, since Ging’s (2017) landmark study on the manosphere, four main groups are broadly agreed upon in the literature: MRAs, MGTOWs, PUAs, and incels (e.g. Lilly, 2016; Ribeiro et al., 2020; Bates, 2020). However, Ribeiro et al. (2020) note the importance of a fifth manosphere community known as *The Red Pill* (also known as TRP), but do not classify it as a group in its own right due to its overlap with other manosphere groups.

In order to obtain a truly comprehensive snapshot of the manosphere, Ribeiro et al. (2020) collected 38 million posts obtained from seven manosphere forums (7.5 million posts from 138,000 users) and 57 subreddits (30.9 million posts from 1.3 million users). They observe that a migration between manosphere communities is currently underway, in that users from older communities such as MRAs and PUAs are moving to newer ones such as MGTOW, incel, and TRP. Based on a sentiment analysis undertaken using the Google Perspective API, they also note that the older communities have stable “toxicity” scores whereas MGTOW and incel have become more toxic over time. Combined with the fact that manosphere activity on Reddit has increased over time, this suggests that overall, the manosphere is becoming a more popular and more extreme place. Indeed, it should also be noted that two manosphere websites (the MRA site *A Voice For Men* and Daryush Valizadeh’s *Return of Kings* website) have been dubbed hate sites by the Southern Poverty Law Center (n.d.).

Now, let us consider the language used within multiple manosphere communities. One recurring theme across Ging’s (2017) sample is derogatory references to women, including “cumdumpsters”, “feminazis”, “femtards”, and “cunts”. Furthermore, Jane (2018) argues that manosphere groups harass women in similar ways, referencing their alleged unattractiveness, both sexual promiscuity and sexual frigidity, unintelligence, mental illness, and misinformed political opinions. Thus, all manosphere groups are united by sexist attitudes towards women.

Analysing 192 MRA and PUA articles, Lilly (2016) found three main themes throughout the posts: the argument that society is strongest when men are in positions of power, the argument that masculine ideals are being replaced by feminine ones, and the argument that

the decline of the nuclear family model has led to a weakening of society. Considering the representation of men and women, Lilly (2016) found that women were represented as entitled, irrational/unintelligent, manipulative, and selfish across both communities, as well as promiscuous, cold, and career-driven in PUA articles. Only 27 articles featured positive representations of femininity, and these discussed traditional femininity based on a woman's commitment to family, maternal qualities, and selflessness (on the MRA sites) as well as physical beauty and amicability (on the PUA sites). Feminism is also dismissed as an ideological movement which subordinates men, and feminists are dismissed as physically unattractive, patronising to women, and hypocritical. In contrast, men are viewed as virtuous, but often not masculine enough, thus acknowledging a hierarchy of masculinity.

Choosing to focus on one manosphere site, *Return of Kings*, Mountford (2018) uses a topic modelling approach to find three main topics across the site: "goals and growth", which occurred in 46% of documents, "pick-up", which occurred in 35%, and an interlinked group of topics of "stats and examples", "personal relationships are political", "international society comparison", and "prescriptive society". This highlights that discussions in the manosphere do not solely focus on women. This being said, Mountford (2018) also notes that women are considered sexual commodities across the website, but notes that different gendered social actor terms carry different connotations. He observes that "girl" is used as the female collective noun and to refer to sexual promiscuity, "woman" refers to a female person who has been unfairly empowered by feminism, "lady" refers to a female suitable for marriage or long-term partnership, and "female" has links to theoretical and scientific terms.

Furthermore, past literature has made links between the manosphere and a wider political movement known as the alternative right (or alt-right). The term alt-right was originally coined in 2008 by Richard Spencer (a Neo-Nazi and white supremacist who led the 2017 Unite The Right rally in Charlottesville) to refer to a "loose set of far-right ideals centered on "white identity" and the preservation of "Western civilization"" (Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d.). The Southern Poverty Law Center acknowledge that the alt-right is characterised by its young following (i.e. in their twenties) and their heavy use of social media and engagement with online meme culture.

Points of overlap include figures such as Milo Yiannopoulos (former editor of the far-right wing news outlet Breitbart and a key figure in the GamerGate movement), Matt Forney (a writer for both manosphere and alt-right websites), and Paul Elam (the curator of the anti-feminist MRA site *A Voice For Men*). It should also be noted that the movements share lexical items. For

example, the term “cuck” is used to refer to left-wing men or men who consider themselves feminists¹ (Marwick and Caplan, 2018; Lyons, 2017; Nicholas and Agius, 2018). Also, the term “red pill” refers to a process of ideological enlightenment upon accepting the beliefs behind the respective movement (Lewis and Marwick, 2017). The term is a reference to the science fiction film *The Matrix* (Wachowski and Wachowski, 1999), in which the protagonist Neo lives in a simulation known as the Matrix and is offered a choice of two pills by the rebel leader Morpheus: the red pill or the blue pill. The red pill would take Neo out of the simulation and free him from the dream world he has been enslaved in, whereas the blue pill would make him forget that he lives in a simulation. Thus, the red pill represents enlightenment and freedom whereas the blue pill represents wilful ignorance. Although the motif of “the red pill” has been co-opted by the manosphere, the alt-right, and the far-right, it should be noted that the source material, *The Matrix*, was originally intended as an allegory for transgender people (see Lilly Wachowski in White, 2020), and Lana and Lilly Wachowski (the directors and writers) are trans women themselves. Commentators have also argued that, in *The Matrix*, the red pill itself was intended to represent prescription estrogen, which was red at the time (Long Chu, 2019).

The main point of overlap between the manosphere and the alt-right lies in their anti-feminist beliefs and belief that traditional masculinity is in crisis (Kelly, 2017; Lewis and Marwick, 2017; Lyons, 2017). For instance, Lyons (2017, p. 8) notes that women are portrayed in alt-right spaces as “irrational, vindictive creatures who need and want men to rule over them and who should be stripped of any political role”. Lyons (2017) suggests that this overlap could lead to manosphere users accessing alt-right communities, which have been linked to violent incidents such as the Unite The Right rally in Charlottesville in 2017. Indeed, this overlap has been confirmed by Mamié et al. (2021), who found significant overlap in their userbases on both YouTube and Reddit, particularly the MRA and MGTOW subsets, and that manosphere users migrated to alt-right communities over time.

The past literature has also been quick to warn that participating in the manosphere could lead to harm against women offline, as it is difficult to completely restrict the actions of the manosphere to the online realm (e.g. Lyons, 2017; Van Valkenburgh, 2018), especially in the cases of the PUA and incel communities (see Section 3.3 and 3.4). Furthermore, Bates (2020) and Manne (2020) argue that the manosphere (in particular incel-motivated attackers) have ideological similarities in common with perpetrators of domestic and intimate partner violence, in that “members of the manosphere explicitly advocate physical and psychological

¹ As opposed to “cuck” being used as a fetish term referring to a man who allows his female partner to have sexual relations with other men.

violence against female partners, in order to create structure and discipline within the domestic sphere” (Bates, 2020, p. 182). However, we cannot claim to know the criminal history of every person who has interacted with the manosphere, so it is not accurate to say these people are destined to become violent towards women.

The extent to which we can describe the manosphere as an extremist (and thus not mainstream) phenomenon is also debatable. For example, Ging (2019, p. 57) argues that the focus on sexual relationships that incels and PUAs have is “not that far removed from the logics that govern mainstream self-help manuals on heterosexual relationship management”. Chang (2020) also notes that although the incel sub-community portrays women as incapable of rational thought, this is merely an extension of wider depictions of women as “crazy”. Thus, the manosphere cannot be thought of in isolation from a wider cultural context which objectifies and derides women, and so we can describe the relationship between the manosphere and normalised media as mutually constitutive (Bates, 2020). Bates (2020) argues that some manosphere talking points have come to the fore in normalised media via figureheads such as former US President Donald Trump, MPs and MEPs in the UK such as Carl Benjamin and Phillip Davies, Jordan Peterson (professor of psychology at the University of Toronto and author of self-help book *12 Rules for Life*), far-right media figure Milo Yiannopoulos, among other anti-feminist media pundits. Additionally, from her work in secondary schools teaching adolescent boys about feminism, Bates (2020) has observed an increase in the number of boys citing statistics from manosphere websites and anti-feminist arguments from YouTube to her.

The rise of the modern manosphere cannot be detached from a global history of anti-feminism. I posit that several strands of the manosphere considered in this thesis correspond to an offline movement. Firstly, the modern online men’s rights movement is a continuation of the men’s right movement which began in the 1960s as a response to second-wave feminism. Secondly, MGTOWs stem from the mythopoetic men’s movement of the 1980s. Thirdly, the online PUA movement was preceded by an offline one which gained mainstream popularity in the mid-2000s. However, the incel and TRP sub-communities are different in that distinct offline movements did not precede them. From here, I consider each manosphere group in greater detail.

3.1 Men’s Rights Activists

The online men’s rights activist movement (hereafter abbreviated to MRA) was preceded by an offline men’s movement which developed in the 1960 and 1970s. The offline men’s movement had multiple facets, including the pro-feminist men’s movement, which campaigned for

feminist causes and the men's liberation movement, which sought to liberate men from harmful sex role expectations. The men's rights movement split off from the men's liberation movement and focused on a variety of social issues directly affecting men. These issues include the unnecessary circumcision of baby boys, alimony payments and family law, false rape accusations, and compulsory military conscription in the US (Benatar, 2012).

Betty Friedan wrote of the "feminine mystique" in 1963 to refer to the unhappiness that many women at the time felt about being forced into motherhood and housewifery. Warren Farrell (1974), an MRA figurehead who originally aligned himself with the pro-feminist men's movement, co-opted Friedan's language in claiming that a "masculine mystique" also exists – that men are forced to be breadwinners and defenders for their family, which leaves men equally unhappy. Farrell (1974) expresses this equivalency by describing women as "sex objects" (thus acknowledging that women are objectified) but men as "success objects" (their worth being determined by their economic output). Herb Goldberg (1976) also asserted that if men are unable to fulfil the role of breadwinner, they will not be sexually attractive to women, but conversely that giving too much time to work would ruin a relationship. Thus, men having economic privilege was viewed by MRAs as a burden as opposed to a source of power. As Messner (1998) notes, these critiques of societal expectations of men were rooted in sex role theory, which posits that men and women are innately suited to different roles in society, and that these roles are equally oppressive. Additionally, Messner (1998) comments that MRAs argued that despite men having economic privileges over women, women held "expressive...and masculinity-validating power" over men, and thus men were not free agents in society. Farrell (1974) originally approached his analysis of gender dynamics from a feminist perspective, having worked for the National Organization for Women in the 1970s, and argued that by supporting women's rights in the workplace, men would be freed from their restrictive sex role (i.e. forced into a breadwinner role).

Goldberg (1976) echoed this sentiment but argued it was men rather than women who are systematically discriminated against. For instance, he argued that the female role gave women the freedom to experiment with gender and femininity, in a way that men could not in the 1970s (i.e. that women could wear suits but men could not wear dresses). MRAs have also observed that men receive harsher prison sentences than women for the same crimes, and that men's suicide rates are higher than women's (e.g. Benatar, 2012). From a feminist perspective, these statistics can be seen as a result of hegemonic masculinity: men are expected to conceal their emotions which can lead to repressed emotions manifesting in unhealthy, self-harming and/or violent behaviour whereas women are conceptualised as

maternal (and therefore less likely to commit crimes) and emotionally expressive. However, despite taking an explicitly feminist stance in his earlier work, Farrell (1993) later claimed that these statistics are due to society being controlled by women, and that men are considered disposable. Farrell (1993) also asserted in his later work that, as opposed to men and women being equally oppressed, female secretaries hold power over their male employers, due to their attractive appearance.

MRAs also claim that intimate partner violence occurs at an equal rate for men and women, and that violence against men perpetrated by women is an understated problem. However, rather than campaigning for male victims of domestic violence, men's rights groups have instead lobbied to stop funding to women's shelters as a solution (Loseke and Kurz, 2005). Thus, women's experiences are discredited to demonstrate that women can be violent, as opposed to assisting men who have suffered from domestic violence.

A similar attitude is taken towards allegations of rape, as a common MRA talking point is the concept that as many as 90% of these allegations are not based on fact. However, these claims rely on studies such as Stewart (1981), which have since been debunked (Rumney, 2006) for having unreliable judgement criteria. More recent studies place the number of such allegations between 4% and 9% in a range of European countries (Burman, Lovett, and Kelly, 2009), and 5.2% in North America (Ferguson and Malouff, 2016). It should also be noted that these numbers are based on incidents that have been reported to the police. As Belknap (2010) argues that as many as 90% of rape incidents go unreported, the true number of "false" allegations is much lower. Nevertheless, holding false beliefs about the prevalence of "false" rape allegations can have political implications. For example, in 2017, Betsy DeVos (the then US Secretary of Education) held a summit on Title IX, which is a federal statute which bans discrimination on the basis of sex at universities. This statute is also used to deal with instances of sexual harassment and assault on university campuses. DeVos modified the statute to narrow the definition of harassment and the instances of harassment that universities are required to investigate, and required universities to provide more evidence before convicting an alleged perpetrator. Although this was done with the intention of giving the accused party more opportunity to prove their innocence, it ignores the prevalence of unreported rape incidents, and the hostility that rape victims are met with in the legal system. It is important to note that these statute modifications were made in conjunction with three MRA groups, the National Coalition for Men's Carolina Chapter, Families Advocating for Campus Equality, and Stop Abusive and Violent Environments, who perpetuate the idea that "false" rape accusations

constitute a serious risk to men (Barthélemy, 2020). This highlights the activist goals of MRA groups, which distinguish MRAs from other subsections of the manosphere.

Another key aspect of the men's rights movement concerns fathers' rights, and this aspect has received some attention in UK politics. For instance, MRA Richard Doyle compared the divorce courts to slaughterhouses, and claimed that wives were favoured over husbands (1985, p. 166). Some have argued (e.g. Smith, 2013) that this perceived mistreatment of men has led to a so-called "marriage strike", as men wished to avoid the risks associated with marriage such as alimony payments and losing access to their children. MRAs also claim to be defending victims of "paternity fraud", defined as men who look after children who are not biologically related to them (Benatar, 2012). To an extent, this mirrors the discussions surrounding "cucks", which appear in the wider manosphere and in online right-wing spaces more generally. This is because emasculation is seen as directly linked to a man's female partner having sexual relations with other men. However, discussions of "paternity fraud" in MRA spaces suggest that women systemically seek to deceive men in this way, and incorrectly suggest that the best caregivers for a child will always be their biological parents.

The men's rights movement also exists on the fringe of politics in the UK and takes an anti-feminist stance. For example, Jordan (2016) documents the language used by the UK-based fathers' rights group *Real Fathers 4 Justice* in interviews and their official literature. She finds that there was no acknowledgement of expectations on women to be the primary caregiver, and notes that fathers are considered to parent differently to mothers, thus perpetuating beliefs of innate gender differences. Also, feminism was not positively represented, as much of the *Real Fathers 4 Justice* literature blames feminism for perceived injustices against fathers. Additionally, Jordan (2016) notes that after these interviews were conducted, the group formed an anti-feminist political group, *Justice for Men and Boys*, which give sarcastic awards for "Whiny", "Lying" and "Toxic" "Feminist of the Month". This party claims to be the only political party campaigning for the rights of men, and they advocate cutting funds for encouraging women to enter science, technology, engineering and mathematics; men retiring earlier than women as men on average tend to die younger than women; and boys being educated by only male teachers, as a female teacher is more likely to favour girls in the class. Their identity is formed in direct opposition to feminism, as they believe that feminists form a hate group against men. The UK advocacy group Hope Not Hate considers the party to be a hate movement (Hope Not Hate, 2019).

It should also be noted that the offline MRA movement is not a solely Western phenomenon. For example, the Indian MRA movement has historically campaigned against laws concerning dowry, domestic violence, and divorce (Basu, 2016). However, much of the past literature focuses on the US context and the Global North.

At the time of writing, two murders have been connected with the MRA movement – the murder of Marc Angelucci, an MRA lawyer and leader of the MRA organisation the National Coalition for Men, in California on 11th July 2020; and of Daniel Salas, the son of a federal court judge, in New Jersey on 19th July 2020. The perpetrator in both cases was 72-year-old MRA lawyer Roy Den Hollander, who reportedly held grudges against both Angelucci and Esther Salas, the federal court judge (Moghe and Murphy, 2020). It is also notable that Den Hollander had published an article on MRA website *A Voice For Men* advocating gun violence against those who oppose MRA ideals in 2010 (Den Hollander, 2010). Although Den Hollander is the only example of MRA-motivated violence to my knowledge, which indicates that the movement is not broadly characterised by violence, this incident should not go unmentioned.

In the modern day, the men's rights movement has a strong online presence, including the website *A Voice For Men* which is run by Paul Elam. *A Voice For Men* is broadly characterised by anti-feminist and sexist articles (see Futrelle, 2018). In one article, Elam declared October "bash a violent bitch" month in an attempt to protest domestic violence against men, which he argues is culturally accepted (Elam, 2015). It is notable that Elam claimed that this was satirical after receiving backlash for the article in the mainstream media. Although it is impossible to determine whether this was truly intended as satire, it shows that MRA talking points are deeply rooted in anti-feminism as opposed to campaigning for men's issues such as funding domestic violence shelters for men.

Lumsden (2019) conducted a manual thematic analysis on 1,931 comments on 24 threads which discussed trolling and gendered violence from the subreddit *r/MensRights*. She found that women and feminists were considered "false" victims of online harassment, which invokes the same logic as discussion of "false" rape accusations; that when "genuine" harassment occurred, it did not amount to violence; and that men are victimised online more often than women. Thus, the issues that women and feminists report are downplayed in favour of perceived men's issues. Furthermore, women were represented as emotional and irrational, and as having underlying motives for drawing attention to online sexual harassment and violence, or to the under-representation of women in various spaces. At the time of writing in December 2021, *r/MensRights* has 318,183 subscribers.

In their content analysis of twelve MRA websites, Schmitz and Kazyak (2016) found two main categories of activists with distinct strategies and ideologies: the more common Cyber Lads seeking masculinity, and the less common Virtual Victims seeking equality. Cyber Lads were characterised by explicit devaluation of women and aggressive language, whereas Virtual Victims used socio-political rhetoric to achieve societal change for men. Cyber Lads had three main discussion themes: homosocial policing of masculinity, the evils of feminism, and women as sexual commodities. Arguably, this is an online version of a phenomenon observed in men's magazines in the 1990s (see Benwell, 2001). In contrast, Virtual Victims aimed for portraying men in crisis, combating institutional misandry and delegitimising women's issues. The study highlights that MRAs are characterised by their contempt for feminism more than their advocacy for men's issues. This is supported by LaViolette and Hogan (2019), who analyse men's movements on Reddit. Comparing *r/MensRights* and *r/MensLiberation*, they found that whereas the members of *r/MensLiberation* take a feminist approach, view men and women as peers, and discuss masculinity and femininity as social concepts, *r/MensRights* was characterised by viewing gender roles as essentialised, by misogynist comments about women, and representations of men as victimised at the hands of women.

As Allan (2016) notes, heightened emotion is central to MRA discourse, as it ties in with Kimmel's (2013) concept of aggrieved entitlement, and anxiety and uncertainty about the place of traditional masculinity in the future. Thus, despite many MRA talking points being debunked, "their [men's rights activists'] affects – the feeling that it is true – trump the veracity of the thing causing the feeling" (Allan, 2016, p. 27). This is arguably one instantiation of post-truth politics, wherein factual arguments are disregarded in favour of appeals to emotion. Additionally, Nicholas and Agius (2018) note that men's rights movements are a global phenomenon, which suggests that their presence in the manosphere could reflect a worldwide backlash against globalisation and feminism, echoing the anti-feminist backlash observed by Faludi in 1991.

3.2 Men Going Their Own Way

Much like the men's rights movement, MGTOW has its roots in offline action. In the early 1980s, the mythopoetic men's movement emerged as an alternative to the political men's rights and liberation movements. Instead of championing political causes which affect men, the mythopoetic movement used the works of poet Robert Bly as well as Jungian psychology to critique toxic and hegemonic masculinity. The mythopoets argued that modern men had lost touch with "deep" masculinity, and that "deep masculinity" encompassed expressing one's emotions; valuing homosociality as opposed to modern competitiveness in both personal and

professional spheres; valuing spending more time with other men than with women; and celebrating the innate differences between men and women as opposed to feeling guilty about them (Messner, 1997). Indeed, Messner (1997) notes that “deep” masculinity was considered “mature” and distinct from femininity, and was constructed in direct opposition to “immature” toxic masculinity.

Notably, although mythopoetic men felt their voices had been silenced in comparison to the feminist movement, the mythopoetic movement was not explicitly opposed to feminism. The movement took the form of self-help groups, in which several generations of men would meet to share myths and folk-tales which provided role model archetypes. For instance, Bly (1990, p. 22) describes the concept of “Zeus energy” as: “encompass[ing] intelligence, robust health, compassionate decisiveness, good will, generous leadership. Zeus energy is male authority accepted for the sake of the community”. This highlights that although the mythopoetic men’s movement did not take an overt political stance on women’s liberation, they used the same terminology of natural sex roles as the men’s rights movement. Additionally, as Ferber (2000, p. 50) notes, there is overlap in arguments between mythopoetic men’s movement literature and white supremacist literature. For example, both argue that men are becoming more feminine and thus weaker, and that “all of society is threatened when masculinity is lost”. To an extent, this overlap foreshadowed the modern incarnation of this movement – MGTOW.

Lin (2017) notes that MGTOWs believe men are trapped in the role of silent breadwinners, and that society is “gynocentric” (centred around women). Thus, they believe that they must eliminate all gynocentric influences from their lives to varying degrees. Lin (2017) observes that four levels of MGTOW separatism exist: rejection of long-term relationships, rejection of short-term relationships (which can include either having sex with only sex workers, or abstaining from sex or even masturbation completely), economic disengagement (as paying taxes is seen as sustaining a government which provides too much social support for women), and lastly societal disengagement, where individual men choose to go off the grid completely. In Lin’s (2017) interviews with MGTOW members, they claim that MGTOW is the “abandon” wing of the manosphere (i.e. abandoning the system as opposed to seeking to change it), and that they focus on self-empowerment. Bates (2020, p. 101) notes that members of the MGTOW community congratulate each other on distancing themselves from women and that the community has a strong social aspect. Indeed, Bates (2020) shares the story of an ex-MGTOW who reports that participation in the community was fun as he made a lot of friends and gained positive reinforcement by participating in MGTOW places.

Furthermore, Futrelle (2020) found that users in *r/MGTOW* gave advice to another user who asked for guidance on how to make their 14-year-old son agree with MGTOW beliefs. This demonstrates that MGTOWs actively seek to influence the opinions of adolescent boys who have not yet come across MGTOW beliefs. This has implications for the mainstreaming of such beliefs, as discussions of MGTOW concepts are not limited to forums sought out by adult men. However, based on this one source, we cannot determine the extent to which this element of educating young boys is characteristic of the MGTOW sub-community as a whole, nor whether this is a unique element of the MGTOW sub-community. Nevertheless, it has been explicitly observed by Futrelle (2020). It should also be noted that *r/MGTOW* has been quarantined on the Reddit platform, because the content of the subreddit is deemed controversial by Reddit administrators. In quarantined subreddits, users must have a verified email address and bypass a warning page to view the subreddit, the subscriber and online user counts are hidden, and Reddit does not earn ad revenue from the subreddit. Also, the subreddit does not appear in search results on Reddit nor in subreddit recommendations. At the time it was quarantined (January 2020), *r/MGTOW* had approximately 140,000 subscribers.

Jones, Trott and Wright (2019) conducted a thematic analysis of 1,688 tweets from three of the most active MGTOW users on Twitter, and found that 29% (483) could be coded as harassment. 51% of the harassing tweets were coded as containing sexist statements against women (e.g. depicting women as inferior, manipulative, submissive) and discussing anti-feminism. This demonstrates that discussions about women are a central practice for MGTOWs. Additionally, 16% of harassing tweets discuss how other men have been emasculated, using social actor terms such as “beta male”, and 7% discuss violently controlling others, using verbs such as “tasing”, “shooting” and “killing”. This demonstrates that although the MGTOW sub-community is not broadly characterised by violence, literal references to violence were a small but notable feature of the dataset.

Furthermore, Jones, Trott and Wright (2019) distinguish between active and passive harassment, where passive harassment is defined as having no specific target but attacking a broad group of people. Although only 4% (18) of harassing tweets were deemed active harassment, Jones, Trott and Wright (2019, p. 1905) note that being a victim of passive harassment can likewise bring about negative mental health outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and avoidance behaviours, which mirrors the experiences of victims of active harassment. Nevertheless, passive harassment is undeniably less specific than active harassment, and for this reason, Jones, Trott and Wright (2019) argue, using Manne’s (2018) terms, that the MGTOW sub-community is sexist as opposed to misogynistic. This is also

backed up by a subsequent analysis of 1012 comments from the official MGTOW website by the same authors (Wright, Trott, and Jones, 2020), which revealed that although the majority of posts (59%) mention women and 61% of these posts portrayed women in highly negative ways, no calls to action were found in the dataset. Instead, Wright, Trott and Jones (2020) found that users sharing personal experiences and anecdotes with each other played an important role in the forum, as users could bond over shared experiences.

Jones, Trott and Wright (2019) conclude that MGTOWs are arguably more subtle in their approach to gender dynamics than other manosphere sub-groups such as MRAs and incels, and therein lies their danger as their beliefs are conveyed without encouraging violence (as incels do) nor political change (as MRAs do). Indeed, Bates (2020) acknowledges that some MGTOW talking points have entered mainstream consciousness. For instance, when then US Vice President Mike Pence claimed that he never eats meals alone with women who are not his wife, MGTOWs viewed this avoidance behaviour as in line with their own beliefs. The avoidance behaviour was also presented as a viable way to avoid allegations of assault from women in more mainstream media (for example, see Randall Bentwick's book *The Pence Principle* published in 2018). Thus, because MGTOW beliefs are not presented as calls to action, they can nevertheless be pervasive outside MGTOW spaces.

Compared to the other subsets of the manosphere discussed in this thesis, MGTOWs are arguably the least researched group within the manosphere in terms of the number of academic publications discussing them (a sentiment echoed by Jones, Trott, and Wright, 2019).

3.3 Pick-Up Artists

As opposed to the MRAs, who focus on social issues, and MGTOWs, who attempt to distance themselves from women (and wider society to an extent), PUAs share formulaic tactics on how to approach and flirt with women. PUAs are also referred to as the "seduction community" by both PUAs and researchers alike. This arguably frames PUA tactics as something desirable to the women who are targeted and mystifies the harmful practices which characterise the community.

The PUA community originated offline in the 1970s and 1980s via self-help books and seminars run by self-proclaimed pick-up experts. Although Eric Weber has been credited as writing the first pick-up guide *How to Pick Up Girls!* in 1977, it is Ross Jeffries who provided the foundation for much modern pick-up artistry with his method rooted in neuro-linguistic programming techniques (i.e. attempting to trigger positive subconscious responses). Jeffries referred to

these techniques as “speed seduction” and published the guide *How to Get the Women you Desire into Bed* in 1992.

The PUA community then saw a resurgence in the 2000s, when journalist Neil Strauss published *The Game: Penetrating the Secret Society of Pick-Up Artists* in 2005, which reached the top of the New York Times bestseller list for two months in 2005. Eric Von Markovik (also known by the pseudonym Mystery) also wrote *The Mystery Method: How to Get Beautiful Women Into Bed* in 2007, which led to him presenting the dating-themed game show *The Pick-Up Artist* on VH1 (Roth et al., 2007-2008). This demonstrates how pick-up artistry entered the mainstream at this time, and indeed, O’Neill (2018) asserts that the PUA community has formed as a result of accepted social norms about relationships with women. Thus, O’Neill (2018) argues that it is not appropriate to describe the PUA community as deviant or extreme. For this reason, Bates (2020, p. 94) argues that PUAs constitute the most acceptable facet of the manosphere, although the PUA community has still undergone public scrutiny.

Indeed, one PUA, Daryush Valizadeh (better known as Roosh V), has received much negative media attention for the online PUA materials he has written and the PUA guides he has self-published. For example, Valizadeh hosted the website *Return of Kings*, which was labelled a hate site by the Southern Poverty Law Center (n.d.), for hosting homophobic and sexist articles such as “Why You Shouldn’t Have Gay Friends” (Adams, 2018) and “7 Ways Women Are Just Like Abandoned Dogs” (Sharpe, 2017). Following PayPal banning Valizadeh from using their services, the site has been defunct since October 2018.

Furthermore, Valizadeh’s first book, titled *Bang: The Pickup Bible That Helps You Get More Lays*, was published in 2007, and he subsequently wrote country-specific pick-up guides such as *Bang Iceland* (2011). These guides have been criticised as some of the alleged PUA experiences that Valizadeh recounts amount to descriptions of rape. For example, *Bang Iceland* includes this excerpt:

While walking to my place, I realized how drunk she was. In America, having sex with her would have been rape, since she couldn’t legally give her consent. It didn’t help matters that I was relatively sober, but I can’t say I cared or even hesitated. I won’t rationalize my actions, but having sex is what I do. (Valizadeh, 2011)

Additionally, there was much public backlash when Valizadeh planned public meet-up events across the UK in 2015, including calls for Valizadeh to be banned from the UK for the “pro-rape” beliefs he had expressed in his books and on his websites (Sherwin, 2016). Indeed, in

December 2017, Valizadeh was banned from entering the UK by then-Foreign Secretary Theresa May.

O'Neill (2018) argues that there is a strong commercial element to the PUA community, in that so-called seduction experts frame themselves as such for financial gain. This is visible in the number of PUA guides and courses that one can take. Additionally, O'Neill (2016) argues that the PUA phenomenon is a reflection of modern neo-liberal society, which puts pressure on individuals to bring about their own successes. As PUAs wish to have more choice of sexual and/or romantic partners, they take it upon themselves to learn the skills required to secure this outcome.

Having considered some of the main figures in the PUA community, let us now consider the contents of offline PUA guides and seminars in more detail. Farvid and Braun (2014) analysed the bestselling *The Game: Penetrating the Secret Society of Pickup Artists*, written in 2005 by Neil Strauss, and found that men were represented as “performing” (in order to have more sex in the future as opposed to a wish to pleasure their partners) and/or “strategic” (approaching women based on their appearance, identifying vulnerable women to target, and using specific strategies to lead to a successful interaction such as decreasing their self-esteem).

Furthermore, Hall and Canterbury (2011) note that *The Game* advocates strategic aggression towards, and manipulation of, women, in that PUAs should attempt to isolate women from their friends in public and should compete with other men in the vicinity. Thus, for men, the focus is not on finding a compatible partner, but rather on securing a partner regardless of individual preference. PUAs are encouraged to show masculine dominance over women and other men.

Indeed, Strauss' (2005) experience was based on a PUA course led by Eric Von Markovik (Mystery), who wrote *The Mystery Method: How To Get Beautiful Women Into Bed* in 2007. In her analysis of the book, Denes (2011) notes that biological responses from women caused by escalated physical contact are considered a more reliable indicator of a woman's thoughts than verbal responses of resistance, which are referred to as token acts of resistance. Strauss (2005) also references this concept with the name “anti-slut defense”, which he claims refers to a phenomenon where women only refuse sex because they do not wish to be labelled a “slut”. Thus, instances where women resist the approaches of a PUA are not considered genuine. Therefore, PUA tactics can be seen as contributing to a wider rape culture, defined by Keller, Mendes, and Ringrose (2018, p. 23) as “a socio-cultural context in which an aggressive

male sexuality is eroticized and seen as a 'healthy', 'normal', and 'desired' part of sexual relations".

Furthermore, according to Denes (2011, p. 414) *The Mystery Method* describes humans but particularly women as both animals and machines, which constitutes dehumanisation. For example, women are explicitly compared to cats who can be trained (despite cats not being animals which are typically trained) and to "beautiful, elegant, biological machines" (Denes, 2011, p. 415). Alternatively, women are described as solely emotional beings who cannot be reasoned with via logic (Denes, 2011, p. 415), which echoes the MRA argument found by Lumsden (2019).

Although the hostile nature of PUA approaches could lead an outsider to believe that anyone who pursues PUA techniques holds malicious feelings towards women, this is an oversimplification. The fostering of a masculine identity is a central theme in PUA books, seminars, and online materials. In her ethnographic study of a pick-up course in London, O'Neill (2016) found that participation in the community was motivated by a desire to be viewed as masculine by other men, rather than a desire to have fulfilling relationships with women or to control women. However, this is not to say that women are not manipulated as a result of these homosocial desires. It simply highlights that the social aspect of these communities is integral to their functioning.

Research into the offline language of PUAs reveals its formulaic and dehumanising nature, and the homosocial aspect of the community. These themes are also reflected in the online language of PUAs. For instance, Lawson and McGlashan (2017) analysed four PUA communities on Reddit: *r/TheRedPill*, *r/seduction*, *r/pickup*, and *r/AskSedit* (although *r/TheRedPill* also hosts users who do not identify as PUAs). They collected the top 100 posts from the subreddits, creating a corpus of approximately three million words. They found that all four communities discussed techniques and shared resources, and that recurring gendered social actors were also prevalent. This includes women who were rated on a "Hot Babe" scale from 1-10, references to "bitches" alongside adjectives which denoted aesthetics and immorality evaluations, as well as discussions of "alpha" and "beta" masculinities. Therefore, hierarchies of in-group men, women, and out-group men were integral to these discussions. It is also noteworthy that at the time of writing (December 2021), *r/seduction* has 668,344 subscribers, *r/pickup* has 12,810 subscribers, and *r/AskSedit* has 28,443 subscribers. Although the latter two subreddits are relatively small, *r/seduction* is the 768th biggest subreddit (Subreddit Stats, n.d.) out of approximately 130,000 active subreddits (Dean, 2021).

Furthermore, Dayter and Rüdiger (2016) gathered a corpus of 24 posts from the field report section of a PUA forum, where users recount alleged experiences they have had using pick-up strategies offline. Dayter and Rüdiger (2016, p. 338) observed that users seek to speedily achieve physical intimacy, and use pseudo-business terms for kissing (“kiss-closed”), getting a target’s number (“number-closed”) and chatting (“used the common travellers’ lines”). This highlights that PUAs maintain emotional distance from their targets, which supports the findings from offline resources showing that women are dehumanised in this community.

The same authors observe in later research that PUAs seek to affirm their masculinity to other PUAs by expressing confidence through the speech act of self-praise in their field reports. Rüdiger and Dayter (2020) examined instances of self-praise in the field reports (38) and replies (74) on three PUA forums and found that self-praise was considered a normal practice in the forums. They also found that self-praise came in three forms: explicit brag statements (accounting for 27% of self-praise), proxy brags (citing a third party’s alleged verbal compliment, accounting for 8%) and evidential brags (citing external events and behaviour as evidence of success, accounting for 65%). More experienced PUAs used more explicit brags, claimed that other PUAs were less knowledgeable than them, and bragged about having superior knowledge in the community. On the other hand, less experienced PUAs sought to learn from more experienced PUAs and their self-praise focused on improvement as opposed to mastery. Rüdiger and Dayter (2020) also acknowledge that criticism was a common occurrence in the replies to field reports. This demonstrates how field reports are used by forum users to both claim membership in the PUA community and to manage relations between more and less experienced members of the community. The speech acts which are prevalent in manosphere communities will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

The affirmation of masculinity combined with harmful approaches towards women in online PUA spaces was also found by Cosma and Gurevich (2020), who identify three consistent themes in their analysis of PUA webpages, blogs, and interviews with alleged PUA experts: embattled masculinity, feminine commodities, and pressured pursuit and consent as control. Embattled masculinity refers to the use of combative language which frames sexual intimacy with women in militaristic terms, such as referring to having sex with women in multiple countries as “global conquest” (2020, p. 50). Secondly, women’s bodies are framed as commodities to be acquired by men through sexual intercourse. In particular, the number of women that one sleeps with, and their perceived attractiveness, referred to in terms of “an assumed universal rating system” (2020, p. 53), is foregrounded as important, as opposed to an individual PUA’s personal preferences. Lastly, “pressured pursuit” refers to the PUA concept

of overcoming last-minute resistance, which refers to a woman withdrawing consent at the last moment before engaging in sexual intercourse. Thus, obtaining consent is positioned as a one-time hurdle to clear, as opposed to an ongoing process of checking in with one's partner.

This latter finding is supported by Wright (2020), who collected a 26-million-word corpus made up of online PUA forum posts and conducted a collocation analysis of the term "last-minute resistance". He found that resistance was framed as something to be overcome and "tackled", that not all resistance was treated as genuine via terms such as "token resistance" and "asd" (short for anti-slut defence, echoing Strauss' *The Game*), and that there were discussions of abusing women for initially resisting sex with them (Wright, 2020, p. 4-7). Wright (2020) concludes by arguing that PUA forums which represent resistance as something to be overcome can increase the risk of forum users committing sexual violence offline, although Wright makes such an assertion tentatively.

The extent to which PUA behaviour constitutes criminally threatening behaviour is ambiguous in legal contexts. 39-year-old Adnan Ahmed, who used PUA tactics to approach women and girls in Glasgow and Lanarkshire, was convicted of abusive and threatening behaviour towards five young women in October 2019 at Glasgow Sheriff Court (BBC, 2019). Ahmed had attempted to apply PUA tactics to the women in question and had also posted PUA materials online under the pseudonym Addy A-Game, which discussed overcoming last-minute resistance. Although Ahmed was originally sentenced to two years in prison and was to be placed on the sex offenders register for ten years, this conviction was quashed on appeal in September 2020 (BBC, 2020a), as the three appeal judges concluded that there was no sufficient evidence for such a conviction. One judge commented that Ahmed's approach amounted to "polite, conversational requests or compliments", and could not be deemed threatening on the basis that it was unwelcome for the women in question, as this response could not be generalised to all women. Thus, rather than putting the onus on the PUA to not approach women in public in a certain way, in this judgement, the onus was put on the alleged victims to not feel uncomfortable with his approach.

3.4 Involuntary celibates

Perhaps the most well-known subsection of the manosphere is incels, who perceive themselves as unable to find sexual and romantic partners, and who resent people who do have these relationships. Unlike MRAs, MGTOWs, and PUAs, whose subgroups originated offline as backlash movements to feminism, it should be noted that the incel subsection of the manosphere originated as an online support group for men and women who struggled finding romantic and sexual partners. Indeed, the group was originally found in the 1990s by a woman

known as Alana, and the group acted as a supportive space for self-proclaimed incels and sexist content was banned by moderators in this space (Beauchamp, 2019). For this reason, Alex DiBranco of the Institute for Research on Male Supremacism distinguishes between incels (in the original sense) and misogynist incels (the modern incarnation, which has gained notoriety) (speaking on the Tech Against Terrorism podcast in 2020). Indeed, this distinction helps us acknowledge that not everyone who identifies as an incel necessarily endorses sexism, misogyny, and violence (see Regehr's (2020) discussion of the Facebook group Incelistan, as well as the *r/IncelsWithoutHate* community). However, these individuals are arguably in the minority, and to reflect the modern usage of the word, the modern incarnation discussed below will be referred to as incels.

Whereas MRAs, MGTOWs, and PUAs base their various approaches to women on a sense of ideological enlightenment via the red pill metaphor, some incels refer to the black pill. The black pill is a fatalistic attitude in that incels believe their sexual success is predetermined by existing biological traits such as ethnicity and physical attractiveness. Incels broadly assert that they cannot take action to improve their perceived condition and thus be desirable to women, although some incels advocate improving one's physical appearance (referred to as "looksmaxxing") by improving one's fitness or getting cosmetic surgery. With this deterministic attitude, incels argue that their only option is to accept that they will never have the intimate relationships they seek with women, which results in many incels reporting mental health issues such as depression and suicide ideation (Anti-Defamation League, 2020; Regehr, 2020). This attitude is so widespread in the incel community that it warrants its own acronym, LDAR, which stands for lie down and rot (Anti-Defamation League, 2019). This sets incels apart from other sub-groups of the manosphere, as depression and emotional distress are integral to the incel identity. Bratich and Banet-Weiser (2019) argue that a shift from pick-up artistry to incelism (as has also been confirmed by Ribeiro et al. (2020)) is underway, as PUAs are taught that they can guarantee access to women via the use of specific techniques, and that incels are individuals who have lost confidence in PUA techniques and the PUAs who teach them.

Much of the academic literature on incels discusses the relationship between online incel communities and offline violence. Incels entered the public consciousness following the Isla Vista massacre perpetrated by Elliot Rodger on 23rd May 2014 and have received much media coverage since, including news articles about mass murders perpetrated by incels and documentaries about the community. Before carrying out the attack, which was originally intended to take place at a sorority house, Rodger wrote a manifesto which detailed his frustrations with being unable to find a sexual or romantic partner and seeing other men with

girlfriends. Specifically, Hoffman et al. (2020) note that, in his manifesto, Elliot Rodger expresses anguish over a black man having a white girlfriend, as “he is descended from slaves”. In the manifesto, Rodger also discusses wishing to punish women for rejecting him. This massacre is a clear example of Kimmel’s (2013) concept of aggrieved entitlement, as Rodger could not obtain the attention from women that he felt entitled to, and turned violent as a result. After carrying out the attack, Rodger killed himself.

Incel communities have been banned from mainstream platforms such as Reddit for advocating violence, whereas other manosphere subreddits have not. Indeed, *r/incels* was banned on 7th November 2017 for inciting violence, and then its replacement subreddit, *r/braincels*, was banned on 30th September 2019 for bullying and harassment. This being said, some communities which espouse incel beliefs, such as *r/blackpillscience*, are still active at the time of writing (December 2021). It should also be noted that Rodger frequented online incel spaces (specifically the community PUAhate, later renamed sluthate) before carrying out the attack, and Rodger himself claimed that the site “confirmed many of the theories I had about how wicked and degenerate women really are” (2014, p. 118). This suggests that these online spaces played a role in encouraging the massacre.

Including the Isla Vista massacre, Hoffman et al. (2020) assert that incel-motivated attacks have been responsible for 50 deaths since 2014, although this number has increased since the publication of Hoffman et al. (2020). For instance, in August 2021, an incel-motivated attacker, Jake Davison, killed five people and injured two with a firearm in Plymouth, Devon, before then killing himself. It should be noted that although Davison engaged with incel content online, incel is not a label he claimed for himself and he posted online about his frustrations with the incel community (Topping, 2021).

Whereas all the perpetrators discussed thus far killed themselves at the crime scene, one attacker who heavily referenced the incel movement did not: 28-year-old Alek Minassian who murdered ten people and injured sixteen on 23rd April 2018 in Toronto, Canada. Before carrying out his attack, Minassian made a Facebook post in which he claimed “The Incel Rebellion has already begun! We will overthrow all the Chads and Stacys! All hail the Supreme Gentleman Elliot Rodger!” Thus, Minassian appeared to explicitly align himself with Rodger and the wider incel community. Minassian also claimed in a police interview in 2019 that he spoke to Rodger prior to the Isla Vista massacre, and that Rodger’s actions encouraged him to carry out his own attack (Humphreys, 2019). Minassian was found guilty of 10 counts of first-degree murder, and 16 counts of attempted murder in March 2021.

However, in the court ruling on the case in March 2021 (R. v. Minassian, 2021), it was concluded that Minassian lied about his connections with the incel movement, including his communications with Rodger, in order to boost the notoriety of the attack and receive more media attention than other mass killers. This was despite Minassian's obsession with Elliot Rodger and his manifesto, his frequenting of incel sites in college, and him claiming that anger against women and identification with the incel ideology were significant factors in his motivation for the attack, albeit alongside a desire for notoriety, anxiety about his job performance, and a desire to carry out a mass killing. However, those who interviewed Minassian claimed that he "shows none of the venom typical of incel followers", and "has never expressed hatred, or even anger, towards women, not even in his initial statement to the police" (2021, p. 51). However, I would argue that Minassian's idolisation of Rodger and his participation in, and sympathy with, the incel community indicate his allegiance to the community.

As well as these attackers, several individuals who have connections with the incel community have been found guilty of possessing dangerous weapons (such as 22-year-old Gabrielle Friel² in Edinburgh, see BBC, 2020b). Although Friel was convicted under the Terrorism Act for possessing weapons including a crossbow and a machete, acts of terror committed by incels have not been consistently referred to as terrorist incidents. This being said, one attack which took place in Toronto, Canada, on 24th February 2020, is being treated as a domestic terror incident. The perpetrator, who cannot be named as he is a minor, killed one woman and injured two at a massage parlour, and has been linked to the incel community (Cecco, 2020). Furthermore, the prevention wing of the UK's anti-terrorism strategy, Prevent, have observed an increase in referrals relating to incels (Leidig, 2021). This suggests that a change in attitude towards how incel-motivated attacks are conceptualised as terror incidents may be underway.

Support for mass murderers who have identified as incels has been noted as a consistent feature of incel forums (e.g. Regehr, 2020; Hoffman et al., 2020). For instance, Elliot Rodger is glorified in incel spaces by being referred to as the "supreme gentleman" (Beauchamp, 2019), a term which another murderer who referenced the incel movement, Alek Minassian, referenced in his own manifesto. Additionally, Beauchamp (2019) details how some incels praise other incels who have assaulted or claimed to assault women by referring to such incels as "low-inhib [inhibition] legends". This suggests that incels actively encourage acts of violence, including violence against women. Regehr (2020) argues that a process of

² Gabrielle, in this instance, refers to a man.

indoctrination occurs within incel communities, and that such a process transforms online hate expressed in incel spaces into offline incel-motivated violence. Firstly, lonely individuals, who are searching for belonging and a support network, interact with other incels. They then have their loneliness transformed into anger towards women and sexually successful men. They subsequently become immersed in incel culture, which is characterised by self-deprecation (which can take the form of comedy), videos which promote incel ideas, memes which spread incel rhetoric, and the glorification of mass murderers such as Elliot Rodger. Regehr (2020) argues that interacting in this echo chamber strengthens incel ideas and that this continuous loop promotes future acts of violence.

Moving onto how the language of incel communities has been studied, past research on incels has foregrounded the language used in this community to detail sexist attitudes towards women and to justify violence against women. At the time of writing, only one study utilises methods used in the linguistics discipline such as corpus linguistics and discourse analysis, although some do take a computational approach to analysing language (Baele et al., 2019). In their analysis of a 67,000-word-corpus of posts from *r/braincels*, Heritage and Koller (2020) conduct both a keyword analysis and an appraisal (Martin and White, 2005) analysis. They found evidence of a hierarchy of men, with “Chads” at the top, and “guys” underneath “Chads” as a neutral term. Next, “cucks” appears underneath “guys”, referring to supposedly beta men who nonetheless have sex, “manlet” and “incels” under “cucks”, which refer to men who cannot find a partner and thus cannot have sex, and lastly “faggots”, which is used as a general pejorative term at the bottom of the hierarchy. Heritage and Koller (2020) also observe that incels perceive themselves as non-normative as opposed to out-group social actors, who are referred to as “normies”, but have strong ideas as to what a fake incel (or “fakecel”) looks like. Their appraisal analysis also revealed that only male social actors were represented in terms of (un)happiness, whereas female social actors were represented in terms of what they allegedly desire, and of immorality, dishonesty, and their perceived capability to hurt men. Lastly, they note that pejorative terms such as “roastie”,³ “bitch”, and “foids” were frequent female social actor terms. This latter example combines the <f> from female and the suffix -oid to refer to women as robotic and thus non-human entities.

Dehumanising language in incel communities has also been observed by other researchers. For example, Chang (2020) analyses the use of the term “femoid” in *r/braincels*, which is used to represent women as non-human, as irrational and less intelligent than men, as mentally

³ This term likens the shape and look of a sexually active woman’s labia to roast beef.

unstable, and as simultaneously agentic and passive in terms of their sexuality. To clarify this latter point, “femoids” are represented as sexually passive when submitting sexually to alpha men known as “Chads”, and sexually agentic when strategically choosing their partners. Despite this representation of women having agency in some contexts, there is also evidence of animalistic dehumanisation via references to the “mating behaviour” and “mating strategy” (2020, p. 10) of “femoids”, and a claim that “femoids” desire sexual relations with dogs. This latter claim also has a term attached to it (“dogpill”), which references how widespread this belief is across the incel sub-group. Although the choice of language used to discuss women in this way is particularly extreme, and the “dogpill” claim is by no means mainstream, references to women’s perceived irrationality and mental instability is arguably reflective of widely accepted cultural attitudes towards women (Chang, 2020, p. 9).

As opposed to undertaking close manual analyses of incel data, several studies have collected large incel forum datasets and analysed them using quantitative methods, such as using automated lexicons to search for hateful language, as well as Natural Language Processing and Machine Learning techniques. For instance, Baele et al. (2019) analysed 769,854 posts from one incel forum using topic modelling and semantic networks to determine the most prominent in-groups and out-groups discussed, and the topics, adjectives and verbs associated with these groups. They also analysed 300 posts qualitatively to investigate narratives showing relationships between these groups. They found that although incels negatively evaluated their appearance, they positively evaluated their intelligence and their capacity for romantic ideals. They also found that the incel hierarchy was represented as naturalised through the use of evolutionary biological arguments. Furthermore, in terms of narrative analysis, a crisis narrative is present via the co-occurrence of “feminism” and “hypergamy” (seeking relationships with partners of a higher social status than your own) with verbs indicating force and control. Thus, incels are framed as the victims of such concepts. Additionally, violence against women is viewed as a legitimate means of self-defence against both women’s perceived immutably harmful nature and against feminist gains in society. The semantic network analysis also revealed that the names of incel-motivated murderers such as Rodger and Minassian co-occurred with terms such as “hero”, “saint”, and “brother”, demonstrating how these killers are glorified.

3.5 The Red Pill

The Red Pill (hereafter referred to as TRP) has been described as a nexus of online misogyny in both academic literature and journalistic articles, as it attempts to unite diverging elements of the manosphere (Marche, 2016; Ging, 2017; Van Valkenburgh, 2018, 2019; Bates, 2020). The

name TRP is a reference to the 1999 science fiction film *The Matrix*, as discussed in Section 3. Whereas the other groups of the manosphere previously discussed have distinct approaches to women, be it campaigning against feminism, avoiding women, pick-up artistry, believing they cannot have the relationships that they desire with women and endorsing violence towards women, TRP acts as an ideological hub for all of these groups. Additionally, the term “the red pill” is sometimes used in these specific sub-groups to refer to the beliefs which underpin them. For instance, Cassie Jaye used the term as the title for her 2016 documentary discussing MRA issues.

Whereas the other manosphere groups discussed in this thesis have websites and forums spanning across multiple websites, the TRP community is mostly confined to a single subreddit of the same name (although there is one stand-alone website called trp.red which is associated with the subreddit). There are dedicated websites and podcasts which also utilise the red pill motif (e.g. Red Pilled America), but these sites can be described as broadly alt-right spaces as opposed to being specifically manosphere-oriented. According to Zuckerberg (2018), who reports on the results of self-reported surveys in the TRP community, over three quarters of TRP members are male, white, heterosexual, politically conservative, have no strong religious affiliation, and are between the ages of 18 and 35. The TRP subreddit was founded in 2012 by Robert Fisher, who was the Republican state representative for New Hampshire from 2014-2017. Fisher resigned from this role after facing pressure for his involvement with the TRP subreddit, although he faced no formal consequences from the New Hampshire legislative committee who discussed whether his involvement with TRP required punitive action (Zadrozny and Bacarisse, 2017). TRP was quarantined by Reddit because the content of the subreddit is deemed controversial by Reddit administrators. At the time it was quarantined (September 2018), TRP had approximately 300,000 subscribers.

Turning to the structure of the subreddit, TRP includes a sidebar which appears on every page of the subreddit and states that the purpose of TRP is “discussion of sexual strategy in a culture increasingly lacking a positive identity for men” (The Red Pill, n.d.). “Sexual strategy” in the TRP context does not refer to PUA technique, but rather to a broader approach to women in all aspects of life. The sidebar also contains a list of community rules, which include posting content which the moderators believe is in accordance with TRP beliefs, and not announcing that you are a woman (as doing so is to suggest that one should be treated differently for being a woman). The sidebar also contains a glossary of terms widely used in TRP, including items such as “AWALT” (all women are like that) and hypergamy (“the instinctual urge for women to seek out the best alpha available”), links to other websites within the manosphere

such as *A Voice For Men*, and 26 items of “required reading” which consist of forum posts highlighting the key themes of the community. The sidebar requests that users read these 26 posts before posting to the TRP subreddit.

In these required readings, economics metaphors are used to frame evolutionary psychology as a scientific truth. For example, it is claimed that women trade physical affection for men’s wealth and status, and that both men and women have “sexual market values”. However, in the sidebar, it is argued that feminism denies this scientific truth and that feminism is a sexual strategy, in that feminism allows women to select partners that would be considered above their “value” from an evolutionary psychology perspective. This perspective also allows the conclusion that women cannot love in the way men can, as women are conceptualised as hypergamous (constantly seeking the partner with the highest status). For this reason, it is argued that men are tricked into relationships with Machiavellian women, which in turn justifies a similarly manipulative approach towards women. Furthermore, the sidebar literature justifies ignoring women’s emotional expressions which are conceptualised as deceptive, including indicators of disinterest which are perceived as a test of a man’s persistence (Van Valkenburgh, 2018). To an extent, this mirrors the PUA concepts of token resistance and anti-slut defence.

Interestingly, Van Valkenburgh (2019) also identifies Marxist themes in the TRP sidebar literature, such as discussions of the exploitation and alienation of men in sexual relationships, the construction of female privilege as a class struggle between men and women, and that free market economics (in terms of the sexual marketplace) are not working in men’s favour. However, these Marxist framings of gender relations do not translate into a critique of the economic metaphors which underpin TRP, nor a critique of capitalism in general. Instead, Van Valkenburgh (2019, p. 1) argues that TRP supports ideals of neoliberal and free market capitalism by encouraging its users to change the way they approach and think of women in their individual lives. Furthermore, in TRP, modern feminism and the welfare state are framed as mutually constitutive and negative (Van Valkenburgh, 2019, p. 7), in that women are framed as receiving a disproportionately high amount of state resources. Thus, although TRP invokes Marxist themes, it is by no means a leftist community.

Turning to the contents of TRP posts and comments, Lawson and McGlashan (2017) observe that, compared to PUA specific subreddits, topics discussed in TRP are based around an ideological model. Their keyword analysis of the top 100 posts of TRP revealed that the salient themes are: gender and masculine identities (e.g. “male”, “female”, “alpha”, “beta”),

feminism, negative identification (e.g. “bitch”, “fat”), sex and sexual violence, and relationships.

One recurring theme across the past literature is that TRP frames itself as a self-help community. For instance, having analysed the ten most upvoted TRP posts of all time and their affiliated comments (35,643 posts total) using a semantic network analysis approach, Eddington (2020) observes that TRP meets the criteria of a resilience-building resource. TRP does this by creating strong identity anchors for users to align themselves with and against (“alpha” and “beta” masculinities respectively), crafting new normalcies and foregrounding positive actions via discussions of sexual strategy, and users supporting each other through ongoing interactions. Dishy (2018) observes similar findings in his computational narrative analyses of the three most upvoted TRP posts and their affiliated 6,744 comments from each month in 2015. He found that discussions around self-improvement (particularly the transition from “beta” to “alpha”, building conversational confidence, and physical fitness) were a consistent theme in the data. He also noted how users relate to each other through personal anecdotes.

However, Dishy (2018) also notes that, like the other subsections of the manosphere, women and feminism are discussed at length. For instance, consistent topics in TRP include “false” rape accusations and male inequality (mirroring the MRA community) as well as the decline of Western civilisation (due to the perception that masculinity as a whole is being threatened by mainstream feminism). Additionally, 89.3% of all mentions of women are negative, using terms such as “slut”, “whore”, “cunt”, and “plates” (a PUA term for women they are in a short-term sexual relationship with, derived from “spinning plates”). Additionally, the perceived behaviour of women is discussed using standardised in-group phrases such as “hamster” (likening women’s thought processes to a hamster on a hamster wheel) and “cock carousel” (to refer to women’s supposed promiscuity). Furthermore, TRP members discuss a period of time referred to as “the anger phase”, where users internalise the TRP perception of women for the first time and experience acute anger towards women.

Zuckerberg (2018) observes that these negative representations of women in TRP are backed up by quoting philosophers from the school of stoicism, who promote self-control, conceptualise logic and emotion as mutually exclusive, and value logical thoughts over emotional instincts. Classical stoic texts are quoted by TRP users to show that women across time share the same negative characteristics. For example, Ovid is credited as the original PUA, the myth of Hippolytus and his stepmother Phaedra is used to justify MRA discussions around

“false” rape accusations, and the works of Hesiod which assert that men would be better off without women mirror MGTOW talking points. Schopenhauer is also quoted to present women as inherently deceitful. Thus, ancient Western philosophy is used to justify TRP beliefs and potentially give the community a veneer of academic credibility.

Based on an analysis of TRP posts and comments from 2013, 2014, and 2015, Dignam and Rohlinger (2019) argue that the TRP community wish to distance themselves from MRAs in the sense that MRAs campaign for collective action from their users, whereas TRP value individual self-improvement. However, Dignam and Rohlinger (2019) observed a pivot to political content in 2016 during Donald Trump’s presidential campaign, as users explicitly supported Trump at this time. This was because Trump’s lack of self-censorship and sexist attitudes were viewed as emblematic of the alpha masculinity that the in-group aspires to. Thus, this study highlights a direct link between TRP and right-wing populist politics (also see Lawson, 2021, who discusses the representation of masculinities on the now-banned pro-Trump subreddit *r/TheDonald* and how it overlaps with representations of masculinities in the general manosphere). However, this trend has not been elaborated on in other literature on TRP.

Although the TRP subreddit was quarantined by Reddit in October 2018, researchers have noted that TRP still affects other people on the internet outside of the community. For example, Dishy (2018) finds hyperlinks in TRP to general subreddits such as *r/movies*, *r/atheism*, and *r/politics* and *r/askwomen*. This suggests that movement is encouraged between TRP and mainstream subreddits, which could lead to the mainstreaming of manosphere ideas. Furthermore, Zuckerberg (2018, p. 188) notes that “the Red Pill has made going online and voicing opinions perilous for women like me”. This suggests that TRP participate in networked harassment of feminists online. Lastly, Van Valkenburgh (2019) suggests that engagement with the TRP community may lead to further online misogynist radicalisation, although this assertion cannot be confidently made without research into user migration between extremist online communities.

Having presented the past literature on the five main manosphere sub-groups, I would like to highlight some research gaps which motivated the research in this thesis. Firstly, I have demonstrated that much research on the manosphere considers the different sub-groups to be completely separate from one another, and not consider the language which unites them. Secondly, much of the past research utilises content analysis methods which analyse what ideas are expressed in general as opposed to analysing the specific ways in which these ideas

are communicated using language. Thirdly, the extent to which the language of the manosphere can be considered hate speech is also currently underexplored.

As has been illustrated throughout the present discussion, Reddit has served as a link between communities of MRAs, MGTOWs, PUAs, incels, TRP, and gamer/geek communities who coordinate misogynist attacks. I will now discuss the platform in more detail.

Chapter 3: Data and Ethics

In this chapter, I describe Reddit which is the site I collected data from and discuss the ethics decisions which apply across the three papers that constitute the original research for this thesis (see Chapters 5, 6, and 7). In Section 1, I discuss the site I collected my data from, namely Reddit, and then in Section 2, I discuss the ethical considerations that needed to be made when using such data and seeking to publish research on controversial communities.

1. Reddit

Reddit is a content aggregation and discussion website, which was founded in 2005 by Steve Huffman and Alexis Ohanian. Reddit is organised into topic-specific communities known as subreddits, which registered users can create and subscribe to, to create a personalised feed of content. In these subreddits, users post topic-specific content including text posts, pictures, videos, and content from other websites. Users can also comment on each other's posts, and give other posts and comments positive and negative votes, referred to as upvotes and downvotes, respectively. The more upvotes a post or comment has, the more visible it becomes within the subreddit (i.e. it is moved to the top of the page). For users without a Reddit account (who have thus not curated their own list of subreddits), the front page of Reddit displays posts that are currently trending on the site, as determined by engagement and upvotes.

The primary purpose of Reddit is to aggregate information relevant to specific interests and to enable interactions between users based on these interests. This makes Reddit distinct from traditional social media platforms such as Facebook, which allows users to connect with family, friends and colleagues on the basis of their offline identity, and to share personal posts on one's profile page. Contrastingly, Reddit users typically choose pseudonyms as their usernames, and Reddit profile pages only display the age of the account, the so-called karma (total upvotes minus downvotes) of the user, the user's posts and comments, and the options to send them a private message, add their posts to a custom feed, and follow the user. By following a user, one can see any posts the user has made on their page rather than a specific subreddit. At the time of writing (October 2021), Reddit is the 20th most visited site in the world (Alexa, 2021), has over 430 million active monthly users, and over 100,000 active subreddits (Dean, 2021).

Reddit hosts a multitude of subreddits on a wide variety of topics. The most popular subreddits with over twenty six million subscribers each include: humour-based communities

such as *r/funny*; current affairs communities such as *r/worldnews*; educational communities such as *r/science*, *r/TodayILearned*; as well as general interest communities such as *r/music* and *r/gaming* (Dean, 2021). Reddit has also been historically associated with geek culture, with the typical Redditor being conceptualised as “a geeky, male atheist who is college educated, from the US, and interested in STEM-related disciplines” (Massanari, 2015, p. 61). Each subreddit has moderators who are supposed to enforce the rules of Reddit and who are volunteers and active members of the communities they moderate.

Reddit has also gained a negative reputation for the number of controversial communities it has hosted over the years. These include a racist network of subreddits referred to as “The Chimpire”, *r/fatpeoplehate*, which condemned overweight people, subreddits dedicated to posting violent imagery (e.g. *r/gore*), and sexualised pictures of underage girls, referred to as *r/jailbait*. The site has also hosted sexist subreddits, such as *r/beatthewomen* (graphic photographs of violence against women), *r/CreepShots* (sexualised photographs of women taken without their knowledge), as well as the manosphere-specific subreddits introduced in Chapter 2 (namely *r/MensRights*, *r/MGTOW*, *r/seduction*, *r/TheRedPill*, *r/incels*, and *r/braincels*). Additionally, there is *r/KotakuInAction*, which originated from the GamerGate movement, in which users discuss opposing feminism in the video gaming industry, and have historically co-ordinated online harassment campaigns against feminists. Furthermore, there is the subreddit *r/TheFapping*, where almost 500 private pictures of celebrities, mostly naked women, were distributed without the consent of the celebrities. After amassing 250 million views, *r/TheFapping* was banned due to copyright takedown notices approximately a week after its creation, although Yishan Wong, the Reddit CEO at the time, defended the choice to keep the subreddit active at first, citing Reddit’s commitment to promoting freedom of speech and libertarian values (Woollacott, 2014). Massanari (2017) dubs these communities “toxic technocultures”, and observes that the very infrastructure of Reddit (i.e. lax content policies, upvotes incentivising users to post controversial content, and inconsistent moderation standards across subreddits) fosters such cultures.

Historically, the Reddit administrators have been reticent to ban offensive subreddits, as techno-libertarianism (minimising online regulation and censorship) has been one of the core principles of the site. Speaking of two such offensive subreddits, *r/picsofdeadkids* and *r/jailbait*, the then general manager Erik Martin argued platforming such communities is the price to pay for a site which is “a free speech site with very few exceptions” (Martin, 2011). Such sentiments have been echoed as recently as 2018 by Reddit co-founder Steve Huffman, who argued that racist slurs should not violate Reddit’s content policy (Statt, 2018). Arguably,

these techno-libertarian values are also held by many Reddit users, as Reddit has historically been used to mobilise activists to protect free speech online (Massanari, 2015, p. 45). Furthermore, Massanari (2015, p. 46) claims that as a whole, Reddit users hold “deeply libertarian views – pro-drug legalisation, anti-big government, pro-business, but anti-interventionist”.

However, pre-2020, controversial subreddits did appear to get banned on a case-by-case basis for violating rules against doxxing (revealing information about a person’s offline identity, such as their address, without their consent), promoting violence and promoting illegal activity, or following lengthy negative media coverage. Indeed, all of the controversial subreddits discussed above, with the exception of *r/KotakuInAction* and the manosphere subreddits which are not incel-focussed, have since been banned. Furthermore, it was only in 2015 that Reddit implemented an anti-harassment policy which banned “attacks and harassment of individuals” (Dewey, 2015). This resulted in the banning of five subreddits which targeted transgender people (*r/transf**s⁴*), black people (*r/shitn*****ssay⁵*), and people who are overweight (e.g. *r/fatpeoplehate*). The backlash that resulted from this policy change also contributed to the CEO at the time, Ellen Pao, stepping down from the role.

A further dramatic change in policy came in June 2020, when Reddit updated its content policy to prohibit promoting hate based on identity or vulnerability (2020). This policy states:

Communities and people that incite violence or that promote hate based on identity or vulnerability will be banned. Marginalized or vulnerable groups include, but are not limited to, groups based on their actual and perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, immigration status, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, pregnancy, or disability. These include victims of a major violent event and their families.

Approximately 2000 subreddits were banned following the policy change, including *r/The_Donald* (a subreddit dedicated to supporting former US President Donald Trump), *r/GenderCritical* (the largest anti-transgender radical feminist subreddit), and *r/ChapoTrapHouse* (a subreddit dedicated to the leftist podcast of the same name). However, despite this policy change, the site still hosts controversial material. For example, Topinka (2017) documents 73 posts and 1424 user-submitted comments and memes regarding the news coverage of three-year-old Alan Kurdi (a Syrian boy whose dead body was photographed on a beach in Turkey) on the dark humour subreddit *r/ImGoingToHellForThis*. Topinka (2017)

⁴ I do not feel it is my place to present this slur uncensored.

⁵ I do not feel it is my place to present this slur uncensored.

found that racism and nationalism in the form of racial stereotypes and white supremacist opinions were disguised as expressions of free speech and as a backlash to politically correct humour. Thus, one could not tell whether posters genuinely endorsed the racist and white nationalist opinions they were sharing or simply attempting to be as transgressive as possible. Furthermore, Topinka (2017) also found that *r/ImGoingToHellForThis* made frequent references to “social justice warriors”, who were portrayed as defenders of political correctness.

References to “social justice warriors” have also been explored by Massanari and Chess (2018, p. 1), who found that the term is used negatively within libertarian communities to refer to people who wish to censor others and is also found within alt-right communities on Reddit as an anti-feminist and anti-Left term. In their analysis of memes on Reddit which depict “social justice warriors”, Massanari and Chess (2018) found that these memes have links to racist and anti-Semitic tropes, and that the feminist “social justice warrior” is depicted as mentally unstable and diseased or cancerous. Overall, these attitudes are reflective of an overlap between a broader techno-libertarian culture which is disdainful of censorship, and a culture (be it alt-right, geek culture, or an amalgamation of the two) which has been historically associated with male tech communities and is thus hostile to people of other genders, including women. The fact that *r/ImGoingToHellForThis* had approximately 500,000 subscribers at the time of Topinka’s (2017) research, this suggests that such beliefs are not unpopular on Reddit. However, it should be noted that *r/ImGoingToHellForThis* was quarantined by Reddit in March 2020, following which the moderators set the subreddit to private and announced that the subreddit is closed. However, this closing was the choice of the moderators, and not enforced by Reddit.

Anti-feminist beliefs are also echoed in the various manosphere subreddits, with the subreddits *r/MensRights* and *r/seduction* having 313,894 and 658,058 subscribers respectively at the time of writing in October 2021. However, it should be noted that both *r/MGTOW* and *r/TheRedPill* have been quarantined, and *r/incels* and *r/braincels* have been banned. Massanari (2015, p. 138) theorises that the sexism which characterises the Reddit manosphere “leaks out” into more mainstream areas of the site via links to anti-feminist content and popular memes. However, it is difficult to determine whether the manosphere was the origin of such anti-feminist content on Reddit, or whether the prevalence of anti-feminism on Reddit is simply a result of lax moderation policies and a widely anti-feminist culture offline.

Five manosphere subreddits, corresponding to the five manosphere sub-groups discussed in Chapter 2, are of interest for this thesis. These are: *r/MensRights*, *r/MGTOW*, *r/seduction*, *r/braincels*, and *r/TheRedPill*. The data for Study 1 (Chapter 5) was collected in August 2019, the data for Study 2 (Chapter 6) was collected in October 2018, and the data for Study 3 (Chapter 7) in July 2020. Thus, at the time of data collection, all collected data was accessible on Reddit. Although data from all five subreddits was used to write Study 1 (Chapter 5), the remaining two studies focused on *r/TheRedPill*. More in-depth information on data selection and collection for each of the studies is given in the corresponding thesis chapters.

Choosing to analyse the manosphere phenomenon and use online data which arguably straddles the private and public spheres led me to consider several ethical dilemmas, which I discuss below.

2. Ethics

I encountered several ethical dilemmas throughout the course of this research, which I will address in turn. Firstly, considering the controversial nature of the manosphere and the history of masculinists harassing feminists, I discuss the measures I took to help ensure my safety as a researcher. I then consider whether collecting and analysing Reddit posts and comments requires obtaining informed consent and anonymising the data, with both researcher and participant safety in mind. Lastly, the potential for holding a bias against such participants certainly exists given my gender and feminist beliefs, and so I consider the implications of this for my research.

2.1 Researcher safety

Although historically, much of the academic discussion around potential harms in research focuses on harms to the research participants, Franzke et al. (2020, p. 11) of the Association of Internet Researchers and the British Association for Applied Linguistics good practices guidelines (2021, hereafter referred to as BAAL) both acknowledge a need to protect researchers who deal with distressing data or participants who could constitute a security risk to the researcher. Firstly, considering the notion of distressing data, BAAL (2021, p. 15) define this as data “that contain offensive or shocking content, or content that is created to oppose social norms, can be upsetting and emotionally demanding”. Posts and comments from the manosphere about gender dynamics constitute distressing data, as they have the potential to detail physical, sexual and emotional abuse (or fantasies about such abuse) and are characterised by hateful expressions about women which have been deemed controversial

enough by Reddit to result in bans or quarantines.⁶ As both a woman and a survivor of abuse, this data has the potential to be personally distressing to me.

BAAL (2021, p. 15) recommend that applied linguists who analyse such data should implement “effective resilience strategies” and recommend that the researcher take regular breaks, limit the amount of data analysed each day, maintain a good work-life balance, and work in a supportive environment. They also acknowledge that reaching out to colleagues doing similar work, attending counselling or having regular meetings with a psychologist could be beneficial to researchers. For this reason, throughout the PhD research, I made sure to work for on average 40 hours a week with regular breaks, fostered my personal relationships, took time to enjoy my hobbies, and sought out connections with other linguists who undertake similarly distressing research. I also agreed with my supervisor that if the data became too distressing for me to work with, I could change the focus of my research project so that I could stop interacting with such data.

Secondly, I argue that analysing manosphere subreddits and seeking to publish academic research on these subreddits could constitute a personal security risk as manosphere members could potentially harass me online. Indeed, Franzke et al. (2020, p. 11) note that researchers with certain identity markers (i.e. ethnic, sexual, or gender identity) are particularly at risk of harassment, doxxing, and death threats. This is certainly the case for outspoken women online, as discussed in Chapter 2. This is also the case for those who undertake feminist research. For instance, Chess and Shaw (2015) detail how a group of feminist games scholars were targeted by supporters of the GamerGate movement. These supporters made a series of YouTube videos disparaging their scholarship and sent condemning messages to the group mailing list which claimed to peer-review their work. Speaking specifically about the “alt-right gaze”, Massanari (2018) argues that the typical asymmetry in power between researchers and those they research is reversed in the case of potentially dangerous groups, in that the research participants are in a greater position of power than the researchers. This is because the researchers are highly visible to potential harassers, whereas those perpetrating harassment attacks are able to anonymise themselves and are able to appear as an organised group (Massanari, 2018, p. 3-4).

Massanari (2018) notes that early-career researchers in particular have the potential to be strongly affected by such harassment, as they have not necessarily developed a strong

⁶ Certain manosphere websites have also been classified as hate groups by the Southern Poverty Law Center (2012).

reputation in their field yet. Thus, such harassment could potentially put early-career researchers off a career in academia. Furthermore, both Massanari (2018) and BAAL (2021) recognise that academics are expected to maintain a level of online visibility so that they can promote their academic work on platforms such as Twitter and do outreach work via media appearances and writing opinion pieces. Arguably, this expectation weighs heavily on the minds of early-career researchers who are keen to make their research well-known, which would put them in good stead for a future academic career.

In order to determine the support I may be likely to need as a result of undertaking this research, my university's research ethics committee asked me to fill out a health and safety risk assessment form (which was originally designed for material science scholars). To do this, I used the guidelines set out by Marwick, Blackwell and Lo (2016) as a basis, and I contacted several researchers in the field to find out if they had been targets for abuse as a result of their work (reassuringly, none had). In this form, I identified that analysing such distressing data could negatively affect my mental health and indicated that I would be responsible for seeking support if this became the case. I also committed to using anti-virus software on my computer (Malwarebytes), and using a virtual private network (VPN) to disguise my IP address (Avast SecureLine VPN), to limit the extent to which my online footprint could be traced. I also use a password manager and regularly check if any of my personal information such as addresses are visible via search engines and if so, get this removed.

To reduce the risk of potential harassment, the research ethics committee in my case specifically recommended that I limit the amount of public outreach I do such as on TV and radio, or making talks publicly available. While this does put me at less risk of harassment, I am aware that this may have negatively affected my academic career. Furthermore, BAAL (2021, p. 16) recommends that researchers ensure that their social media accounts are set to private, check what content is being shared with others and if it is appropriately contextualised, and present work objectively. Thus, I ensured that my social media accounts were set to private and set to usernames which do not reveal my full name. I also only rarely use the Twitter account I use for academic networking to comment on relevant news stories about my research (i.e. those concerning the manosphere or hate speech against women).

Massanari (2018) recommends that those researching the alt-right, and alt-right adjacent communities such as the manosphere, develop research networks with a visible collective identity. Thus, the name of the collective research network is attacked, as opposed to individual researchers, and lessens the potential for individual harassment and doxxing.

Although I did not do this for my academic email or Twitter handle, I am part of an informal research team called “MANTRaP” (a loose acronym for “misogyny and the red pill”). It was with members of this team that I co-authored Study 1 (Chapter 5). Being part of such a team has ensured that I have colleagues who understand the exact nature of the distressing data and with whom I can have an open discussion about managing mental health. Similarly, reaching out to other researchers via email to ask about their safety allowed me to swiftly make connections in the field, which ensured that I did not feel isolated doing my research. Additionally, although I have identified that by virtue of being a feminist woman I am particularly vulnerable to both harassment and the distressing nature of the data, I argue that it is precisely these identity markers which motivate me to carry out such research and which, to quote Conway (2021, p. 370), “keep [me] going”.

Some academics working in this area acknowledge that doing research which constitutes a safety risk to the researcher can justify the use of covert research methods (Massanari, 2018). For instance, for her research examining the narratives of incels, Regehr (2020) used a young male proxy to conduct interviews with her incel participants, as participants would be more amenable to speaking to him than a female academic. It is in the context of doing risky research that I now discuss my decisions to not seek informed consent and to anonymise my data.

2.2 Obtaining informed consent

On the question of obtaining consent, BAAL (2021, p. 9) acknowledge that when collecting and analysing “large amounts of freely available, non-elicited online data”, it is ambiguous whether the originators of such data should be considered research participants and thus approached for informed consent. This question has been approached in three different ways in the past literature. Traditionally, if a data source can be deemed sufficiently public, some researchers have argued that informed consent is not required because the risk of harm coming to the participant as a result of taking part in the study is low (see the first iteration of the ethics guidelines from the Association of Internet Researchers, Ess and the Association of Internet Researchers, 2002). As users do not need a Reddit account to access *r/MensRights* or *r/seduction*, it could be argued that these subreddits are sufficiently public. However, it is unclear whether obtaining data from “quasi-public” (franzke et al., 2020) communities such as quarantined subreddits (*r/MGTOW* and *r/TheRedPill*, as well as *r/braincels* at the time of data collection), which require a registered account for access, require informed consent.

The most recent iteration of ethics guidelines from the Association of Internet Researchers (franzke et al., 2020) advocates for a case-by-case approach to privacy, depending on the

norms of the community of interest. I interpret this to mean the norms of both the users and of Reddit more widely. For this reason, I consulted the Reddit User Agreement (2021a) and Privacy Policy (2021b), contacted a Reddit administrator, and considered the norms of the communities I sought to research. Firstly, Reddit's Privacy Policy (2021b) states:

When you submit content (including a post, comment, chat message, or RPAN broadcast) to a public part of the Services, any visitors to and users of our Services will be able to see that content, the username associated with the content, and the date and time you originally submitted the content. Much of the information on the Services is public and accessible to everyone, even without an account. By using the Services, you are directing us to share this information publicly and freely.

Additionally, Reddit has an application programming interface (API) available for external users to automatically collect and display large amounts of Reddit data, including from quarantined subreddits. The Reddit API Terms of Use (Reddit, 2016) explicitly state that data collection using the API is allowed by Reddit (and is thus an appropriate method of collecting data for large scale studies, see Chapter 5). Furthermore, it should be noted that the five manosphere subreddits of interest wish to be public, but have been unwillingly quarantined or banned by Reddit. Together, the existence of the Reddit API, the content of the Privacy Policy, and that those who frequent manosphere subreddits wish for those subreddits to be public, suggest that Reddit posts and comments are indeed public and thus available for use in academic research.

However, the Reddit User Agreement (2021a) does not explicitly state that Reddit data can be used for such research. The Agreement (2021a) states that users may not "access, search, or collect data from the Services by any means (automated or otherwise) except as permitted in these Terms or in a separate agreement with Reddit" (e.g. using the Reddit API). As collecting data for academic research is not explicitly permitted, the Lancaster University research ethics committee requested that I obtain a written statement from Reddit's data protection officer which gives me explicit permission to use Reddit data for academic research. In the first instance, the Reddit administrator (u/TheOpusCroakus) who responded to my query told me no such officer exists for Reddit, and recommended that I seek an answer to my dilemma from the research ethics committee. This confusion highlights that both the research ethics committee and Reddit alike were conflicted over what constitutes good practice for using online data. After clarifying that I was seeking a statement from Reddit on request of the research ethics committee, the Reddit administrator responded:

You are able to do research without using the API. Doing so would not be against the rules of Reddit and many researchers have done this. Reddit users own their content, so we are unable to grant a blanket permission for use. It is a good idea for you to contact any users whose comments or posts you wish to use (with identifying information removed before publication) in order to get permission.

I then inquired further on whether contacting the users was required, to which the administrator responded “it is not a requirement of Reddit that you explicitly get permission from users to use their content, though it is the best practice”. Thus, obtaining consent was not a prerequisite to using the data, although the administrator acknowledged such seeking consent, regardless of data publicity, is best practice.

Although I did not strictly need to obtain consent from the communities I was analysing, I briefly considered doing so anyway as I did not want the participants to feel unduly observed if they did come across the research. Indeed, BAAL (2021, p. 4) support approaching participants, stating that in general, “applied linguists should respect the rights, interests, sensitivities, privacy and autonomy of their informants”. As Nissenbaum (2010) notes, despite some data being described as public in a website’s terms and conditions, many online communities nevertheless do not expect their names, posts, and comments to be used in an academic context, be that for analysis or reproduction in academic literature. Indeed, many users of online services do not read or understand these terms and conditions, due to their length and propensity for legal jargon (McDonald and Cranor, 2009). Thus, Reddit’s view that the data of its users is public and that obtaining consent from its users is not required may be a moot point. Furthermore, boyd (2011) notes that when authors produce texts online, they have a specific audience in mind, even if the text is likely to be read by other audiences. Thus, these authors may not want their texts to be taken out of context.

As conducting research using online data has become more commonplace, some researchers have opted to seek consent from either users themselves (e.g. Mackenzie, 2017) or from a community representative, such as a moderator or administrator (e.g. Rüdiger and Dayter, 2017), regardless of whether the data is widely considered public. For instance, Mackenzie (2017) observed in her research on Mumsnet users that her participants had different opinions over whether their data was public, and that it was impossible to predict the desires of each individual user with regards to anonymity and data usage. For this reason, Mackenzie (2017) both contacted the Mumsnet administrators before starting the research, and then reached out to Mumsnet users after feeling an affinity with them.

However, such an approach can be problematic for two reasons. Firstly, dealing with online data specifically presents a range of issues for obtaining consent. For instance, users are not guaranteed to respond to researchers seeking consent, as was the case for Rüdiger and Dayter (2017), who decided to undertake their research despite this. It may also be difficult to contact each individual user when large datasets containing hundreds of posts are analysed (see Chapter 5), and users may not be active on Reddit anymore or may have deleted their account since posting. Thus, obtaining consent from all individual users involved may not be an achievable goal.

Secondly, while such a transparent approach to obtaining consent is arguably ideal, it is not necessarily advisable when researching communities who could be potentially hostile towards researchers, a possibility which BAAL (2021, p. 5) explicitly acknowledge. One potential issue, as Rüdiger and Dayter (2017) note in their work on PUAs, is that manosphere users would disagree with the way many researchers choose to portray them in academic work. Thus, informing the participants of the research would lead to a dilemma between discussing the observed phenomena (e.g. that the participants portray women in a dehumanising manner in the case of PUAs) at the risk of participants withdrawing their consent, or framing the data in a way that the participants are happy with (i.e. too favourably). Furthermore, making oneself known to such hostile groups could constitute a safety risk to the researcher, and in such cases, the need for informed consent could be waived (Massanari, 2018). For these reasons, I chose not to seek informed consent from my research participants, but did choose to anonymise them to some extent. I discuss this latter decision below.

2.3 Anonymising the data

Both Franzke et al. (2020) and BAAL (2021) acknowledge that wherever possible, the anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy of research participants should be protected. In the case of online data however, Franzke et al. (2020, p. 10) observe that this can be approached in multiple ways. For instance, researchers can choose to anonymise individuals and delete highly identifiable information, to anonymise the community that participants are a part of or the website they use, or to assign anonymising identifiers to individuals. Following the lead of Rüdiger and Dayter (2017), in lieu of informed consent, I chose to anonymise the individual posters in my dataset by deleting identifiable information such as names, locations and usernames, and assigning each user a unique numerical pseudonym. Although usernames are arguably already anonymising, some internet users use the same pseudonym across multiple platforms (Bruckman, 2002), and so the pseudonym still acts as an individual identity marker.

However, anonymising individuals does not guarantee that their identity cannot be determined, especially if one uses verbatim quotes which are traceable (BAAL, 2021, p. 8), as search engines can be used to find the original data source (boyd, 2010). Posts and comments from *r/MensRights*, *r/MGTOW*, *r/seduction* and *r/TheRedPill* are traceable via a search engine as *r/MensRights* and *r/seduction* are publicly accessible via Reddit, and *r/MGTOW* and *r/TheRedPill* are accessible via public archive websites. Although Markham (2012) recommends paraphrasing data to avoid this issue, I take issue with this for two reasons. Firstly, I am a linguist and thus my research specifically focuses on the exact language used to express beliefs about gender dynamics and on the language used to foster connections between group members. Secondly, as Jane (2014b) notes, paraphrasing data or choosing never to directly quote it has the potential to obscure its true nature, and may risk readers misunderstanding the controversial and offensive nature of communities such as the manosphere. Thus, Jane (2014b) recommends quoting data in its entirety and I follow this recommendation, and I also provide content warnings to warn readers about the potentially distressing nature of the data.

The research ethics committee also recommended that I anonymise the manosphere subreddits of interest for two reasons. Firstly, the committee argued that not naming the subreddits could reduce the risk of potential harassment from users who perceive my research to be offensive to them. Arguably, this also reduces the risk of drawing undue attention to the subreddits, as indicating that they are controversial in nature may attract curious users to them. This being said, I argue that this falls under the same logic as obscuring the true nature of the data, and that attention from the intended audience of my research (i.e. feminist-oriented social scientists) would be a positive outcome, not a negative one. Secondly, anonymising the data at the community level would seek to avoid causing any reputational harm to Reddit or indeed the subreddits of interest. However, many journalistic articles (e.g. Lott-Lavigna, 2016) and a growing number of academic sources which are not behind paywalls (e.g. Donna Zuckerberg's 2018 book *Not All Dead White Men: Classics and Misogyny in the Digital Age*) acknowledge that the manosphere community on Reddit is a hub of online sexism. Additionally, Reddit themselves acknowledge that parts of the manosphere community are controversial, as they have banned *r/incels* and *r/braincels*, and quarantined *r/TheRedPill* and *r/MGTOW*. Thus, it is widely acknowledged that these communities are both controversial and often platformed on Reddit, and thus the risk of my research posing a threat to the site's reputation is low. It should also be noted that in order to fully contextualise the data discussed in this thesis, I would need to make reference to the Reddit platform and its history of

platforming controversial subreddits and anti-feminist content. For these reasons, I have chosen not to anonymise the subreddits of interest to this research.

2.4 Reflexivity and potential researcher bias

Lastly, as Rüdiger and Dayter (2017) rightly raise in their article on researching “unlikeable subjects”, there is the risk that my personal opinion of the manosphere (i.e. overwhelmingly negative) may negatively influence my presentation of the research findings. It is my hope that by making this concern explicit, I commit to a practice of reflexivity in my research and seek to present my findings as factually as possible. It is my intention to present the various facets of the manosphere I analyse as nuanced, and I acknowledge that some manosphere talking points such as male suicide rates (see Chapter 2) are social issues which deserve to be taken seriously. I hope that pursuing my PhD by alternative format and thus having my work read by multiple scholars as part of the peer-review process will help to highlight any instances where I am not sufficiently objective.

This being said, I do not consider academic centrism (and thus presenting feminism and anti-feminism as equivalent positions) as an ideal to aspire to, as this downplays the harms associated with anti-feminism, which I discuss in Chapter 2. Indeed, Rüdiger and Dayter (2017) argue that their negative feelings towards the PUA movement were a result of immersing themselves in PUA culture for the purposes of data analysis, and that to take a centrist stance when presented with such polarising data amounts to a tacit endorsement of their position. I agree and explicitly wish to orient myself away from research such as Whitley and Zhou (2020), which freely engaged in the controversial practices of a PUA community (namely approaching women on the street who wore headphones to try pick-up techniques, and participating in a fight club) without sufficiently critiquing them.

It is with this attitude that I introduce Chapter 4, where I discuss the feminist-oriented and critical discourse analysis theoretical approaches to my work, as well as the theoretical basis I use to explore how manosphere users express their identity.

Chapter 4: Theoretical Approaches

In this chapter, I will discuss the three theoretical approaches which underpin the methodologies I have used in the three studies for this thesis. These approaches are (feminist) critical discourse analysis, corpus-assisted discourse studies, and face and identity in interaction.

1. (Feminist) Critical Discourse Studies

Critical discourse analysis (hereafter abbreviated to CDA) is a problem-oriented and interdisciplinary approach, defined by Fairclough, Mulderigg and Wodak (2011, p. 405) as “the analysis of linguistic and semiotic aspects of social processes and problems”, paying particular attention to “the semiotic dimensions of power, injustice, abuse, and political-economic or cultural change in society” (2011, p. 356). CDA scholars seek to make connections between individual instances of language use (i.e. text) and structures of power and ideology in wider society. The term *discourse* can itself be defined in multiple ways. Whereas *text* refers to any grammatically coherent instance of language use which has a discernible meaning, the term *discourse* refers to texts in their social function, such as forging relationships with others and constructing one’s own identity. Researchers distinguish between two types of discourse which operate on different scales. Firstly, there is “little ‘d’ discourse” (Gee, 2015) which refers to language in use in a given context such as a specific conversation. Comparatively, “big D Discourse” (Gee, 2015) refers to different ways of presenting aspects of the world and sets the context for how “little ‘d’ discourse” can be interpreted. According to Gee (2015):

the notion of “Big ‘D’ Discourse”...is meant to capture the ways in which people enact and recognize socially and historically significant identities or “kinds of people” through well-integrated combinations of language, actions, interactions, objects, tools, technologies, beliefs, and values. The notion stresses how “discourse” (language in use among people) is always also a “conversation” among different historically formed Discourses (that is, a “conversation” among different socially and historically significant kinds of people or social groups). (p. 2)

Furthermore, Koller (2014a) distinguishes between discourse as a mass noun and a count noun. Discourse as a mass noun can be specified in terms of historical and social context (e.g. “late nineteenth-century Italian political discourse”), whereas discourse as a count noun can be specified via stance, topic and locality such as “a nationalist discourse on immigration in British newspapers” (Koller, 2014a).

This distinction between individual instances of language use and what is discussed and accepted in wider society is pertinent for CDA scholars, as discourse and society are seen as mutually constitutive (Fairclough, 1995). This means that engaging in discourse with others is conceptualised as a social practice which affects wider society (i.e. by sustaining, negotiating or resisting the status quo). Conversely, what is expressed and how via discourse is affected by wider society (e.g. via widely referenced topics and lexicogrammar in the media). To interrogate this relationship between discourse and society, CDA scholars consider three levels: the micro, meso and macro (Fairclough, 1995). The micro-level refers to what is linguistically represented in a specific text and how it is represented, and thus requires a close linguistic and semiotic analysis. The meso-level refers to the discourse practice context, i.e. the factors affecting the production, distribution, and reception of texts. This encompasses the discourse practice norms of a given community, including who plays what role in the discursive practice being analysed, whether there is an intended audience, and the goals of the discourse producer. Lastly, the macro-level refers to the situational, institutional and societal context, and considers the wider ideologies which are salient in the text. Both the meso-level and macro-level are used to theorise why topics are linguistically represented in a certain way.

From a CDA perspective, language is the primary tool used to influence the ideologies of others and to convey power relations. Ideology can be defined as “a network of beliefs that gives rise to expectations, norms and values about events, ideas and people” (Koller, 2014b, p. 239). For instance, feminism, anti-feminism, racism and sexism can be described as ideologies, and integral to these ideologies is one group of people broadly having power over another/others. As Fairclough and Wodak (1997, p. 258) argue, language can “help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities”. While this definition from 1997 arguably still holds true because we have not achieved full equality along the lines of class, gender or ethnicity, it does not account for someone having multiple relevant identity categories, for instance victims of misogynoir (i.e. misogyny towards black women where both gender and race play a role, see Bailey, 2013). Furthermore, it does not account for specific instances where even though a person may have some amount of privilege (e.g. by virtue of being a white man), they may be marginalised in other aspects (e.g. having a disability or identifying as LGBTQ+). I would argue that a fully contextualised CDA approach should account for these intersectional nuances, as has third-wave feminist research in comparison to second wave feminism.

CDA studies have historically focused on media and political discourse where the discourse producer (i.e. the media institution or politician) was invariably viewed as the more powerful party in comparison to the audience. However, this is not the case for every discourse practice context. In the case of some online discourses, the discourse producers and audience are the same people, and thus the power dynamics between the two are not clear cut. Furthermore, within manosphere discourse, its users are united by an anti-feminist ideology and are thus arguably the powerful party in this context as opposed to women (although this is not how they see themselves). However, if one defines power as when “[one group] is able to control (specific) actions of (the members of) another group, thereby limiting the freedom of the other group” (van Dijk, 2014, p. 132), the extent to which this applies in the manosphere context is debatable. This is because although the manosphere endorses anti-feminism, it is made up of many disparate individuals as opposed to being a unified organisation, and so the material effects of endorsement are difficult to discern. Thus, one needs to approach the notion of power in a nuanced manner.

The CDA focus on power and ideology is due to CDA’s origins in Western neo-Marxist thought and the field of Critical Linguistics. Firstly, considering Western neo-Marxism, this movement concerned investigating the effects of capitalism on cultural development, class conflict and social relations. Western neo-Marxism has been associated with the Frankfurt School of social theory and philosophy, who were a group of researchers based at the Institute for Social Research at Goethe University Frankfurt. Led by philosopher and sociologist Max Horkheimer (1982 [1937]), these scholars based their work on the concept of critical theory, which is oriented towards critiquing social relations and improving society for those who are oppressed. Given the movement’s leftist roots, Frankfurt School scholars critiqued capitalism, fascism, Nazism and totalitarianism. The Frankfurt School also promoted an interdisciplinary approach which spanned multiple disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, history and psychology. This interdisciplinary tradition has also been adopted by modern CDA scholars.

The field of Critical Linguistics, developed by Fowler et al. (1979), was the foundation for modern CDA and used Western neo-Marxism for its theoretical basis. Critical Linguistics was concerned with determining the links between grammatical structures and semantic content. Being rooted in neo-Western Marxist thought, the aim of Critical Linguistics was “to uncover the structure of power in texts” (Kress, 1990, p. 88) and this was mainly done using Halliday’s (1978) systemic functional linguistics framework (a framework which I also apply, see Chapter 6), with some proponents of the field arguing that “the social is built into the grammatical tissue of language” (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, p. 140). For instance, Critical Linguists

analysed how linguistic features such as transitivity (the use of different verb processes, see Chapter 6), agentless passivisation (foregrounding the object of a sentence), and nominalisation (changing a verb to a noun and thus reifying processes) can be used strategically to present the same event in different ways, and distance or completely remove agents from their actions (Fowler, 1991; Hodge and Kress, 1993).

Since the development of Critical Linguistics in the 1970s, a wide range of CDA approaches have emerged which incorporate a range of methodologies, such as the Discourse-Historical approach (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001), critical metaphor analysis (Charteris-Black, 2004; Koller, 2004; Musolff, 2004), the socio-cognitive approach (van Dijk, 2009a), and social actor analysis (van Leeuwen, 2008, which I also apply, see Chapters 5 and 6), and multimodal discourse analysis (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). Indeed, from the start, CDA has not been defined as a specific methodology but instead, as van Dijk (2013) puts it, “a state of mind, an attitude, a way of dissenting”. To reflect the disparate range of methodologies which CDA scholars can apply in their work, there has been a shift from calling the field Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) in approximately the past five years (Koller, 2018). Koller (2018) argues that “studies” in CDS “is a more comprehensive notion than analysis” in the sense that “analysis” presupposes the use of a specific methodology, whereas “studies” connotes a more eclectic approach.

Despite this diversification in methods, CDA/CDS has by no means lost its focus on examining the role of language in maintaining, negotiating and resisting power and ideology. Modern CDA extends the lexicogrammatical focus of Critical Linguistics by also analysing the means of discourse production, distribution and reception (i.e. discourse practice) and who has control over these processes. Furthermore, whereas discourse analysis more generally refers to the analysis of language beyond the sentence (Stubbs, 1983) while taking contextual factors into account, CDA/CDS scholars have an explicit ideological stance and critical impetus. Indeed, the “critical” in critical discourse analysis refers to an approach which focuses on “address[ing] social wrongs...and possible ways of righting or mitigating them” (Fairclough, 2010, p. 11). Due to CDA developing from the field of Critical Linguistics, which is rooted in neo-Marxist traditions, this stance is typically leftist in nature. According to Reisigl and Wodak (2015), who write from a discourse-historical perspective, CDA/CDS scholars seek to undertake three types of critique:

‘Text or discourse immanent critique’ aims to discover inconsistencies, (self)-contradictions, paradoxes and dilemmas in text-internal or discourse-internal structures. ‘Socio-diagnostic

critique' is concerned with uncovering the – particularly latent – persuasive or 'manipulative' character of discursive practices. Here, we rely on our contextual knowledge and draw on social theories and other theoretical models from various disciplines to interpret discursive events. Future-related prospective critique seeks to improve communication (e.g. by elaborating guidelines against sexist language use or by reducing 'language barriers' in hospitals, schools and so forth). (p. 45)

In addition to these three types of critiques, Fairclough and Fairclough (2012, pp. 79-80) add two more: normative and explanatory critique. Normative critique "evaluates social realities against the standard of values taken as necessary to a 'good society'" and is "directly concerned with such judgements in evaluating behaviour, actions and social practices as being, for example, just or unjust, fair or exploitative, racist or non-racist, sexist or non-sexist, and beliefs as being true or false". Thus, a researcher who is being normatively critical casts an explicit judgement on the discourse being analysed as either good for, or detrimental to, society. On the other hand, explanatory critique "seeks to explain why social realities are as they are, and how they are sustained or changed". For instance, seeking explanations of how and why certain discourses emerge, and how and why they become taken up more widely, would come under the remit of explanatory critique.

An impetus of activism and applying one's findings in a practical manner to bring about positive societal change are integral to CDA/CDS. For this reason, eminent CDA/CDS scholars such as Ruth Wodak and Teun van Dijk, who have analysed how ideologies such as racism and anti-Semitism are expressed through language, have also written pieces and given talks for the general public, and have worked alongside third parties such as government bodies to form language guidelines. Furthermore, some CDA/CDS scholars apply their linguistic analysis skills in consultancy contexts (see Mullany, 2020), in order to promote diversity and inclusion and improve communication in contexts such as corporate communication, healthcare contexts, and language policy. Although practical positive change that has come from the work of some CDA/CDS scholars, this is arguably not the case for most CDA/CDS research, which does not extend to the level of future-related prospective critique (Catalano and Waugh, 2020). Much research is hidden behind the paywalls of academic journals, as opposed to being brought to the groups that CDA/CDS scholars claim to be emancipating, as well as to the public via dissemination methods such as media appearances. Furthermore, the use of technical language which has specific meanings in academic contexts may alienate laypeople from engaging with such research.

As a CDA/CDS scholar, I wish to make my ideological stance clear. As mentioned in Chapter 3, I am a feminist, and thus believe in equality of opportunity and treatment for people of all genders. I undertake the present research on the basis that this equality has not yet been achieved, and that women are systemically disadvantaged in society. As the Reddit manosphere has been identified in both the academic literature (e.g. Ging, 2017) and journalistic sphere (e.g. Marche, 2016) as vehemently sexist, I fully expect the representations of women I find in my data to be unfavourable. However this expectation does not presuppose that I will find this. On the contrary, it is because I am a feminist that I hope my expectation is proven to be false. My consideration of whether the manosphere language I analyse in my thesis can be classified as hate speech will encompass a primarily socio-diagnostic, normative, and explanatory critique. My analysis will be rooted in a micro-linguistic analysis while also acknowledging how hate speech is defined in law and in the academic literature (see Chapter 2). I also endeavour to meet the CDA/CDS criterion of future-related prospective critique, by considering the practical applications of my research. For instance, I chose to make the published research in Chapter 6 open access in the *Discourse & Society* journal, so that people can access my work without needing to bypass an academic paywall. Furthermore, I will seek to make my findings known to those who are able to effect change, be that within a local organisation context, NGOs, at the level of the UK Government, or at the level of supra-national social media platforms (see Chapter 8).

As Lazar (2005, 2007) argues, a CDA which labels itself as explicitly feminist (namely Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis) is a natural development for an approach which concerns itself with identifying and correcting social inequality. Indeed, as Christie (2000) notes, feminism as a movement aims to redress inequalities between people of different genders. Lazar (2007, p. 145) argues that the central aim of feminist CDA is “critiquing discourses which sustain a patriarchal social order – relations of power that systematically privilege men as a social group, and disadvantage, exclude, and disempower women as a social group”. The purpose of such research, as Lazar (2007, p. 142) comments, is to bring about material consequences for the benefit of both men and women which narrows the inequality between the two.⁷ The importance of effecting social change is echoed by both KhosraviNik and Esposito (2018) and Mills and Mullany (2011, p. 162), who note the importance of aligning feminist academic research with modern political developments, as well as consulting with “activists, journalists,

⁷ I acknowledge that there are of course more than two genders, and that there are multiple ways of performing masculinity and femininity. I do not mean to suggest otherwise in my use of the terms *men* and *women* exclusively in this section. This language is reflective of the strictly binary view of gender which is present in my data and thus of consideration in this thesis.

politicians, feminist and human rights groups” in order to effect positive change outside the academic realm. For instance, Mills and Mullany (2011, p. 145) suggest calling for bans to sexist language via anti-discriminatory language campaigns as a potential positive step forward, but also note that short-term solutions such as language bans should be seen as a step towards effecting long-term social change in terms of how we think about relations between men and women.

Furthermore, Lazar (2007, p. 141) comments that in the modern day (i.e. in an era of third wave feminism) gendered power asymmetries are simultaneously more subtle than in the past (i.e. the eras of first and second wave feminism) but also that a backlash against feminism has become increasingly widespread (see Faludi, 1991; McRobbie, 2008). Thus, Lazar (2007) identifies the post-feminist context (McRobbie, 2008) as requiring specific attention from feminist CDA scholars. Indeed, post-feminism is a pertinent context for the analysis of the manosphere, as its users interpret the feminist movement as already having achieved its emancipatory goals. Furthermore, as also argued by Ging (2019), anti-feminism and post-feminism can be linked, as believing that the goals of mainstream feminism have been achieved in wider society, and that these goals have been achieved to the detriment of men, could lead to resisting further feminist policies. This is certainly the case for the manosphere, where any further campaigning for feminist causes (e.g. the #MeToo movement) is interpreted as a misandrist attempt at giving women more power than men (Marwick and Caplan, 2018). It should also be noted, as discussed in Chapter 2, that the manosphere cannot be considered an isolated phenomenon from a broader cultural context which represents women in derogatory and sexualised ways (Ging, 2019; Chang, 2020). Ging (2019) also considers how certain technological affordances have affected the development of the manosphere. The movement’s controversial nature arguably brings more users to websites such as Reddit, and thus it is not in Reddit’s commercial interest to deplatform the majority of manosphere communities. Thus, a feminist CDA approach which takes into account the micro-level of the text, the meso-level of the production, distribution, and reception practices of Reddit, and the macro-level of a society which widely perpetuates post-feminist attitudes, would incorporate the necessary levels of context needed to comprehensively analyse the manosphere.

So far, this section on CDA/CDS has focussed on critiquing the language use which a given researcher analyses as sustaining hegemonic power dynamics and thus detrimental to the emancipation efforts of marginalised groups. However, a complementary approach to CDA/CDS, namely Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA), was proposed by Martin (2004, p. 9), who stated that the purpose of PDA is to analyse “how change happens, for the better, across a

range of sites”, and thus consider instances where hegemonic power dynamics are effectively resisted and positive social change is demonstrated. Rather than solely focusing on the positive or the negative as it were, Martin (2004) advocates taking a “yin and yang approach” in the sense that it is important to see how such power dynamics are both sustained and successfully resisted, in order to determine effective ways to resist them. Thus, in Martin’s (2004) words, the aim of PDA is not just to “critique” past texts but also to “design” better ways to construct texts in the future which suits the goals of the researcher, be they anti-racist, anti-sexist, etc. Although PDA has not been as widely taken up as CDA/CDS, notable examples of PDA research include the analysis of English language news media in Russia (Macgilchrist, 2007), autism acceptance advocacy (Hughes, 2018), and a political speech by the first president of Indonesia advocating Afro-Asian unity (Nartey and Ernanda, 2020). A PDA approach is arguably a solution to a problem that van Dijk (2009b, p. 4) terms the “blame game” in CDA/CDS (i.e. that discourse is critiqued without any solutions being offered). However, Bartlett (2012, p. 7) argues that while PDA is indeed a fruitful approach to the analysis of social change, it runs the risk of downplaying the prevalence of hegemonic power dynamics in language and the negative consequences this can have on the marginalised, if it solely focuses on positive aspects of language use. Furthermore, it is important to appropriately contextualise the existing tensions and conditions for which hegemonic social orders can be resisted in the first place. I agree that PDA is an appropriate approach to take, especially for the purposes of future-related prospective critique, although I unfortunately did not have space to undertake such an analysis in the current research project. However, this is a fruitful direction for future research that I will refer to in Chapter 8.

CDA/CDS as an approach is not without its critics, the most prolific of which has been Henry Widdowson. Firstly, Widdowson (1995) argues that when applying CDA (the term CDS was not yet widely used), it is difficult to determine an appropriate unit of analysis (i.e. the word, the sentence or something larger), and that there is little guidance on how to balance the language aspects of the analysis with appropriate contextual knowledge. Secondly, employing multiple methods for the purposes of CDA may result in those methods being incorrectly applied to the data (Widdowson, 1998). Naturally, proponents of CDA view the methodological flexibility of CDA as a boon rather than a weakness, although Breeze (2011) notes that in some CDA work, methodology and the theoretical underpinnings for why certain methods are chosen are not discussed in sufficient detail. Thus, such methodological flexibility must be accompanied by a clear description and justification of the methods being utilised.

Thirdly, Widdowson (1995) claims that due to its neo-Marxist traditions, CDA scholars privilege leftist interpretations of data over others, and thus CDA scholars cannot approach data from an objective perspective which considers multiple interpretations as having merit in a given context. Similarly, Hammersley (1997) criticises the leftist basis of CDA by claiming that the neo-Marxist roots of CDA have since been discredited by philosophers, historians and economists, although I would argue the universality of this argument is up for debate. Fairclough (1996, p. 52) responds to Widdowson's (1995) criticism by arguing that despite CDA developing from a leftist research tradition, it is still theoretically possible to use a CDA approach to analyse left-wing or feminist texts (see Koller, 2008). On a connected point, Widdowson (1995) also claims that ideologically driven research cannot be conducted in a non-prejudiced manner. Indeed, CDA approaches have been accused of having a lack of objectivity in general, as researchers have the ability to only select data or specific examples which match what the CDA researcher wants to prove. This is sometimes referred to as "cherry picking" (e.g. Baker, 2012). Verschueren (2001) argues that the move from the description stage of analysis to interpretation in CDA work is not empirical and that evidence which does not support the researcher's viewpoint has the potential to be disregarded. Thus, Breeze (2011) states that in CDA research, the interpretation stage needs to be rooted in observable phenomena from the data, as opposed to being decided by the researcher beforehand. Furthermore, responding to Widdowson's (1995) criticisms directly, Fairclough (1996) argues that all researchers are biased even if such biases are not explicitly stated. Indeed, Wodak and Meyer (2015) agree with Fairclough (1996) and also note that due to the strong ideological basis of CDA, its scholars are typically self-reflective of their own research process by keeping the description and interpretation sections of their work separate. This is something I have endeavoured to do in my own work.

Lastly, Widdowson (1995) claims that CDA scholars make unfair assumptions about the intentions and beliefs of speakers, as ideology and an individual's beliefs are not necessarily encoded in language in a one-to-one mapping. This criticism, which has since been echoed by Blommaert (2005), focuses on the influence of Critical Linguistics and Halliday's (1978) Systemic Functional Linguistics, from which the modern field of CDA arguably developed. In response, Fairclough (1996) argues that CDA, being distinct from Critical Linguistics, acknowledges that language can hold multiple meanings, and thus CDA scholars seek contextual information before settling on a principal interpretation. Furthermore, Fairclough (1996) argues that it is too liberal an approach to assume that language choices such as

grammatical action are purely a result of individual choice, and not at all influenced by wider societal context, a position that I also align myself with.

On a related note, Blommaert (2005) argues that CDA scholars make assertions about how readers interpret and are influenced by certain uses of language without providing sufficient proof of these effects. To address this criticism, Blommaert (2005) calls for CDA scholars to consider the specific social consequences that arise as a result of their texts of interest being produced. While I believe this is a valid criticism of much CDA work, this can be mitigated in multiple ways, such as considering whether there is evidence in the macro-context which indicates social consequences. For instance, if one is interested in the effects of a political text, a CDA analysis could account for the macro-context by also considering relevant political speeches, election results and polling data. This being said, it would still be difficult though to claim direct cause and effect. Furthermore, some CDA scholars consider the effects of certain language formulations on a cognitive level. For instance, some CDA researchers combine a linguistic approach with psychological experiments, to determine the effects of subtle linguistic changes (e.g. activation and passivation) on how individuals perceive certain social actors (e.g. Hart, 2018).

It should also be noted that CDA scholars themselves question the extent to which certain linguistic features such as nominalisation and passivisation can be considered universally negative. For instance, Billig (2008a, 2008b) argues that CDA scholars should not use such features in their academic writing, so as to not alienate laypeople who wish to engage with CDA work, and to clearly ascribe actions to agents. However, Martin (2008), Fairclough (2008) and van Dijk (2008) vehemently disagree in direct responses to Billig (2008a), arguing that these linguistic devices are not negative in and of themselves and that they are useful for formulating evaluations, and necessary in academic language for building theory and methodology. Indeed, Fairclough (2008, p. 1) argues that while public impact is an important aspect of CDA work, “not all writing is or should be aimed at reaching a general public”. Billig (2008b) responds, arguing that relying on technical terms such as nominalisation can lead to analysts having conflicting ideas over how to define such terms. However, such a criticism is in no way unique to the CDA discipline, and ambiguity of meaning is arguably a tension in communication in general. Rather, this debate indicates that any interpretation of a linguistic device as having negative effects needs to be backed up by considering its use in context.

Another common criticism of CDA is that CDA scholars tend to work with relatively small datasets, and thus their findings may not be replicable or representative of the community of

interest (Stubbs, 1997). Indeed, Stubbs (1997, p. 10) states that “varieties of language use are defined, not by individual features, but by clusters of co-occurring features: this entails the use of quantitative and probabilistic methods of text and corpus analysis”. While small datasets and qualitative methods may result in unreliable findings from some CDA research, there can also be cases where because the data is appropriately contextualised, it does not matter that the dataset is small. For instance, if a CDA analysis only makes claims about a specific text and acknowledges the small-scale nature of the study, such analyses should not be considered less valuable than ones which utilise larger datasets. Nevertheless, if a researcher wants to make claims about a speech community in general, larger datasets can help to ensure that the findings discussed in a given analysis are widely applicable to the community of interest.

Researchers have helped to address the methodological weaknesses of CDA/CDS (i.e. small datasets and bias via cherry-picking) by complementing their work with corpus linguistic methods. Baker (2012) observes that Widdowson (1998) positively reviews those CDA/CDS studies which employ corpus methods to undertake some level of systematic language description. I will discuss the combination of these methods in more detail below.

2. Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies

Triangulating CDA/CDS methods with corpus linguistic ones is a well-established approach for addressing the weaknesses of CDA/CDS. Corpus linguistics scholars collect datasets which would be too large to analyse manually (known as a corpus) and use computational means to analyse them. There are five main ways in which this is done. Firstly, one can search for how frequently a linguistic item occurs, or what the most frequent linguistic items in a given corpus are. Secondly, one can determine how many texts in a corpus the linguistic item is dispersed across. This means that it is possible to find out whether the occurrence of a certain linguistic item is limited to a minority of texts in a corpus, or if it is characteristic of the corpus as a whole. Thirdly, one can analyse how a linguistic item is used in context. This is done by generating concordance lines, which show a pre-set amount of text (e.g. ten words) to the left and right of the word of interest. Fourthly, one can analyse the words which co-occur with a linguistic item. These co-occurring words are known as collocates, and analysing them can reveal the concepts which are associated with the linguistic item and whether the linguistic item is used in a primarily positive or negative manner. This is referred to by Stubbs (2001) as “discourse prosody”. Typically, collocates are calculated by applying two types of statistical test. There are tests which determine the strength of the collocation, such as Mutual Information, which compares how many times a pair of words occur together against where they occur separately. However, statistical tests of strength tend to ignore how frequently a

word occurs, which means that even if a collocation occurs at a relatively high frequency, a test of strength will not capture it. Tests which determine the confidence of the collocation (i.e. the extent that we can be confident that a relationship between two words exists and is not due to chance) such as t-score do take into account the frequency of the collocation, and thus using both a test of strength and confidence in tandem is recommended (Hunston, 2002). Lastly, one can apply statistical means to calculate words which characterise the corpus as a whole, in comparison to a reference corpus which is often bigger than the corpus of interest and includes more general language. The words which occur more often in a corpus of interest compared to a reference corpus are referred to as keywords. Although the word is most often the unit of analysis in corpus linguistics, these techniques can also be applied to a word sequence or a set of words or phrases that have received the same grammatical or semantic tag.

Corpus linguistics utilises quantitative methods, such as those used in two of the studies in this thesis (see Chapters 5 and 6), which can take advantage of the sheer amount of Reddit data available. However, corpus linguistics should not be thought of as solely quantitative: while corpus linguistic methods generate numerical data about specific words or phrases used in a given corpus, it is then up to the individual researcher to interpret these findings. This sets corpus linguistics apart from other quantitative methods of language analysis such as machine learning and topic modelling, which rely on decontextualised language data for the creation of automated algorithms (e.g. for determining the supposed frequency of hateful language within a dataset) and topic lists, respectively. For examples of how such techniques are applied to manosphere data, see my consideration of Mountford (2018) in Chapter 2. The findings that these automated methods generate are not necessarily reliable. Indeed, Brookes and McEneaney (2019) tested the efficacy of omitting function words and the bag-of-words approach (a natural language processing technique which ignores word order) on a 29-million-word corpus of online patient comments about the NHS. The authors found that the method was not reliable as 8 of the 20 topics found were unusable, 9 showed mixed results, and only 3 were supported by a subsequent discourse analysis. Thus, corpus linguistic methods which rely on contextualised language use can provide a more accurate impression of a given dataset than methods where the language is analysed automatically in a decontextualised manner.

An approach which utilises corpus methods allows for the analysis of much larger datasets than the smaller datasets analysed by CDA/CDS scholars. In theory, larger datasets can be more representative of the community being analysed, as it is more likely that the linguistic phenomena identified in a larger dataset are more characteristic of the community as a whole

than those identified in a smaller one. However, this is reliant on the researcher selecting appropriate texts for their specific corpus, and for some communities, a fully representative corpus (e.g. of books by a certain author) does not have to be large in size. Furthermore, by using methods which generate statistical and other quantitative results, as opposed to the typically qualitative methods of CDA/CDS scholars, researchers can have more confidence that their findings are replicable. Due to their statistical nature, corpus linguistic methods can also be useful in mediating the effect of researcher bias in CDA/CDS work. As Partington (2003) puts it:

Corpus technology helps find other examples of a phenomenon one has already noted. At the other extreme, it reveals patterns of use previously unthought of. In between, it can reinforce, refute or revise a researcher's intuition and show them why and how much their suspicions were grounded. (p. 12)

Partington also notes in later work (Partington et al., 2013) that corpus linguists who are politically motivated must strive to find examples which run counter to their expectations of the data, in order to fully investigate their hypotheses and existing biases. Indeed, as I have argued in Section 1 of this chapter, while I am investigating the potential presence of gendered hate speech and online sexism more generally, it is certainly not my wish to find evidence of this. Thus, I wholeheartedly endeavour to find evidence of such counterexamples in my data.

Corpus linguistic methods have also been criticised, as data is presented in a decontextualised manner at both the lexical level (e.g. keyword and collocate lists of individual words without concordance lines to provide context) and discourse level (few indications of the socio-cultural context of the data collected) (Baker, 2006, p. 25). Furthermore, corpus approaches uncover that which is statistically significant and occurs at a high frequency on a lexical level. This means that language which conveys ideas in more subtle ways with a variety of terms would not necessarily be captured using corpus methods. This has the potential to include counter discourses. On the other hand, corpus linguists utilise much larger datasets than qualitative researchers using smaller ones and thus may be more likely to capture these minority cases in their datasets. However, a combined corpus linguistic and CDA/CDS approach allows for the contextualisation of data, for an analysis of language which conveys concepts in more subtle ways, and for explicitly linking the description and interpretation stages of the analysis (Hunston, 2002).

Baker et al.'s (2008) paper on how corpus linguistics and CDA/CDS form a "useful methodological synergy" undoubtedly popularised the combination of methods (although see

Hardt-Mautner, 1995, for an earlier consideration of the method) and thus warrants some discussion. In this paper, the authors investigated how refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants and migrants were each represented in a 140-million-word corpus of news articles from the British press. They conducted collocation and keywords analyses of each term, and sorted the keywords into argumentative topoi (see Reisigl and Wodak, 2001) by using the concordance lines of these keywords to determine the context they were being used in. Alongside this, Baker et al. (2008) conducted a manual CDA analysis of a smaller number of articles to corroborate the findings from the corpus and topoi analyses, as well as contextualise the data. They found that the CDA approach allowed for a more detailed analysis of selected texts and that the corpus approach uncovered trends which were not identified in the CDA analysis. Thus, as new themes were noticed by the researchers, Baker et al. (2008) advocated moving back and forth between the qualitative and quantitative methods, in order to have them corroborate each other. Since the publication of Baker et al. (2008), Nartey and Mwinlaaru (2019) have identified 121 studies which utilise this mixed-method approach (13 of which consider gender and power). There have also been a number of studies which solely utilise corpus approaches to examine the representation of gender, such as in Baker's *Using Corpora to Analyse Gender* (2014). This past literature is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 (Study 1).

However, it would not be accurate to say that integrating corpus methods in CDA/CDS work removes any trace of researcher bias. Indeed, Baker (2012) observes that when undertaking corpus-assisted CDA/CDS work, there are still subjective decisions to be made when interpreting results. For instance, an individual researcher may decide the extent to which a representation can be interpreted as strongly negative, and how many negative interpretations of people from vulnerable groups in a dataset constitute a significant amount to frame as a social problem. Thus, corpus linguistic methods are not devoid of researcher influence. This is also supported by Marchi and Taylor (2009), who both used the same data in an attempt to address the same research questions using a corpus-assisted CDA/CDS approach. They found that their results were a mix of convergent findings (the same results), complementary ones (findings which came to the same conclusion via different methodological means), and divergent ones (findings which were not at all reconcilable).

Other researchers have had more success in triangulating their results using corpus-assisted CDA/CDS. For instance, in Baker and Levon (2015), one analyst used a 41.5-million-word corpus of news articles while the other used a down-sampled set of 51 articles from the same corpus to analyse the representation of racialised masculinities. Unlike Marchi and Taylor (2009), their findings were all either convergent or complementary. This indicates that

although there is the potential for conflicting findings using a corpus-assisted CDA/CDS approach, the approach also allows for the identification of different themes within a given dataset which together form a nuanced picture.

In Sections 1 and 2 of this chapter, I have described the political and activist impetus behind CDA/CDS and how this relates to my work. I have also shown how triangulating a qualitative CDA/CDS approach with a more quantitative corpus one can help to mitigate methodological weaknesses of CDA/CDS. For this reason, this theoretical approach is reflected in the methodologies in both Chapter 5 and 6. However, for all the rigour and systematicity that corpus approaches can bring to an analysis, a corpus approach is not appropriate if one is interested in how users act in relation to each other in online comment threads, in how they negotiate their identities, and in the potential reasons the Reddit manosphere may appeal to its users. Thus, in order to investigate these three points, I also undertake a qualitative analysis which takes into account how face and identity are attended to (see Chapter 7). Indeed, Fairclough, Mulderigg and Wodak (2011, p. 406) identify three aspects of social life which can be discursively constituted: “representations of the world, social relations between people, and people’s social and personal identities”. Chapter 5 and 6 consider these aspects in relation to (mostly) third party gendered social actors, whereas Chapter 7 considers them in relation to the individuals posting on *r/TheRedPill*. Whereas Chapter 5 focuses on the ideational metafunction (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2013) of language (i.e. on the ideas expressed, in this case about gender dynamics), Chapters 6 and 7 focus on the interpersonal metafunction of language (i.e. conveying and evaluating social relationships). The interpersonal aspect of the analysis should not be considered completely distinct from the CDA/CDS approach outlined in Section 1, because the entire research project is motivated by a desire to critique online language which perpetuates harmful gender stereotypes. My justifications for an approach which considers face and identity, and the definitions of face and identity which are relevant to this study, are given below.

3. Face and identity in interaction

In considering how face and identity are attended to in posts and comments between users in the Reddit manosphere, I analyse what Androutsopoulos (2013) refers to as the “place” perspective of computer-mediated communication. According to Androutsopoulos (2013), researchers can conceptualise such communication as either “text” (analysing online language use in terms of its linguistic features) or “place” (foregrounding the social aspect of online communities). The “text” approach is researcher-oriented, in that the researcher chooses the features to analyse, whereas the “place” approach is typically led by the users themselves. In

Chapter 5 and 6, I undertake an analysis of how gendered social actors are represented in the Reddit manosphere, thus incorporating the “text” approach. Practically speaking, Androutsopoulos (2013) indicates that in order to integrate a “place” perspective, researchers should contact users and incorporate their perspectives of how the community functions and their experiences within it into the research. This echoes Widdowson (1998), who recommends using ethnographic methods so that researchers can balance their own interpretations of the data with how language users specify their language should be interpreted. However, as discussed in the researcher safety section of Chapter 3, ethnographic methods would not be appropriate for the present research. This justifies an approach which analyses how manosphere users act in relation to each other and express their individual and/or group identities and gender identities without interacting with them myself, using the notions of face and impression management (see Chapter 7 for more discussion of this methodology).

The notion of face has its basis in the field of pragmatics, which considers how context contributes to meaning-making in interactions. Whereas CDA/CDS scholars consider the effect of external context on micro-level text in terms of the meso-level and macro-level, pragmatics analyse how language users seek to achieve their interactional goals by using certain language forms. Although face can be defined in multiple ways, the principal definition of face I utilise is from Goffman (1967):

the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes – albeit an image that others may share, as when a person makes a good showing for his profession or religion by making a good showing for himself. (p. 5)

This definition treats face as an external rather than internal phenomenon, in that face can be maintained, gained and lost through interactions with others. Indeed, Goffman (1967) takes a dramaturgical perspective, in that he views the self as something to be performed for others in specific contexts, and thus his definition is rooted in social interaction. This approach has also been referred to as self-presentation and impression management (Goffman, 1959). Goffman (1967, p. 6) also argues that face is closely linked to an individual’s emotions in that ‘if events establish a face for him that is better than he might have expected, he is likely to “feel good”; if his ordinary expectations are not fulfilled, one expects that he will “feel bad” or “feel hurt”’.

This has been corroborated by researchers such as Culpeper (2011), who found that British students reported feelings of embarrassment and humiliation after experiencing face-attack.

Spencer-Oatey (2007) aligns herself with Goffman's (1967) definition of face as an emotionally sensitive phenomenon, and extends it to account for speakers not just wanting to be perceived in terms of "approved social attributes" but also as distanced from negative traits. This added element mirrors the "ideological square" phenomenon proposed by CDA scholar van Dijk (1998), which suggests that individuals or groups minimise their own (or own group's) bad traits and highlight their good ones, while maximising the opposition's bad traits and minimise their good ones. It should also be noted that while the "ideological square" certainly constitutes a broad trend, it is not present in all discourses, as negative out-group representation can occur without positive in-group representation (e.g. Heritage and Koller, 2020, on incels).

Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), best known for applying the concept of face to the study of politeness, modify Goffman's (1967) definition of face in two ways. Firstly, they argue that face is an individual's internal desire to be accepted by other interlocutors, as opposed to a phenomenon created solely through interaction. Thus, there is less of a focus on the identity of the speaker and more on how speakers can avoid threatening the face of their interlocutor(s). Secondly, to this end, they theorise two types of face: positive face being the desire to be socially accepted by others, and negative face being the desire to act unimpeded. They give examples of strategies that speakers can use to boost the hearer's positive or negative face. Examples of positive politeness strategies include agreement, joking and using in-group identity markers, whereas negative politeness strategies include hedging, showing deference, and apologising.

Although the theory of positive and negative face has since been a cornerstone of much politeness research, researchers such as Craig et al (1986, pp. 452-3) claim that politeness strategies can include both negative and positive politeness, and that there is no clear separation between the two types. Another widespread criticism of Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) work includes the fact that they solely focus on politeness and consider all speech acts to be potentially offensive. They thus do not consider the specific norms associated with a particular set of interlocutors or a given speech community, which was a pitfall of much first-wave pragmatics research (e.g. Lakoff's (1973) rules for politeness, Leech's (1983) focus on politeness maxims). Brown and Levinson (1978) also claimed in their earlier work that their

theorisations on face are universally applicable, although this claim was rescinded in later work (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

Overall, I favour Goffman's (1967) broader definition of face, as opposed to Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) because in its external focus, it foregrounds the contributions of the speaker, and argues that these contributions are integral to the construction of a speaker's identity. It is also arguably easier to analyse face from this perspective, as it does not presuppose how hearers will interpret certain utterances, and instead focuses on the identity that a speaker wishes to express. Furthermore, Goffman's (1967) definition of face lends itself well to an analysis of social interaction in general, as opposed to specifically politeness behaviours (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003, p. 1459). This distinction has also been noted by second-wave pragmatics researchers, who investigate the interactional norms of different communities, as opposed to determining what is polite and impolite on a near-universal basis (see Lakoff, 1973; Leech, 1983 for the latter approach). For example, Locher and Watts (2005) posit a framework which analyses "relational work" as opposed to (im)politeness. Locher and Watts (2005, p. 10) define this as "the 'work' individuals invest in negotiating relationships with others", and consider how language is used in a face-enhancing, face-threatening, or face-saving manner in specific contexts to enact roles which are specific to that context. This framework is referenced in Chapter 7 in my discussion of face-enhancing and face-threatening speech acts.

Despite the criticism directed at it, I would like to draw attention to an aspect of Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) model which I believe has merit for my present consideration of face and identity. Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) discuss the effect of power, distance and rank on a potential face threat. They acknowledge that the power dynamics between interlocutors (e.g. a lecturer and a student), the social distance between interlocutors (e.g. friends versus strangers), and the rank of any potential imposition (e.g. asking someone for 10p versus £100) will have an effect on how face is attended to in a given interaction. This consideration is of particular importance when analysing communities which do not have flat power structures, such as *r/TheRedPill*. This is because users may choose to present themselves differently and/or attend to the face of others in different ways if there is a power differential between users (e.g. between moderators and non-moderators).

It should be noted that some pragmaticians argue that face is distinct from personal identity in that face is co-constructed between interactants, and is thus specific to a certain social context. In formulating his Face-Constituting Theory, Arundale (2005, p. 202) argues that "face,

is a dyadic phenomenon, whereas identity is an individual (and much broader) phenomenon". However, I support the notion that identity and face are intrinsically linked. Indeed, Culpeper (2011) highlights that Goffman's (1967) definition of face presupposes a link between external perceptions of oneself (i.e. face) and an internal notion of identity, in the sense that:

it is not just the positive values that you yourself want, but what you can claim about yourself from what others assume about you. How you feel about yourself is dependent on how others feel about you, and so when you lose face you feel bad about how you are seen in other people's eyes. (p. 404)

This echoes Scollon and Scollon (1995, p. 34), who define face as being the "interpersonal identity of individuals in communication", as well as Spencer-Oatey (2007, 2008) who argues that face-attack can also be interpreted as an attack on one's identity. Furthermore, Garcés-Conéjos Blitvich (2013) posits that from a social constructionist perspective, distinguishing between face and identity is counterproductive, as identity is arguably reified via interaction with others. This concept has been a mainstay of sociolinguistic research for decades. For example, Bucholtz and Hall (2005, p. 586) define identity as "a relational and sociocultural phenomenon that emerges and circulates in local discourse contexts of interaction rather than as a stable structure located primarily in the individual psyche or in fixed social categories".

This approach to defining identity has also been applied in gender studies, with Judith Butler (2004, p. 1) arguing that "gender is a kind of doing" and that "one is always 'doing' [gender] with or for another, even if the other is only imaginary". This can be done in an explicit (e.g. the terms *man* or *woman*) or implicit manner, i.e. by speakers using language and certain styles of interaction to purposefully take a stance associated with a particular gender identity (Ochs, 1992). However, it is simplistic to assume that just because a speaker uses language forms which are typically associated with a gender identity (e.g. politeness forms associated with women, see Holmes and Stubbe, 2003), they mean to perform that gender identity regardless of context (Swann, 2002). However, taking my specific research context into consideration, a community such as *r/TheRedPill* who describe themselves as a community dedicated to the discussion of "sexual strategy in a culture increasingly lacking a positive identity for men" (The Red Pill, 2021), are specifically aligned to men and masculinity. Thus, I would say it is fair to assume that people who act in relation to each other on this platform do seek to perform masculinity as part of their identity (see Chapter 7).

To summarise, in this section, I have indicated that I am to analyse the Reddit manosphere as both "text" and "place" (Androutsopoulos, 2013), and discuss the theoretical approach behind

my analysis of face in Chapter 7. I have broadly aligned myself with Goffman's (1967) definition of face as an affectively sensitive phenomenon in which individuals attempt to manage their own self-image, although I also acknowledged the power, distance and rank aspects of Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) model. I have also aligned myself with Locher and Watts' (2005) relational work framework, which posits that in doing relational work with others, individuals perform certain aspects of their identity, including gender. This theoretical underpinning will allow me to investigate how users act in relation to each other and manage their self-image (see Chapter 7).

Having discussed the theoretical approaches behind the methodologies I utilise in Chapters 5, 6, and 7, I will now provide a brief summary of what is covered in each of the analysis chapters. Chapter 5 investigates Research Question 1 by analysing the representation of gendered social actors and also considers the extent to which these representations are rooted in mainstream ideologies of gender relations. In Chapter 5, I take a corpus-based approach and conduct a key-word and consistent collocate analysis of five manosphere subreddits corresponding to the different sub-groups of the manosphere. Chapter 6 also investigates Research Question 1 by comparing how gendered social actors are represented in a smaller dataset from the *r/TheRedPill* subreddit to determine whether these representations are sexist in nature. In particular, I focus on the power relations between male and female social actors, whose viewpoints are presented homogeneously or heterogeneously, and what attitudes are ascribed to each social actor. This is done using the transitivity framework (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2013) and appraisal analysis (Martin and White, 2005). Finally, Chapter 7 investigates Research Question 2 by analysing whether *r/TheRedPill* functions as a traditional men's self-help community. This is done by determining the speech acts which characterise *r/TheRedPill*, how these correspond to ideas of face-enhancement, face-threat, face-saving and impression management (Jones and Pittman, 1982), and how the internal hierarchy of *r/TheRedPill* affects the discourse therein.

I now introduce Chapter 5 and the first paper: The representation of gendered social actors across five manosphere communities on Reddit. This paper has been accepted for publication in the corpus linguistics journal *Corpora*, and will be published in the summer of 2022. The authorship statement for this paper has been provided on page xi.

Chapter 5: Study 1 – The representation of gendered social actors
across five manosphere communities on Reddit. (*Corpora*).

Abstract

This paper investigates the representation of gendered social actors in a specialised corpus of 10.9 million words, collected from five Reddit communities associated with the so-called manosphere: incels (involuntary celibates), Men Going Their Own Way (male separatists), pick-up artists, men's rights activists, and a group dedicated to wider discussions of 'red pill' philosophy. 34 gendered social actor terms were identified as key-key-words across the manosphere corpora. Both male and female social actors are referenced using relational terms, while the latter are also referenced using derogatory terms and the former are referenced using terms for kinship and in-group identification.

We then analysed the consistent collocates (Baker et al., 2008) of the four most frequent gendered social actor terms (*women, girls, men* and *guys*), to establish the topics, descriptions, and actions associated with the social actors across the five groups. Gendered social actors were constructed in essentialist dichotomies, with women and girls, although objectified and passivated in dating/sexual contexts, being represented as violent towards male social actors and as holding a privileged position over men in wider society.

The anti-feminist ideology reflected in manosphere discourse can be seen as a more extreme version of mainstream discourse, into which it may be re-imported.

Keywords: Reddit, manosphere, key-key-words, consistent collocates, gender, social actor representation

1. Introduction

This paper investigates the representation of gendered social actors across a corpus representing the so-called manosphere. The manosphere refers to a broad online network of websites and platforms where users share anti-feminist content and essentialist views about gender, and participate in 'networked misogyny', organising campaigns against feminists (Marwick and Caplan, 2018). Five subcommunities have been identified consistently in the literature (Ging, 2017; Jane, 2018; Ribeiro et al., 2020): men's rights activists, Men Going Their Own Way (male separatists: henceforth MGTOW), pick-up artists (PUAs), involuntary celibates (incels), and individuals who participate in manosphere discussions on what is known as 'red pill' philosophy but without identifying with a specific subgroup. These communities each have corresponding individual subreddits (i.e. dedicated spaces for the discussion of manosphere topics on the content aggregation and discussion site Reddit), and past literature has investigated the anti-feminist and sexist aspects of individual subreddits in qualitative ways (e.g. van Valkenburgh, 2018 on /r/TheRedPill; Lumsden, 2019 on /r/MensRights).

The manosphere has been widely recognised as a 'toxic' community, with links to anti-feminist harassment campaigns (Jane, 2018), wider right-wing political movements (Lewis, 2019), and offline violence. The incel community in particular has received much media coverage, as some individuals who aligned themselves with the community have claimed that frustration at their own lack of romantic and/or sexual relationships had motivated them to commit murder (Rodger, 2014). The perpetrators who have received the most media attention are Elliot Rodger in California in 2014, who killed seven people and injured fourteen, and Alek Minassian in Toronto in 2018, who killed ten people and injured sixteen. Approximately a dozen other such attacks have occurred, with one occurring as recently as May 2020 in Toronto being the first incel attack to be characterised as domestic terrorism (Cecco, 2020). Although only a small

number of offline manosphere actions have been criminally prosecuted, these examples suggest that an underlying ideology about gender relations across the manosphere could contribute to these behaviours.

Although some recent studies in corpus linguistics have focussed on the manosphere (see Section 2), the majority of these studies have concentrated on a single community. While each of these communities draws on essentialist views about gender to legitimise different approaches to women (e.g. avoidance or serial seduction), by considering the manosphere as one community composed of similar but distinct parts, we interrogate Marwick and Caplan's (2018:553) claim that groups within the manosphere are 'brought together by *a common language* that orients them in opposition to the discourse and rhetoric of feminism' (emphasis added). Thus, we aim to uncover its underlying ideology, here defined as 'a (metaphorical) network of beliefs that gives rise to expectations, norms and values about events, ideas and people' (Koller, 2014:239). Ideology can be seen as the 'common ground' (Clark, 1996) that is shared by the participants. In particular, we investigate how a *common language* is used to represent, describe, and evaluate male and female social actors. As such, the analysis aims to uncover what ideologies around these gendered social actors are prevalent in the manosphere.

Koller (2014:150) argues that 'repeatedly exposing text recipients to certain [socio-cognitive representations] transported in texts, under similar conditions of reception, may help to align recipients' cognition with that of the text producer'. This has also been described by corpus linguists such as Baker (2006:13) as 'the incremental effect of discourse', and has been examined using techniques such as keyword and collocation analysis. Doing so allows us to infer the ideology that underlies the representation of gendered social actors across the manosphere. To this end, we examine the gendered social actor key-key-words (words which are key across a number of texts; Scott, 1997) shared across five manosphere subreddits along with their consistent collocates (words which collocate across subcorpora, hereafter referred to as c-collocates; Baker et al., 2008). To structure our findings, we employ van Leeuwen's (2008) social actor framework to categorise these key-key-words, and then inductively categorise their c-collocates into topics, descriptions, and actions. We have organised this investigation around two research questions (RQs):

RQ1) How are gendered social actors represented across five manosphere communities on Reddit?

RQ1a) What words are used to identify gendered social actors?

RQ1b) When gendered social actors are identified, what topics, descriptions, and actions are they associated with?

RQ2) What ideologies of gender are social actor representations in the manosphere related to?

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows. Section 2 provides an overview of previous research which investigates representations of male and female social actors using corpus-based approaches, as well as the growing body of research which applies corpus linguistic methods to manosphere datasets. Sections 3 and 4 outline our Reddit data collection process and the procedure of calculating key-key-words and c-collocates, along with the categorisation systems used for analysis. We first present our results in Section 4 and further discuss our findings in Section 5. In Section 6, we conclude by explicitly answering our RQs and looking at the implications of our study.

2. Corpus-based research on gender representations

Collocation analysis has been a central method used in the past literature to investigate gendered social actors in general corpora of English. This is for instance evidenced by Romaine's (2000:103) analysis of the adjectival collocates of *bachelor* and *spinster* in the British National Corpus, in which she argues that the collocates of *spinster* are more likely to be negative, e.g. *jealous*. Ultimately, the collocates indicate that there are negative discourse prosodies around nominal terms for women and that discourse prosodies are typically more positive for nominal terms for men. Similarly, Pearce's (2008:8, 12) analysis of the pre-modifying adjectival collocates and verbal collocates of *man* and *woman* in the British National Corpus using SketchEngine reveals that *man* is more likely to collocate with terms denoting physical size (and implied strength), such as *broad-shouldered*, while *woman* is more likely to occur with terms denoting social categories, such as *married*. Pearce (2008) also notes that *man* is more likely to collocate with terms denoting power and success.

Elsewhere, Sigley and Holmes' (2002:151) analyse the collocates of *boy* and *girl* in five general corpora of British, American, and New Zealand English, and found that collocates of *girl* typically relate to their physical attractiveness and domestic skills, whereas the collocates for *boy* relate to a range of age, appearance, and behaviour descriptors. Also looking at the terms *boy* and *girl*, Baker (2014) explores the collocates of these gendered nouns in the ukWaC corpus of British websites. His analysis examines different verb collocates of these terms, and in particular focuses on whether these gendered terms are the agent or patient of the verb collocates. He finds that *girl* is more likely to collocate with terms such as *rape* and *abducted* in the patient position (i.e. they were more likely to be represented as victims), while *boy* is more likely to occur as agent with collocates relating to physical violence (such as *beat*).

Furthermore, utilising corpus methods in tandem with other discourse analytical frameworks, Caldas-Coulthard and Moon (2010) and Moon (2014) both analyse the adjectival collocates of *man/men*, *woman/women*, *girl* and *boy* in the 450-million-word Bank of English corpus. Both utilise van Leeuwen's (2008) social actor representation framework to structure their results, and find that female social actors are typically described in terms of their sexuality and physical appearance, whereas male social actors are described in terms of strength, physical activity, and ability.

While the majority of the past literature foregrounds differences between male and female social actors, Taylor (2013) instead analyses the similarities in the c-collocates of *boy* and *girl* in three UK broadsheet newspapers, using the SiBol 93, SiBol 05, and Port 2010 corpora. She notes that about a third of a total 119 c-collocates were shared between *boy* and *girl*, and that sexual relationships are prevalent for both *boy* and *girl*, although more frequently indicated alongside *girl*.

Broadly, all of the comparative studies discussed here conclude that male social actors are represented as more agentive and occupying more powerful positions than female social actors. Contrastingly, female social actors are represented in terms of physical appearance and their relationships to male social actors. This demonstrates that binary distinctions between male and female social actors are constructed in general language use, which could incrementally affect the way gendered social actors are conceptualised in the minds of other speakers, with such concepts in turn influencing language use.

2.1 Corpus linguistic research into the manosphere

Corpus methods are increasingly being applied to studies of the manosphere, with most studies concentrating on a single community or facet of the manosphere and rarely exploring

multiple communities. Studies of PUAs include Dayter and Rüdiger's (2016) work on 37 'field report' postings from PUA forums as well as Wright's (2020) analysis of the frequency and collocates of lexis denoting resistance in a 26-million-word corpus of PUA discussion forum data. These studies have found that pseudo-technical language is used to bring credibility to PUA techniques and create emotional distance between PUAs and the women they target, and that in-group experiences with women are framed as sequences of complicating actions to be overcome. Additionally, Lawson and McGlashan's (2017) keyword and key-keyword (Scott, 1997) analysis of posts collected from three PUA/seduction subreddits and r/TheRedPill (which consists of manosphere members unaffiliated with a specific sub-group) reveals that gendered social actors, swear words and taboo terms, and affective/mental processes are referenced across the four subreddits, with female social actors referred to in derogatory and sexualised ways (e.g. *bitch* and *hb*, denoting 'hot babe').

Focussing on an incel subreddit, Heritage and Koller (2020) collect a corpus of 50 threads, comprising approximately 67,000 words of running text from both original posts and comments. They analyse which social actor terms are key compared to the American English 2006 corpus (Potts and Baker, 2012), the frequencies of these terms, and how social actors are appraised, using Martin and White's (2005) appraisal framework. Much like Lawson and McGlashan (2017), Heritage and Koller (2020) note the use of pejorative terms to refer to female social actors, although male social actors are also referred to in this way in the incel dataset, as they are placed in a hierarchy which includes terms such as *manlets*, i.e. men who are judged as less capable than men who enact ideals of hegemonic masculinity (see Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). In terms of appraisal, Heritage and Koller (2020) show that male social actors are judged as incapacitated and unhappy, whereas female social actors are perceived as having the capacity to hurt men, as well as being dishonest and immoral.

Krendel (2020) uses the same appraisal framework in her analysis of the gendered social actor keywords *men*, *women*, *guys* and *girls* (compared to a 1.65 million-word sample of the Corpus of Contemporary American English; Davies, 2010) in a corpus of 214,269 words made up of posts and comments from the *TRP* subreddit. This analysis is supplemented by an analysis of pre-modifying adjectival collocates and verbal collocates, using the SketchEngine Word Sketch tool (Kilgarriff et al., 2014), to check that the qualitative findings obtained are representative of the whole corpus. She finds that female social actors are dehumanised and sexually objectified, are represented as wanting hostile behaviour from male social actors, as well as being dishonest and immoral. On the other hand, male social actors are represented as unhappy and insecure. Krendel's (2020) findings therefore mirror Heritage and Koller's (2020) results for incel discourse.

In sum, various studies have explored gender in the manosphere with corpus linguistic tools and noted that female social actors are referred to in derogatory ways in multiple subgroups. Furthermore, Marwick and Caplan (2018: 553) claim that the manosphere shares a common language, a claim which is echoed by Bates (2020) albeit not from a linguistic perspective. However, there remains a gap in the research in that we currently do not have statistical evidence of the language, beliefs and attitudes which unite all five subgroups, a research gap addressed in the present study.

3. Data Selection and Collection

Although there are dedicated manosphere websites, the popularity of such websites has not been established. By contrast, past literature on the manosphere (e.g. Lawson and McGlashan, 2017; Lumsden, 2019) has revealed that Reddit is used by multiple manosphere communities which attract large subscriber numbers. Reddit is a content aggregation and discussion

website, where users can create and subscribe to dedicated topic-specific communities, known as subreddits. In these subreddits, users post topic-specific content including text posts, pictures, and content from other websites. Users can also comment on each other’s posts.

We selected five subreddits for our study which pertain to the five parts of the manosphere discussed in Section 1: r/MensRights corresponds to men’s rights activists, r/MGTOW to Men Going Their Own Way, r/seduction to PUAs, r/braincels to incels, and r/TheRedPill to manosphere members unaffiliated with a specific sub-group. At the time of writing, r/MensRights has 300,289 subscribers, and r/seduction has 616,677 subscribers. As the remaining three subreddits are either quarantined or banned, their subscriber counts are hidden, but at the time of quarantine or ban, respectively, r/TheRedPill had approximately 300,000 subscribers, r/MGTOW had approximately 140,000 subscribers, and r/braincels had approximately 80,000 subscribers.

On Reddit, users can upvote and downvote posts and comments, to show that they like or dislike the post or comment respectively. If a post has many upvotes, this indicates that the post is popular, whereas the opposite is true for downvotes.. We collected comments on the 200 most upvoted (and therefore most popular) submissions from the five subreddits since their inception. The original posts were not considered in this analysis, as many of them are not made up of original text, but use links to external websites to generate discussion in the comments section. The Reddit manosphere corpus was collected using the Python Reddit API Wrapper (PRAW, 2020). By collecting the top 200 comment threads in each subreddit (a total of 1,000 threads), as determined by the Reddit upvotes, we generated a corpus of 10.9 million words, which contains five subcorpora. By building subcorpora of the most popular posts in each subreddit, we attempt to capture the widely accepted ‘common ground’ within that specific subcommunity as well as across the manosphere more generally. Details about corpus size are presented in Table 1. When quotations are taken from these threads to illustrate our findings, the number assigned to the thread and the originating subreddit is given (e.g. 184_MGTOW).

Subreddit	Filename convention	Number of threads	Tokens
r/TheRedPill	TRP	200	2,977,113
r/MensRights	MR	200	5,019,556
r/MGTOW	MGTOW	200	888,930
r/seduction	SED	200	1,042,601
r/braincels	BRA	200	973,334
		1,000	10,901,534

Table 1: The Reddit manosphere corpus

As we used the Reddit API (application programming interface) to collect the data used for this study, we collected our data in accordance with the Reddit API Terms of Use. These Terms state that if one uses the Reddit API to collect user content from the site, Reddit grants one ‘a non-exclusive, non-transferable, non-sublicensable, and revocable license to copy and display the User Content using the Reddit API’ (Reddit API Terms of Use, 2016). Thus, even though the Reddit User Agreement (2021) states that users have ownership rights to their content, Reddit does not require API users to obtain consent from the Reddit users they collect data from. Furthermore, considering copyright, Reddit adheres to US copyright law, which only protects works which contain creative expression, and not works which solely constitute facts or ideas. As the Reddit posts and comments used in this study are not creative works, their use does not constitute copyright infringement according to the DMCA (Digital Millennium Copyright Act).

However, the researchers are aware of ethics guidance from the Association of Internet Researchers (franzke et al., 2020) which notes that obtaining informed consent from research participants is often best practice. Although some researchers seek informed consent from the online communities they wish to research (e.g. Mackenzie, 2017), this is not necessarily appropriate when researching communities which could pose a security risk to the researchers. Indeed, those who have researched the manosphere (e.g. Rüdiger and Dayter, 2017) acknowledge that making oneself known to such communities could result in the researchers being harassed and targeted online. Such incidents have led to the most recent ethical guidelines from the Association of Internet Researchers (franzke et al., 2020) explicitly recognising that in some instances, researcher safety must come at the expense of obtaining informed consent. Thus, we chose to not obtain informed consent from the moderators of the five manosphere communities we research.

4. Methodology

Our methodology comes in three parts: we (i) identified key-key-words shared across five manosphere subreddits (Table 1) and analysed them using van Leeuwen's (2008) social actor framework to ascertain gendered social actors; (ii) identified c-collocates of these shared social actor key-key-words occurring at least five times in each of the five subcorpora, and; (iii) inductively categorised these c-collocates into topic indicators, descriptions of social actors, actions either undertaken by the social actor (occurring to the right of the node) or actions in which the social actor is passivated (occurring to the left of the node), and miscellaneous c-collocates.

4.1 Identifying shared key-key-words across five manosphere communities

Keyword analysis aims to identify lexical items (types) used in a target corpus at an unusual relative token frequency when compared against another (usually larger) reference corpus. Egbert and Biber (2019: 88) suggest that keywords identified in this way are strong indicators of a target corpus' "content-distinctiveness". As such, keywords have been described as "lexical signposts" (Baker, 2004a: 90) providing a "rapid and useful way of directing researchers to elements in texts that are unusually frequent (or infrequent)" (Baker, 2004b:348). Although widely used to identify content-distinctive lexis, keyword analysis has been criticised for overplaying lexical differences and obscuring the potential lexical similarities between corpora (Baker, 2004b: 346) as well as for treating the texts within a target corpus as a single, homogeneous whole. In response, methods for keyword analysis have been elaborated to identify content-generalisable keywords, i.e. keywords that are dispersed across a target corpus' composite texts. Notable methods include Egbert and Biber's (2019) text dispersion keyness and Mike Scott's (1997) key-key-word approach; we have adopted the latter in this paper.

To identify key-key-words, we first produced a list of positive keywords - lexical items used at a significantly higher frequency than is found in a reference corpus - for each of the 200 threads that make up our five separate corpora described in Table 1 (1000 total). For our reference corpus, we used the WebCorp Mini-Web corpus (2010) consisting of 100,000 randomly sampled English language webpages (totalling 339,907,995 tokens) collected between 2000 and 2010. This was due to its size and composition, in that it draws on data written for online consumption, making it register appropriate, and across a range of different topic domains. These keyword lists were compiled using a script written in R (2020) following the guide set out on the UCREL log-likelihood and effect size calculator webpage (Rayson, 2008). All keywords identified in these 1000 keyword lists were measured for statistical significance using the Log-Likelihood (LL) statistic and were only deemed to be key if they met a minimum threshold of $LL \geq 15.13$ ($p < 0.0001$). Following the production of keyword lists, we then

focussed our attention on the production of key-key-word lists for each of our five manosphere subcorpora. Key-key-words were identified by following Scott's (1997) approach which notionally tallies the number of times a keyword is found to be key across each individual text in a corpus. As Scott (1996) states, 'a "key key-word" is one which is "key" in more than one of a number of related texts. The more texts it is "key" in, the more "key key" it is'.

In our study, we produced a list of key-key-words for each subcorpus (a tally of the keywords found in each of the 200 threads), and then ranked keywords by their key-keyness (i.e. *dispersion*, or how many times they occurred as keywords across the 200 threads). We then selected only those 528 keywords that were present in all of the five key-key-word lists using the intersect function in R (Kerns, 2018). We argue that these 528 shared key-key-words are both distinctive of the respective subreddits they originate from (as they are significantly frequent across the subreddits) as well as generalisable to the language across these five manosphere communities. As such, they provide a basis for interrogating Marwick and Caplan's (2018: 553) claim that the manosphere is unified through the use of a "common language".

To address our specific focus on gendered social actor representation across Reddit manosphere communities, we then identified the nominal items from the key-key-words list which indexed gendered social actors either explicitly (e.g. *men*) or implicitly (e.g. *whore*). Where the gender of a social actor was indexed implicitly, gender was determined by checking the concordance lines for patterns in the co-text (e.g. "women are whores" (184_MGTOW)), and by applying contextual knowledge of the manosphere (e.g. Ging, 2017) to determine which gender is indexed (e.g. *incel* as male).

We then sorted the gendered key-key-words using van Leeuwen's (2008:42) social actor analysis framework. In doing so, we focussed on categorisation, which considers how social actors are represented in terms of the qualities they share with others. Categorisation is further split into appraisal (evaluation), functionalisation (what a social actor does) and three subtypes of identification (what a social actor more or less permanently is):

- Classification - social actors are identified through demographic information, e.g. gender, age, ethnicity
- Relational identification - social actors are identified through their relationships with others
- Physical identification - social actors are identified through physical characteristics

Of the 528 key-key-words shared by the subcorpora, 34 refer to nominal gendered social actors, and are displayed in Tables 2 and 3. Cases where *bitch* was a verb and where *male* and *female* modified a head noun (e.g. 'female friend') were filtered out using a part-of-speech tagger (TreeTagger, which is included in #LancsBox; Brezina et al., 2018), so that only nominal cases of *bitch*, *male* and *female*, and the collocates and c-collocates which met our statistical threshold, were considered. Across the corpus, male social actor terms were used 94,605 times in a mean of 458.5 comment threads, and female social actor terms were used 98,953 times in a mean of 429.9 comment threads. Thus, discussions about female social actors were slightly more prevalent than discussions of male ones.

Key-key-word	Frequency	Dispersion	Number of collocates	Number of c-collocates
<i>men</i>	43155	892	1159	104
<i>man</i>	17812	941	549	5
<i>guy</i>	11161	898	387	96
<i>guys</i>	9535	885	348	97
<i>incel</i>	2035	311	99	0
<i>male</i>	1849	491	73	10
<i>dude</i>	3799	783	176	31
<i>dudes</i>	1061	449	67	9
<i>bro</i>	1711	598	81	16
<i>bruh</i>	138	110	0	0
<i>boyfriend</i>	756	287	37	8
<i>bf</i>	277	134	10	3
<i>cuck</i>	686	281	34	0
<i>pua</i>	468	175	22	0
<i>neckbeards</i> ⁸	135	85	0	0
<i>niceguys</i>	27	16	0	0

Table 2: Key-key male social actor terms, their frequency and dispersion (how many texts they are key in) across the corpus, and their (c-)collocates, ordered by frequency of and within terms

Key-key-word	Frequency	Dispersion	Number of collocates	Number of c-collocates
<i>women</i>	55197	947	1260	145
<i>woman</i>	14768	858	423	78
<i>girl</i>	9049	826	328	84
<i>girls</i>	8536	800	321	86
<i>girl's</i>	220	132	8	1
<i>bitch</i>	2026	564	89	19
<i>bitches</i>	875	380	61	6
<i>girlfriend</i>	1171	435	58	15
<i>gf</i>	561	273	27	7
<i>girlfriends</i>	311	197	20	4
<i>females</i>	1570	463	65	11
<i>female</i>	1095	399	49	4
<i>chick</i>	964	380	54	8
<i>chicks</i>	711	325	44	2
<i>slut</i>	648	246	33	4
<i>whore</i>	598	250	32	2
<i>whores</i>	416	204	18	0
<i>lesbians</i>	237	59	11	0

Table 3: Key-key female social actor terms, their frequency and dispersion (how many texts they are key in) across the corpus, and their (c-)collocates, ordered by frequency of and within terms

Male and female social actors are categorised in different ways in the key-key-words, as shown in Table 4.

⁸ A derogatory term for a man with facial hair on his neck who is stereotypically geeky, unhygienic and awkward with women (McKinnon-Crowley, 2020)

			Male	Female
Categorisation	Identification	Classification	<i>men, man, guy, guys, male, dude, dudes</i> <i>incel, pua</i> (9)	<i>women, woman, girl, girls, girl's, females, female, chick, chicks, lesbians</i> (10)
		Relational identification	<i>bro, bruh</i> <i>boyfriend, bf</i> (4)	<i>girlfriend, gf, girlfriends</i> (3)
		Physical identification	<i>neckbeards</i> (1)	
	Appraisalment		<i>cuck, niceguys</i> (2)	<i>bitch, bitches, slut, whore, whores</i> (5)

Table 4: Representation of gendered social actors through key-key-words (see van Leeuwen, 2008: 52)

Male and female social actors are most commonly classified in terms of their gender (e.g. *men, women*) as well as by men's group membership within the manosphere (*incel, pua* [pick-up artist]) and, for women, with regard to their sexual identity (*lesbians*). The second most frequent categorisation for female social actors is by way of negative, sexualised appraisalment or evaluation (*bitch(es), whore(s), slut*). This is in stark contrast to only two negative evaluative categorisations for male social actors (*cuck* [cuckold] and *niceguys*, although *neckbeards* is also arguably negatively evaluative), only one of which is sexual in nature (see Marwick and Caplan, 2018). This finding corroborates previous studies of both general and manosphere corpora that show women and girls to be represented in negative and sexualised terms more often than men (e.g. Romaine, 2000; Krendel, 2020). Gendered social actors are also relationally identified as *boyfriend/bf* and *girlfriend(s)/gf*, but key-key-words which refer to metaphorical kinship (*bro* and *bruh*) are specific to male social actors, as is the one, derogatory instance of physical identification (*neckbeards*). While this overview demonstrates the negative bias of manosphere discourse, it also shows important differences in the representation of male and female social actors.

4.2 Identifying c-collocates

Following the identification of gendered social actors, c-collocates (Baker et al., 2008) of the respective key-key-words were calculated by first using the GraphColl tool in #Lancsbox (Brezina et al., 2018) to determine the collocates of each relevant social actor in each of the five subcorpora, and then using Microsoft Excel to identify which of these collocates were consistent across subcorpora. Following the guidelines set out in Gabrielatos and Baker (2008), the minimum frequency that a collocation needed to occur in each corpus was five. Thus, a collocation needed to occur at least five times in each of the five subcorpora (and therefore a minimum of 25 times) to be considered a c-collocate. Calculating c-collocates filters out 'seasonal collocates' (Baker et al., 2008), which are collocates specific to one subcorpus and, therefore, unrepresentative of typical language use in the corpus as a whole. This helped to ensure that the larger subcorpora (*Men's Rights* and *The Red Pill*) were not over-represented.

By conducting such an analysis, we aim to reveal ‘the associations and connotations [words] have, and therefore the assumptions which they embody’ (Stubbs, 1996:172).

C-collocates were identified as those words occurring within a span of five words from the node word (5L/5R), with the collocation occurring at least five times in each of the five subcorpora, and with an MI score of at least 3 and a T-score of at least 7.5. These statistical thresholds are in line with, or considerably higher than, the accepted field standards of an MI score of 3 and a T-Score of 2, which Hunston (2002) recommends. The cut-off points we use were informed by Durrant and Doherty’s (2010) lexical decision task study, in which they found that collocate pairs with MI scores of at least 6 and T-scores of at least 7.5 could be considered psychologically real. However, we found that an MI threshold of 6 did not yield enough c-collocates to allow for an extended discussion and therefore chose to keep a minimum MI score of 3, while acknowledging that the c-collocates with the highest MI scores are expected to best reflect psychological reality, although this is impossible to determine without experimental data. This method resulted in 379 c-collocates for the key-key-words denoting male social actors, and 476 c-collocates for the key-key-words denoting female social actors.

For reasons of space, we investigate the c-collocates for the four most frequent gendered social actors: *women*, *girls*, *men* and *guys*. In total, these social actors have 432 c-collocates. Only the plural forms are selected for analysis, to investigate how collective gendered identities are represented, as opposed to individualised ones.

4.3 Categorising c-collocates

Thirdly, we placed c-collocates into five categories: topic indicators, descriptions, actions to the left of the node (reflecting social actor as a patient), actions to the right of the node (reflecting social actor as an agent), and a bin category (cf. Table 5). Where a c-collocate can be placed in more than one of the categories described in Table 5, it is categorised multiple times. The action c-collocates were sorted using the GraphColl tool in LancsBox (Brezina et al., 2018), which notes whether collocates occur more frequently to the left or right of the node. To interpret how these c-collocates were employed in the dataset, we used WordSmith 7 (Scott, 2016) to generate 25 randomised concordance lines for each c-collocate (using the Reduce to N’ function), with a window of 150 characters either side of the node for additional co-text. There are two reasons why we chose 25 random concordance lines as the number of lines to closely read for each c-collocate for two reasons. Firstly, 25 is the minimum frequency of the c-collocate together with the node word across the corpus, and so 25 was the minimum number of concordance lines which could capture how the c-collocate was used across all five subcorpora. Secondly, given that the four social actors of interest had a total of 432 c-collocates, this required the manual reading of 10,800 concordance lines (25 concordance lines per c-collocate) between three researchers. This was deemed to be the maximum manageable workload for the researchers. In the following section, we discuss the results generated from the application of these methods.

C-collocate category	Definition
Topic indicators	nominal and adverbial items which denote a particular topic being associated with the node
Descriptions	adjectival and adverbial items which quantify and describe the node
Actions to the left of the node	verbs which occur to the left of the node
Actions to the right of the node	verbs which occur to the right of the node
Miscellaneous	Grammatical particles; auxiliary and modal verbs; items which indicate argumentation, stance, or intensification

Table 5: C-collocate categorisation system

5. Results

Figures 1-4 display the 432 categorised c-collocates of *women*, *girls*, *men* and *guys* in different shades, with their position in relation to the node and their MI score given in the bottom left and right-hand corners of each square respectively. Squares are scaled and ordered by MI scores; squares with larger MI scores are positioned to the top left of a category and are larger, squares with smaller MI scores are positioned to the bottom right of a category and are smaller. In the following discussion, we will distinguish between key-key-words and c-collocates by using italics to indicate key-key-words whereas double quotation marks will be used to indicate c-collocates. Furthermore, as it is not feasible to discuss each of the 432 c-collocates in detail in this paper, we discuss those c-collocates which constitute evidence of a consistent theme across multiple c-collocates. This is to ensure that we discuss the themes which are referenced most consistently using the c-collocates. We also consider the c-collocates which are shared between social actors, to serve as points of comparison between the social actors, as well as c-collocates which constitute comparisons and binary opposites (e.g. "hard" for *men* versus "easier" for *women*). Furthermore, when considering the social actors in isolation, the c-collocates with the highest MI scores are given the most space in the discussion.

women

R	R	L	R	L	L	R	R	R	R	L	R	R	R	L	R	L	R	L	R
attracted	capable	attractive	differently	majority	towards	who	themselves	almost	for	as	being	also	men	sexually	relationships	physically			
5.65	5.21	5.18	4.94	4.73	4.99	4.21	4.03	3.78	3.78	3.71	3.7	3.69	5.44	4.96	4.53	4.52			
L	R	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	R	L	L	L	L	R	L	L	L	L
plenty	higher	average	feminine	older	against	these	by	with	funny	absolutely	basically	i've	standards	problems	act	status			
4.71	4.7	4.64	4.63	4.63	4.69	4.2	3.98	3.69	3.51	3.46	3.35	3.35	4.48	4.28	4.25	4.03			
R	R	L	R	L	R	R	L	L	R	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L
less	generally	beautiful	general	younger	are	were	only	while	so	had	ok	or	traits	sex	dudes	physical			
4.57	4.56	4.55	4.49	4.48	4.67	4.2	3.97	3.67	3.3	3.22	3.22	3.22	4.47	3.96	3.62	3.58			
L	R	L	L	L	R	L	R	R	R	R	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	R	L
many	often	mostly	young	ugly	aren't	between	have	complete	even	it's	well	the	rate	feminism	guys	boys	past		
4.45	4.44	4.43	4.43	4.39	4.67	4.15	3.9	3.59	3.29	3.21	3.18	3.18	4.47	3.79	3.56	3.37	3.24		
R	R	L	R	R	L	L	L	L	R	R	L	R	L	L	L	L	L	L	L
more	constantly	successful	emotional	interested	than	both	fact	can't	no	until	our	but	tend	wanting	seek	act			
4.38	4.16	4.16	4.12	4.06	4.49	4.14	3.82	3.52	3.24	3.19	3.14	3.13	5.22	4.48	4.29	4.25			
R	L	L	R	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	R	R	R	R	R	R
naturally	status	all	different	1	attract	treating	blame	meet	dating	value	putting	complain	deserve	given	find				
4.37	4.03	3.94	3.94	3.81	6.01	5.19	4.66	4.24	4.07	4.01	4	4.91	4.2	3.9	3.48				
R	L	R	R	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
likely	value	always	easier	100%	slept	dated	hitting	respect	pick	believe	avoid	choose	sleep	wanted	use				
4.36	4.01	3.76	3.7	3.45	5.51	5.04	4.5	4.21	3.99	3.82	3.55	4.5	4.13	3.33	3.28				
L	R	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
most	same	certain	common	ok	treat	hate	desire	hurt	talk	seeing	stop	lie	want	feel	start				
4.24	3.95	3.74	3.36	3.22	5.19	4.92	4.27	4.08	3.91	3.47	3.37	4.5	4.13	3.27	3.17				

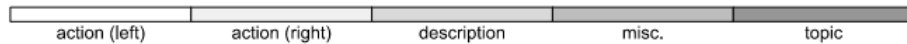


Figure 1: 145 c-collocates of women

girls

L	L	R	R	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	R	R
i've	these	who	around	those	with	hot	young	fat	high	old	hit	love		
4.75	4.74	4.46	4.43	4.33	4.33	7.13	6.1	5.82	4.73	4.66	5.33	4.45		
R	R	L	R	L	L	L	L	L	L	R	R	R	R	R
aren't	don't	only	too	had	from	really	most	pretty	lot	two	always	start	want	
4.32	3.88	3.87	3.86	3.77	3.73	3.71	4.53	4.41	4.3	4.28	4.17	4.4	4.2	
R	R	L	R	R	R	R	L	L	L	L	L	R	R	R
are	over	when	they're	do	also	and	many	other	few	different	all	go	like	
4.27	3.69	3.63	3.62	3.61	3.6	3.59	4.52	4.38	4.15	4.05	3.81	4.06	4.06	
L	L	R	L	R	R	R	L	L	L	L	R	R	M	R
up	than	at	how	on	they	still	white	year	some	same	never	give	think	
4.27	3.69	3.59	3.55	3.55	3.55	3.53	4.46	4.36	4.13	3.75	3.31	3.85	3.52	
R	R	R	L	R	R	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L
will	yeah	them	to	but	not	of	talking	get	know	girls	school	sex		
4.15	3.69	3.58	3.52	3.43	3.36	3.33	4.95	4.34	3.98	5.87	5.35	3.75		
R	L	L	R	L	R	R	L	L	M	L	L	L	L	L
like	there	where	even	for	that	in	fuck	try	think	guys	thing	3.32		
4.06	3.67	3.58	3.51	3.31	3.25	3.22	4.54	4.2	3.52	5.76				
R	R	R	R	R	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L
were	after	just	because	their	the									
4.02	3.65	3.56	3.48	3.3	3.15									



Figure 2: 86 c-collocates of girls

men

among	by	ones	themselves	their	as	for	gay	majority	differently	higher	boys	women
5.18	4.23	4.16	4.15	4.08	3.96	3.94	5.34	5.11	5.07	5.07	5.49	5.44
are	these	especially	also	should	being	they're	attracted	average	often	more	society	men
4.79	3.94	3.81	3.8	3.76	3.72	3.7	4.95	4.86	4.58	4.56	4.66	4.34
than	have	that	too	of	can't	yes	less	most	attractive	successful	relationships	problem
4.72	3.91	3.67	3.63	3.58	3.54	3.52	4.51	4.32	4.31	4.05	3.93	3.78
aren't	fact	about	there	around	be	in	different	number	better	always	sex	sexual
4.52	3.87	3.66	3.47	3.43	3.43	3.43	4.02	3.88	3.66	3.63	3.71	3.7
between	while	and	having	like	us	it's	many	other	usually	few	world	attention
4.47	3.86	3.64	3.44	3.36	3.31	3.28	4.5	3.98	3.61	3.24	3.56	3.35
both	do	why	how	well	can	would	naturally	lots	lot	important	together	hard
4.47	3.85	3.64	3.44	3.33	3.24	3.17	4.35	3.88	3.46	3.23	3.37	3.28
who	because	they	when	so	them	very	blame	hate	dating	act	getting	feel
4.39	3.84	3.63	3.44	3.31	3.23	3.1	4.96	4.45	3.33	4	3.42	3.22
								think	see	want	get	
								3.4	3.26	3.63	3.39	

action (left)
action (right)
description
misc.
topic

Figure 3: 104 c-collocates of men

guys

these	hey	who	those	aren't	here	tall	nice	short	plenty	talk	get	talking	
5.49	5.31	5.13	4.93	4.63	4.58	6.73	6.03	5.64	5.55	4.41	4.17	4.08	
are	i've	lol	doing	over	really	with	lot	many	young	other	look	getting	come
4.55	3.94	3.93	3.92	3.91	3.91	3.88	5.26	5.01	5	4.71	4.02	3.94	3.91
fuck	do	how	so	yeah	up	just	looking	some	good	all	trying	want	need
4.18	3.85	3.7	3.65	3.65	3.62	3.61	5.23	4.5	4.09	3.86	3.91	3.82	3.74
were	there	why	for	actually	than	of	two	two	better	same	saying	say	
4.07	3.76	3.61	3.55	3.54	3.53	3.48	4.38	4.38	3.81	3.69	3.6	3.57	
like	pretty	even	because	much	only	this	most	bad	different	more	find	got	
4.06	3.74	3.59	3.47	3.44	3.44	3.43	5.14	4.32	3.8	3.4	3.58	3.47	
too	have	their	mean	had	but	by	fucked	know	love	help	girls	sub	
4	3.73	3.59	3.47	3.42	3.33	3.32	4.82	4.24	4.12	3.94	5.76	4	
don't	out	about	on	them	that	the	seen	date	think	tell	guys	problem	
3.96	3.72	3.57	3.45	3.41	3.31	3.24	4.45	4.15	4.05	3.93	5.31	3.63	
				from	would	to				see	women		
				3.36	3.3	3.17				3.85		3.57	

action (left)
action (right)
description
misc.
topic

Figure 4: 97 c-collocates of guys

5.1 Essentialist dichotomies

Common to all social actors studied here is a strong association with topic c-collocates that reference other gendered social actors. The strongest topic c-collocate of both *girls* and *guys* is

“girls”, for *men* the strongest c-collocate is “boys”, and for *women* it is “men”. The consistency of collocation between the terms under study with other gendered social actor terms suggests that within the manosphere, these gendered social actors are understood in terms of their (construed) relationships with each other and with other gendered social actors.

5.1.1 Representations of homogeneous groups

Relationships between gendered social actors are framed in terms of their differences, especially allegedly immutable differences between men and women. Such discursive constructions have been evidenced in more mainstream discourses as well, which have been critiqued by feminist critical discourse analysts such as Mills (2008) for their essentialism and for perpetuating often harmful gender stereotypes. In our data, these beliefs are indexed by the prevalence of lexemes of DIFFERENT as description c-collocates for *girls*, *guys*, *men*, and *women*. For *women*, the description c-collocates “different” and “differently”, when found alongside the c-collocate “men” within a 5L/5R window, explicitly evaluates women and men as being innately, biologically, and socially different, e.g. “men and women deal with stress differently mentally and chemically” [121_TRP]. These differences can also be assumed as biological differences through the c-collocate “naturally” for both *men* and *women*, which is used to frame these differences as biologically determined and thus objectively innate (e.g. ‘women naturally have much higher standards than men’ [138_BRA]).

However, although infrequent, some comments reveal possible ideological contestation in the manosphere concerning biological differences. For instance, the comment ‘men and women are biologically different that is not sexist. Choosing to interpret that difference in such a way that woman don’t have the potential to do a job simply for being a woman is wrong’ [174_MR] shows a user who is explicit in their understanding of men and women being biologically different whilst also rejecting essentialist and deterministic interpretations of these differences.

Although the presence of “same” – an antonym of “different” – as a c-collocate for *girls*, *guys*, and *women* potentially suggests a focus on commonalities between gendered social actors (e.g. ‘we have the same problems as women’ [107_MR]), “same” is more often used to argue against the presence of such commonalities between women and men, commonly through negation (e.g. ‘I don’t think men and women are the same’ [114_BRA]). Moreover, notions of commonality and equality between men and women may come into conflict with essentialising discourses of gender, as in ‘in an ideal world men and women would be treated the same, but an ideal world excludes the things that exist in the real world. Men are larger, stronger, and more aggressive than women are’ [3_MR]. The user goes on to suggest that benevolent sexism is important for women who are potentially in inherent danger from men ‘in the real world’.

Identities are further homogenised and distinguished using numerals (“1”, “one”, “two”), quantifiers (e.g. “lot”, “few”), comparatives (e.g. “less”) and superlatives (e.g. “most”), all of which are description c-collocates of *girls*, *guys*, *men* and *women*. In use, these forms largely serve to homogenise groups of social actors with increasing intensity as they move from quantifier to superlative. Quantifiers such as “few”, which occurs only as a c-collocate of *men* and *women* (e.g. ‘I have however met quite a few men who’ve slept with many women’ [61_MGTOW]), and numeral c-collocates for *girls* (“two”) and *guys* (“two”) serve to aggregate individuals (van Leeuwen 2008: 38). Numerals, for example, do this through determination (‘Now I’ve moved to the big city, flew alone 3 times, in the last one I’ve banged two girls’ [87_TRP]).

Other c-collocates of the social actor key-key-words studied here are the quantifier “many” and its related gradable forms, i.e. the comparative “more” and the superlative “most”. Their presence potentially suggests a common lexico-grammatical choice for representing social actors across the manosphere as homogeneous. When acting as an adjective quantifying *men* and *women*, “many” can be used to distinguish men and women, particularly through (re)establishing deterministic gendered traits and subsequent tensions. For example, one post represents men as being biologically determined to not raise children, as in ‘the entire genesis of child support etc was to avoid the biological imperative - men impregnating women, bouncing, not sticking around to help raise the child. The reason for the law is to protect women from what many men naturally want to do’ [110_BRA]. Furthermore, the superlative form “most” is associated with more severely reductive identity (re)presentations than the other forms but again relies on negative gender stereotypes of men and women (e.g. ‘I believe that while most women are better than most men at manipulation’ [80_TRP]).

However, there is evidence of a counter-discourse within the manosphere which challenges essentialist representations of women, such as in ‘it seems like most men on here hate women and dehumanize them like they’re a different species, but then I see posts where a lot of the same people are upset/depressed about not having a partner’ [9_BRA]. Not only does such a counter-discourse suggest the presence of multiple (and competing) discourses of gender in the manosphere, but it also serves to acknowledge and confirm the presence of the derogatory and dehumanising discourses that we analyse in this paper.

In the following, we will look at how commenters in our data compare male and female social actors, and how relations between them are portrayed, before looking at the representation of such social actor groups on their own.

5.1.2 Comparisons of, and relations between, male and female social actors

The comparative forms “more”, “higher”, and “less” frame gendered social actors in ways that (re-)assert gendered conflicts by setting up gendered fields of action wherein actions carried out by and affecting men and women are constructed dichotomously (e.g. ‘women tend to earn higher grades and drop out less frequently than men’ [101_MR]). These constructions typically represent men as disadvantaged compared to women, as becomes evident through the analysis of c-collocates which discuss the treatment of male and female social actors in wider society.

Although *men*, *women* and *guys* are all conceptualised as having problems, as indicated by the topic c-collocate “problem(s)”, and although the action “treat(ing) *women*” refers to ‘treating women like shit’ [30_BRA] and ‘treating women like children’ [172_TRP], female social actors are at the same time represented as privileged over their male counterparts. This is visible via *women’s* descriptive c-collocates “ok” and “easier”, which express the way in which commenters see women being treated in wider society (e.g. ‘it’s way easier to be a woman in the United States in 2018’ [131_MR]). The verbs occurring to the left of *women* indicate that when patients, women are also the beneficiaries of undeserved privilege and support, as shown by “giving”, “putting”, and “respect” (e.g. ‘giving women awards because they are women’ [124_MR], ‘putting women on a pedestal’ [57_MGTOW], and ‘despite my lame attempts to love and respect women as delicate flowers, I learned the hard way they will eat your heart out’ [71_MGTOW]). This is also the case for verbs, such as “given” and “deserve”, which occur to the right of *women* (e.g. ‘women are given preferential treatment’ [74_MR] and the ascribed and rejected proposition that ‘women deserve things simply for being women’ [131_TRP]).

In contrast, the descriptor “capable” is used to refute the argument that women deserve special treatment (e.g. ‘women are perfectly capable of taking care of themselves’ [129_MR]). Furthermore, “complain” and “choose”, which occur to the right of *women*, are used to dismiss the grievances of women such as objectification (e.g. ‘everything women complain about is pure projection’ [40_BRA]), and under-representation in typically male-led industries (e.g. ‘women still don’t choose STEM careers’ [56_TRP]).

Contrastingly, in the *men* dataset, the struggles that men are seen as facing are presented as legitimate. For instance, “hard” is used to describe the perceived issues that men are confronted with (e.g. “men have an incredibly hard time getting support” [43_MR]) and the effort which men exert compared to women (e.g. ‘men have to work so hard to get laid’ [118_MGTOW]). This is also shown through the topic indicator “standards”, which refers to “double standards” in favour of women in 36 out of the 152 instances. In addition, the topic indicator “attention” and the descriptor “important”, c-collocates for both *men* and *women*, refer to women receiving more attention and being more important than men in various contexts (e.g. ‘Most intelligent guys will start to realise how bombarded most women are with male attention’ [102_SED]). Thus, issues for men are perceived as consistently downplayed in favour of those of women. Furthermore, the topic indicator “world” for *men* is used to convey the perceived universality of such issues (e.g. ‘the plight of homeless men all over the world’ [123_MR]).

Men are represented as being subjugated by a coalition of women and those who are perceived as supporting the interests of women. Women and feminists passivate men, where “blame” and “hate” occur to the left of *men* (e.g. ‘most women today just try to shove the blame on men’ [107_TRP], and ‘extremist feminists hate men because that’s at the core of all feminist thought and ideology’ [104_MR]). “Society” as a whole is also framed as taking a semantically agentive role in subjugating men, who are passivated in constructions such as ‘society is blatantly telling men not to maximise their value’ [28_TRP]. Conversely, when “hate” and “blame” occur to the left of *women*, commenters refute a presupposition that the in-group “hate” women and “blame” women for societal issues (e.g. ‘it’s not that we hate women, but we understand them now’ [39_TRP]).

As will be explored in more detail in Subsections 5.2 and 5.3 below, intimate relationships between male and female social actors are discussed via the topic indicators “sex”, “sexual”, “sexually” and “relationships”, which co-occur with *women*, *girls* and *men* in various combinations. As well as referencing consensual relationships, these topic indicators can be used to refer to abusive dynamics. For instance, “sexual(ly)” is used to reference harassment for both *men* and *women* (e.g. ‘the very real issue of sexual harassment of men’ [134_MR], and ‘women get sexually harassed on the street about their body’ [5_TRP]). Both male and female social actors are thus represented as victims and perpetrators, although instances where women are victims of abuse tend to be dismissed by the in-group. For instance, women are represented as lying about having experienced rape and sexual assault to harm male social actors, via “lie” occurring to the right of *women* (e.g. ‘all women lie about sexual assault and paternity when hit by hypergamous doubt’ [76_TRP]). Furthermore, although 26 out of 84 instances of “hit” to the right of *girls* are accounted for by the romantic/sexual phrasal verb “hit on”, “hit” more often references violence in the *girls* data (e.g. ‘girls can hit men too’ [45_MR]). In addition, women are also represented as perpetrators of abuse via the descriptor “capable” (e.g. ‘women are equally capable of violence as men’ [181_MR]). Thus, the in-group seek to correct a presupposition that women and girls are not as violent as male social actors. However, it should be noted that women are also represented as the victims of violence, as seen by “hitting” and “hurt” typically occurring to the left of *women* (e.g. ‘men can do evil

things, they can hurt women beyond belief' [189_MR]). However, such instances are typically downplayed in comparison to violence against men.

So far, we have established that, despite some evidence of a counter-discourse, male and female social actors are mostly represented as homogenous groups with immutable characteristics. Comparisons both express and reinforce this dichotomous concept of gender. The two groups are also portrayed as relating to each other, with women enjoying social privileges yet complaining and men being disadvantaged and facing unacknowledged struggles. While both women and men are represented as perpetrators and victims of violence, women are referred to as blaming, hating and framing men. We will now look more closely at how each of the two gendered groups is represented on its own.

5.2 Representation of *women* and *girls*

We established four main themes in the c-collocates of *women* and *girls*: sexual objectification, ascriptions of emotionality, discussions about ethnicity and age, and a less homogeneous representation for *girls* than for *women*.

5.2.1 Sexual objectification

Evidence for sexual objectification can be found in the proportion of c-collocates which account for physical descriptions of *women* and *girls* (29.7% and 25.6% respectively) compared to *men* and *guys*. This is reflected in descriptors such as “attractive”, “physically”, “beautiful” and “ugly” for *women*, and “hot”, “fat”, and “pretty” for *girls*. Objectification is also reflected in the actions which co-occur with *women* and *girls*, with 16.6% of *women* c-collocates reflecting the passivation of women, compared to 12.4% of c-collocates reflecting their agency. Actions to the left of *women*, such as “attract”, “slept”, “dating” and “hitting” (in the phrasal verb “hitting on”) represent them as passivated by male social actors in dating/sexual contexts. Similarly, “fuck” and “get” occur to the left of *girls*, with the latter used to reference acquiring a partner (e.g. ‘is that why I get no girls?’ [139_MR]). Users also share their personal approaches to, and advice for, dating girls using “try” and “talking” (e.g. ‘I would always try to get girls to go to multiple venues with me before getting them to mine’ [123_TRP] and ‘just practice talking to girls and it’ll become easy’ [200_SED]). In comparison, only one c-collocate, namely “sleep” for *women*, represents female social actors as agentive in these contexts, which indicates a lack of sexual agency for both women and girls. Although *girls* are more frequently agents than patients overall (9.3% and 7% of actions to the right and left respectively), it should be noted that *girls* are described more, and ascribed fewer actions, than *women*, and the term *girls* is frequently used to refer to either female social actors in their youth or in dating/sexual contexts. Contrastingly, the term *women* is used to discuss a variety of contexts, such as relationships, careers, and their treatment in wider society, as discussed in Section 5.1.2.

5.2.2 Emotionality

When women and girls are represented as agents, these actions often reference mental processes. For instance, when the affective and desiderative mental processes “love”, “want”, and “like”, as well as the cognitive “think”, occur to the right of *girls*, these actions are used to describe what girls allegedly seek in a dating/sexual context (e.g. ‘girls love to be approached, when it is done correctly and not forced’ [151_SED]). Similarly, desiderative and perceptive mental processes such as “want”, “seek”, and “feel” occur to the right of *women*, as does the descriptive c-collocate “interested”, which is used to ascribe attitudes to women (e.g. ‘women aren’t interested in the act of sex’ [103_BRA]). Overall, this indicates that female social actors are represented in terms of emotions rather than material actions. This is also done explicitly via the descriptor “emotional” for *women* (e.g. ‘women are emotional beings’

[35_SED]). Furthermore, the topic indicating c-collocates “standards” and “status” are used to discuss what women expect from men in a relational context. *Women* are represented as having “standards” which are ‘irrational’ [112_BRA], because they have ‘far higher standards than men’ [114_BRA], but also low, as in ‘women have zero standards’ [178_SED]. As for “status”, this refers to the type of men that women seek out for relationships, as in ‘women are attracted to high status men’ [121_SED], with “value” also occasionally used in this manner. Overall, this indicates that female social actors are often represented in terms of emotions and desires, although this is done more explicitly for *women* than *girls*.

5.2.3 Ethnicity and age

Furthermore, unique to the description of women and girls are adjectives denoting ethnicity and age. Although both women and girls are described in terms of age (via “young(er)” and “older” for *women*), youth is emphasised in the *girls* dataset via the c-collocates “high”, “school”, “year”, “old” and “young”. Indeed, 62 of the 92 instances of “old” occur in the trigram “year old girls”, which mainly refers to girls between the ages of 13 and 25. Moreover, 44 of the 112 occurrences of “school” are accounted for by the trigram “high school girls”. This trend is broadly in line with findings from general corpora of English (e.g. Sigley and Holmes, 2002), which note that *girls* is used to reference children, adolescents, and adults alike. In-group experiences with girls of this age are discussed (e.g. ‘the only girls I knew in school that had little to no hobbies were the ones that read Cosmopolitan in class’ [71_MGTOW]) and girls are represented both as victims of sexual abuse (e.g. ‘Larry Nasar abused young girls for decades’ [191_MR]) and as overtly sexual (e.g. ‘I’ve had 13 year old girls “flirt” with me before’ [7_MR]). However, it should be emphasised that these concordance lines do not encourage abusive or sexual behaviour towards young girls.

Furthermore, girls are the only social actor to be described in terms of ethnicity, specifically whiteness. White girls are ascribed a disparate range of personality traits, and described in terms of how attracted they are towards male social actors of other races, and vice versa, including girls desiring black and Indian men. The statistical significance of “white” suggests that the in-group acknowledge cultural differences in behaviour among girls, which was not found for women more broadly. However, it is unclear why other skin colours are not similarly significant. It could be the case the phrase ‘white girls’ is being used as a disparaging term, as it arguably holds this meaning in popular culture. Indeed, Slobe (2018) observes that ‘mock white girl’ performances in popular media portray white girls as excessively emotional, vapid, childish, cosmopolitan, and excessively consumerist. Thus, the prevalence of “white” as a c-collocate of *girls* in this dataset could indicate that the girls in question are perceived as having these personality traits, which are considered negative in both popular culture and the manosphere alike.

5.2.4 Heterogeneous representation of girls

Our c-collocate analysis reveals that *girls* are represented more heterogeneously than women. Unlike *women*, *girls* are quantified using small numbers (“one”, “two”), which indicates that users discuss individual experiences with girls (e.g. ‘I remember overhearing two girls talking at the bar’ [181_TRP]). Furthermore, although *girls* are described as immutably “different” from male social actors, “different” is more often used to discuss individual differences between girls than differences between girls and male social actors, as in ‘different types of girls and types of looks’ [117_SED]. Similarly, “same” is not used to denote homogeneity between girls as a wider demographic, but instead refers to similarities between girls and male social actors of similar attractiveness, as in ‘hot guys get away with being jerks the same way hot girls get away with being bitches’ [15_BRA]. Thus, as also found in Krendel (2020), *girls* are represented

as individuals and in a somewhat less homogeneous manner than *women*, whereas *women* are referred to as an abstract, homogenous group.

5.3 Representation of *men* and *guys*

We established three main themes in the c-collocates for *men* and *guys*: discussions about dating and relationships (including what constitutes an attractive male social actor), ascriptions of personality and heterogeneity (especially in *guys*), and ways in which the in-group discuss interactions with each other and offer advice to other male social actors.

5.3.1 Dating and relationships

Fewer c-collocates reference dating and sexual relationships for *men* and *guys* than for *women* and *girls*, and do so in different ways for *men* and *guys*. The topic indicators “sex”, “sexual” and “relationships” co-occur with *men* but not *guys*, and only one action is ascribed to men regarding sexual relationships, namely “dating” to the left of the node, alongside the descriptors “attracted”, “attractive”, and “gay”. Although “gay” is used as neither a positive nor a negative term, its presence in this list reveals heteronormativity, as terms such as ‘straight’ or ‘heterosexual’ are not c-collocates. However, the descriptors of *guys* concern in-group beliefs about what physical characteristics can lead to romantic and sexual success. The most statistically significant c-collocates for *guys* reference their physical appearance (“look”, “looking”), including height, where “tall” is conceptualised as positive and “short” as negative (e.g. ‘most women might prefer tall guys’ [176_BRA]). This suggests that physically imposing traits are associated with masculinity and sexual prowess. Furthermore, the actions “date”, “fucked”, and “love” typically occur to the left of *guys*, with female social actors as agentive in these constructions (although such agency in sexual contexts is not visible consistently in the form of c-collocates for either *women* or *girls*). Thus, as with the action c-collocates for *women* and *girls*, *guys* also lack sexual agency. However, it should be noted that *guys*, while described the least among the four social actors (in 19.6% of c-collocates), are more frequently represented as agents than patients (13.4% vs 9.3% of c-collocates). The majority of these c-collocates frame *guys* as sayers (“talk(ing)”, “say(ing)”) and beneficiaries (“get(ting)”, “got”), but without any overarching themes prevalent in the concordance lines. This suggests that despite lacking sexual agency, *guys* are nevertheless represented as more active than female social actors.

Furthermore, although the topic indicator “problem”, which co-occurs with *guys*, suggests a similarity in topic with *men* (i.e. perceived systemic issues), it in fact covers a wide variety of topics, such as dating strategies and types of guys (e.g. ‘the problem is guys think they have to compete with each other for these chicks’ [65_TRP]). Additionally, the c-collocate “different” is used to quantify guys (e.g. ‘they are usually fucking 3-5 different guys at once’ [71_MGT]), as opposed to referring to innate differences between guys and female social actors. Thus, the term *men* is used to discuss perceived systemic issues, whereas *guys* is used in a broader range of contexts, including relational ones.

5.3.2 Personality and heterogeneity

References to both positive (“successful”, “good”, “nice”) and negative (“bad”) qualities are made in the *men* and *guys* c-collocates, albeit more prevalently so for *guys*. “Good guys” and “bad guys” are presented as immutable identities (e.g. ‘you have your good guys and bad guys mixed up in life’ [24_MR]), and “nice” refers to out-group *guys* who act positively (but often disingenuously) towards female social actors to gain their approval (e.g. ‘manipulative guys that call themselves nice guys’ [37_MGTOW]). Additionally, the descriptor “successful” broadly refers to men achieving economic success and personal fulfilment, suggesting that despite perceived problems, men are nonetheless represented as able to achieve such success. Thus,

commenters acknowledge a variety of personality types in male social actors, whereas this is not the case overall for female social actors. It is moreover noteworthy that “successful” is a c-collocate of *women* used to describe men’s sexual and romantic success with them: 48 of the 112 instances of “successful” are accounted for by the trigram “successful with women”. Unlike women, men are not referred to as the object of anyone’s sexual success.

Additionally, like *girls*, *guys* co-occurs with quantifiers indicating smaller numbers (e.g. “some” and “two”), which indicates some level of heterogeneity in their representation, as individual experiences with guys are discussed. In comparison, more c-collocates describe *men* (23.1%), *men* are ascribed fewer actions, and *men* are equally represented as agents and patients in the action c-collocates (4.8% of c-collocates for actions to both the left and right of *men*). These findings, combined with the results discussed in Section 5.1, indicate that the term *guys* is used to discuss male social actors in terms of their actions, whereas the term *men* is used to discuss male social actors in terms of their perceived place in wider society.

5.3.3 In-group interactions and advice

Furthermore, a variety of interactions within the male in-group are discussed. The topic indicator “sub” for *guys* is used to discuss the characteristics of individual subreddits in a broadly negative manner (e.g. ‘too many guys in this sub have some sort of victim complex’ [99_MR]). Also, “come”, which occurs to the right of the node, refers to guys joining manosphere subreddits as a result of external problems (e.g. ‘a lot of guys come to [the seduction subreddit] because they have problems relating with women’ [153_SED]). Self-improvement and advice given in that respect are referenced and expressed via the action c-collocates “trying”, “better”, and “need” which occur to the right of guys (e.g. ‘guys are trying to better their self worth’ [15_BRA]), and ‘you guys need some perspective’ [29_MR]). To the left of guys, “tell” and “help” serve a similar purpose (e.g. ‘Mhmm, I tell guys to become interested in many things. Discover new hobbies and passions you never thought you’d care about’ [183_SED]). Lastly, “love” is used to signal both sarcastic or genuine affection for fellow group members (e.g. ‘I love the way you guys always assume I’m a dude’ [91_MR]).

The descriptive c-collocate “better” also co-occurs with *men*, although in this context, it is used to signal a desire to improve conditions for men in general (e.g. ‘I want to help men be better and happier’ [104_MR]). Two contradictory strategies for achieving this are suggested via the c-collocate “together”. The first of these is fostering unity between men and women, as in ‘it’s so important for men and women to come together and talk human issues’ [172_MR], whereas the second is creating male-only spaces, as in ‘men need to stick together, and use our heads against these women taking advantage of us’ [149_MGT]. Contrastingly, the advice given in the *guys* concordance lines focus on self-improvement or refer to specific individuals, whereas the solutions in the *men* concordance lines pertain to gender relations more broadly.

To summarise Subsections 5.2 and 5.3, we can say that both female and male social actors are represented in terms of their physical appearance, with an additional focus on sexual attractiveness for women and girls. The latter are also passivated in sexual and romantic contexts, while men are portrayed as successful in sexual, professional and economic terms, despite their perceived social disadvantage (see Subsection 5.1.2). Where women and girls are assigned agency, they are typically involved in mental rather than material processes. Finally, and despite perceiving gendered social actors as two homogenous groups when comparing them, commenters reference a variety of personalities for male in-group members and also allow for men to change.

In the final section of this paper, we will now answer our RQs and point out possible directions for future research, for those who wish to further investigate the manosphere.

6. Conclusion

To answer our first research question (How are gendered social actors represented across five manosphere communities on Reddit?), we can note the following: male and female social actors are mostly referred to in terms of their gender (e.g. *men*, *women*) and identified by employing romantic relational terms. Men in particular are denoted with kinship terms. As expected in view of previous studies, female social actors are more often derogated and ascribed negative sexual terms. While there are some instances of a counter-discourse, male and female social actors are mostly represented as homogenous, dichotomous groups. Nevertheless, a variety of personality types and possible changes are assigned to men.

Discussions around gender dynamics are integral to the manosphere: comparing men and women, commenters present the latter as enjoying social privileges, while men are represented as disadvantaged. Although women and men are both portrayed as perpetrators and victims of violence, women are specifically referred to as framing men for sexual violence. Despite the alleged disadvantages faced by men, they are still talked about as sexually, professionally and economically successful. Both female and male social actors are represented in terms of their physical appearance, with women and girls also described in terms of how sexually attractive commenters perceive them to be. Female social actors are moreover shown as passivated in sexual and romantic contexts, and are often ascribed descriptors and mental processes which denote their wishes, thoughts and feelings. This finding echoes much corpus linguistic and feminist critical discourse analysis work alike (e.g. Caldas-Coulthard and Moon, 2010; Mills, 2008).

With the common ground across the five subsections of the manosphere established, future research could interrogate relationships between users in comment threads using more qualitative methods. In this study, we did not have space to cover a larger number of gendered social actors key-keywords (see Lawson (forthcoming) for such a discussion), investigate the use of argumentation strategies and framing devices, or look at the representation of feminism and feminists, all of which would constitute fruitful directions for future research. In this study, we attempted to give a robust analysis of the usage of c-collocates for the four most commonly mentioned gendered social actors in our data, in order to address our research question on how gendered social actors are represented across the manosphere. Thus, to consider the sheer number of c-collocates this analysis generated, this necessitated a broad approach, whereas future research could choose one category of c-collocates to analyse in further detail.

In answer to our second research question (What ideologies of gender are social actor representations in the manosphere related to?), commenters show a strong belief that there are two clearly delineated and diametrically opposed genders. While their socio-cognitive representation of men is somewhat differentiated, they seem to believe that women in particular are a homogenous group with many negative traits. Manosphere discourse further reflects a belief that relations between genders are characterised by an imbalance of sexual and economic power, giving rise to an expectation that women's actions will put men at a disadvantage. While the ideology of the manosphere is characterised by heteronormativity, commenters seem to see the current state of gender relations as violating their norms of appropriate behaviour in women.

The overall conceptualisations of female social actors across the manosphere can be seen as an extension of mainstream representations in general corpora of English (see e.g. Romaine, 2000; Pearce, 2008; Taylor, 2013). Given the “incremental effect of discourse” (Baker, 2006:13), it is likely that interaction with and within manosphere communities reinforces and amplifies ideological beliefs about gender, potentially radicalising members. What is more, the more extreme beliefs of the manosphere may be visible across other online communities such as gaming communities and alt-right spaces (see Massanari and Chess, 2018), which indicates a degree of mainstreaming. Future work will have to identify such mainstreaming and raise awareness about the risks associated with it.

References

- Baker, P. 2004a. ‘Unnatural acts’: Discourses of homosexuality within the House of Lords debates on gay male law reform. *Sociolinguistics* 8(1), pp 88-106.
- Baker, P. 2004b. Querying keywords: Questions of difference, frequency, and sense in keywords analysis. *Journal of English Linguistics* 32(4), pp 346-359.
- Baker, P. 2006. *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis*. London: Continuum.
- Baker, P. 2014. *Using Corpora to Analyze Gender*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Baker, P., Gabrielatos, C., KhosraviNik, M., Krzyzanowski, M., McEnery T., & Wodak, R. 2008. A useful methodological synergy? Combining critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics to examine discourses of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK Press. *Discourse & Society* 19(3), pp 273-306.
- Brezina, V., Timperley, M., & McEnery, T. 2018. #LancsBox v.5.1.2 [software]. Available at: <http://corpora.lancs.ac.uk/lancsbox/> [Accessed 22 December 2020]
- Caldas-Coulthard, C., & Moon, R. 2010. ‘Curvy, hunky, kinky’: Using corpora as tools for Critical Discourse Analysis. *Discourse & Society* 21(2), pp 99-133.
- Cecco, L. 2020. Canada police say machete killing was ‘incel’ terror attack. *The Guardian* [online]. 19 May. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/19/toronto-attack-incel-terrorism-canada-police> [Accessed 04 Dec 2020]
- Clark, H. 1996. *Using Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Connell, R., & Messerschmidt, W. 2005. Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender & Society*, 19(6), pp 429-459.
- Davies, M. 2010. *Corpus of Contemporary American English* [online]. Available at: <https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/> [Accessed 11 December 2020]
- Dayter, D., & Rüdiger, S. 2016. Reporting from the field: The narrative reconstruction of experience in pick-up artist online communities. *Open Linguistics* 2(1), pp 337-351.
- Durrant, P., & Doherty, A. 2010. Are high-frequency collocations psychologically real? Investigating the thesis of collocational priming. *Corpus Linguistics and Linguistic Theory* 6(2), pp 125-155.
- Egbert, J., & Biber, D. 2019. Incorporating text dispersion into keyword analyses. *Corpora* 14(1), pp 77-104.
- franzke, a. s., Bechmann, A., Zimmer, M., Ess, C. & the Association of Internet Researchers. 2020. *Internet Research: Ethical Guidelines 3.0*. Available at <https://aoir.org/reports/ethics3.pdf> [Last accessed 12 April 2021]
- Gabrielatos, C., & Baker, P. 2008. Fleeing, sneaking, flooding: A corpus analysis of discursive constructions of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK press, 1996-2005. *Journal of English Linguistics* 36(1), pp 5-38.
- Ging, D. 2017. Alphas, betas, and incels: Theorizing the masculinities of the manosphere. *Men and Masculinities* 22(4), pp 638-657.

- Heritage, F., & Koller, V. 2020. Incels, in-groups, and ideologies: The representation of gendered social actors in a sexuality-based online community. *Journal of Language and Sexuality* 9(2), pp 153-180.
- Hunston, S. 2002. *Corpora in Applied Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jane, E. 2018. Systemic misogyny exposed: Translating Rapeglish from the manosphere with a random rape threat generator. *International Journal of Culture Studies* 21(6), pp 661-680.
- Kerns, G. J. 2018. *intersect: Intersection of Subsets*. Available at: <https://rdocumentation.org/packages/prob/versions/1.0-1/topics/intersect>
- Kilgarriff, A., Baisa, V., Bušta, J., Jakubíček, M., Kovář, V., Michelfeit, J., Rychlý, P., & Suchomel, Y. 2014. The Sketch Engine: Ten years on. *Lexicography* 1(1), pp 7-36.
- Koller, V. 2014. Applying social cognition research to critical discourse studies: The case of collective identities. In: C. Hart and P. Cap (eds). *Contemporary Critical Discourse Studies*. London: Bloomsbury, pp. 147-165.
- Krendel, A. 2020. The men and women, guys and girls of the 'manosphere': A corpus-assisted discourse approach. *Discourse & Society* 31(6), pp 607-630.
- Lawson, R. (forthcoming). *The Linguistic Construction of Contemporary Masculinities: Cultures, contexts, constraints*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lawson, R., & McGlashan, M. 2017. "You need to become prime dick": A corpus-based analysis of self-help discourses and gender constructions in online seduction communities. 116th annual American Anthropological Association meeting, Washington D.C., 30 November 2017.
- Lewis, H. 2019. To Learn About the Far-Right, Start with the 'Manosphere'. *The Atlantic* [online]. 07 Aug. Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/08/anti-feminism-gateway-far-right/595642/> [Accessed 04 December 2020]
- Lumsden, K. 2019. "'I want to kill you in front of your children' is not a threat. It's an expression of a desire, not of an intent": Discourses of trolling and gendered violence on r/MensRights. In: K. Lumsden and E. Harmer (eds) *Online Othering: Exploring violence and discrimination on the Web*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 91-115.
- Mackenzie, J. 2017. Identifying informational norms in Mumsnet Talk: A reflexive-linguistic approach to internet research ethics. *Applied Linguistics Review* 8(2-3), pp 293-314.
- Marwick, A. E., & Caplan, R. 2018. Drinking male tears: Language, the manosphere, and networked harassment. *Feminist Media Studies* 18(4), pp 543-559.
- Martin, J., & White, P. 2005. *The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Massanari, A., & Chess, S. 2018. Attack of the 50-foot social justice warrior: the discursive representation of SJW memes as the monstrous feminine. *Feminist Media Studies* 18(4), pp 525-542.
- McKinnon-Crowley. 2020. Fighting Gendered Battles: On Being a Woman in a Contemporary Gaming Community. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 49(1), pp 118-142. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241619864405>
- Mills, S. 2008. *Language and Sexism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Moon, R. 2014. From gorgeous to grumpy: Adjectives, age and gender. *Gender and Sexuality* 8(1), pp 5-41.
- Pearce, M. 2008. Investigating the collocational behaviour of MAN and WOMAN in the BNC using SketchEngine. *Corpora* 3(1), pp 1-29.
- Potts, A., & Baker, P. 2012. Does semantic tagging identify cultural change in British and American English? *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 17(3), pp 295-332.
- PRAW. 2020. *PRAW: The Python Reddit API Wrapper* [online]. Available at: <https://praw.readthedocs.io/en/latest/> [Accessed 11 December 2020]

- R Core Team. 2020. *R: A language and environment for statistical computing*. R Foundation for Statistical Computing, Vienna, Austria [online]. Available at: <https://www.R-project.org> [Accessed 22 April 2021]
- Rayson, P. 2008. Log-likelihood calculator. UCREL web server. Available at: <http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/llwizard.html> [Accessed 08 April 2021]
- Reddit. 2016. Reddit API terms of use. Available at: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSezNdDNK1-P8mspSbmtC2r86Ee9ZRbC66u929cG2GX0T9UMyw/viewform> [Accessed 12 April 2021]
- Reddit. 2021. Reddit user agreement. Available at: <https://www.redditinc.com/policies/user-agreement> [Accessed 12 April 2021]
- Ribeiro, M., Blackburn, J., Bradlyn, B., De Cristofaro, E., Stringhini, G., Long, S., Greenberg, S., & Zannettou, S. 2020. *From Pick-Up Artists to Incels: A Data-Driven Sketch of the Manosphere* [online]. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338737324_From_Pick-Up_Artists_to_Incels_A_Data-Driven_Sketch_of_the_Manosphere [Accessed 04 December 2020].
- Rodger, E. 2014. *My Twisted World: The story of Elliot Rodger* [online]. Available at: <https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/1173619/rodger-manifesto.pdf> [Accessed 17 December 2020].
- Romaine, S. 2000. *Language in Society: An introduction to sociolinguistics* (2nd ed). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rüdiger, S., & Dayter, D. 2017. The ethics of researching unlikable subjects. *Applied Linguistics Review* 8(2-3), pp. 251-269.
- Scott, M. 1996. WordSmith Tools Help. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Scott, M. 1997. PC analysis of key words - and key key words. *System* 25(2), pp 233-245.
- Scott, M. 2016. WordSmith Tools 7 [software]. Available at: <https://www.lexically.net/wordsmith/> [Accessed 22 December 2020]
- Sigley, R., & Holmes, J. 2002. Looking at girls in corpora of English. *Journal of English Linguistics* 30(2), pp 138-157.
- Slobe, T. 2018. Style, stance, and social meaning in mock white girl. *Language in Society* 47(1), pp 541-567.
- Stubbs, M. 1996. *Text and Corpus Analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Taylor, C. 2013. Searching for similarity using corpus-assisted discourse studies. *Corpora* 8(1), pp 81-113.
- van Leeuwen, T. 2008. *Discourse and Practice: New tools for Critical Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Van Valkenburgh, S. 2018. Digesting the red pill: Masculinity and neoliberalism in the manosphere. *Men and Masculinities*, 1-20. doi:10.1177/1097184X18816118
- WebCorp Mini-Web Corpus. 2010. *WebCorp Linguist's Search Engine*. Available at: <http://wse1.webcorp.org.uk/home/syn.html> [Accessed 11 December 2020]
- Wright, D. 2020. The discursive construction of resistance to sex in an online community. *Discourse, Context & Media* 36(1), pp 1-9.

Transition I – From corpus-based key-key-words and c-collocates to transitivity and appraisal analysis

Having undertaken a broad analysis of the language in five subreddits which represent the five different aspects of the manosphere in Chapter 5, I will now discuss the rationale for the research design of Chapter 6. The large size of the dataset in Chapter 5 necessitated analysis methods which captured broad trends across the five subreddits, namely key-key-words and c-collocates, with some supporting concordance line analysis. By only using corpus linguistic methods, a much larger quantity of data was analysed than could have been done manually. However, this came at the expense of only analysing language features that were statistically significant and thus easily measurable. Also, due to space constraints, the first paper only discusses a portion of the results generated and thus could not fully take advantage of the wealth of data available. For instance, Chapter 5 included identifying the actions that the four most frequent gendered social actors were represented as commonly undertaking, but did not have the space to further investigate the context behind these actions. Furthermore, although relational processes of being and having co-occurred with the social actor terms in a statistically significant fashion, due to the sheer frequency of these terms given their role as both lexical and auxiliary verbs, these processes were not investigated in further detail. Also, despite identifying 34 gendered social actor terms which were shared across the five manosphere subreddits, only 4 were analysed in detail. As a result, although it could be argued that using vast corpora of online data takes advantage of the quantity of data available to the researcher, such an approach does not allow for a nuanced discussion of many linguistic features. Nevertheless, Chapter 5 provided a fruitful starting point for linguistic analysis of manosphere discourse, by demonstrating which gendered social actor representations are salient across the five sub-communities.

Furthermore, the corpus-based nature of Chapter 5 necessitated an inductive approach, in order for shared representations of gendered social actors to be identified by the researcher. Those inductive findings from Chapter 5 provided a basis for Chapter 6, in which I utilise deductive discourse analysis methods alongside corpus linguistic ones to investigate the same four gendered social actors which were foregrounded in Chapter 5. Thus, for Chapter 6, I did not solely rely on statistical means to indicate salient themes in the data via lexical items, but additionally used methods which required the close reading of data beyond the concordance line level alongside a keyword and collocate analysis. This smaller and mainly qualitative analysis allowed me to triangulate the results gathered via quantitative means, and to

investigate how representations of gendered social actors are expressed using a variety of linguistic constructions.

The affective aspect of the manosphere specifically, and online spaces dedicated to counter-movements more generally, has been identified consistently in the past literature (Ging, 2019; Siapera, 2019; Allan, 2016; Papacharassi, 2014). As a result, I identified appraisal theory (Martin and White, 2005), particularly the attitude system, as an appropriate pre-existing framework to use in my consideration of the emotions which are attributed to gendered social actors and expressed by in-group members. The affect section of the appraisal framework lends itself best to this analysis, also considering that judgement provided context to the analysis of descriptions and actions in Chapter 5. Additionally, given the number of c-collocates in Chapter 5 which referenced the physical appearance of social actors, using the appreciation subsection of the appraisal system can contextualise the findings on aesthetics in Chapter 5, as well as introduce new categories for consideration.

Furthermore, although Chapter 5 examined individualisation and collectivisation to some extent (e.g. social actor pluralisation in the key-key-word analysis), the detailed c-collocate analysis extended only to four plural social actors. Analysing both the singular and plural forms of each social actor in Chapter 6 considers whether representations of individuals contribute to the points made about collective social actors, or deviate from them. Furthermore, by utilising the engagement subsystem of the appraisal framework, differing perspectives on the representation of gendered social actors are noted, which allows for a more nuanced analysis of the findings than in Chapter 5. Moreover, using the graduation subsystem of the appraisal framework in Chapter 6 seeks to query the homogeneity of the findings of Chapter 5, by noting how aspects of gendered social actor representations are intensified or mitigated.

Lastly, having not had the space to discuss the nature of actions ascribed to social actors in detail in Chapter 5, I not only investigated how social actors were represented as agents and patients (as in Chapter 5), but also utilised the transitivity system (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2013) in Chapter 6, to investigate the process types that tend to be associated with male and female social actors. Considering the different process types also allowed me to consider the differences between more or less agentive processes (e.g. material and mental respectively, see Barty-Taylor, 2020, which draws on Darics and Koller, 2019). This analysis also included relational processes, as each sentence was read in full unlike in Chapter 5. Such an analysis reveals how perceived distributions of power, a key finding of Chapter 5, are reflected in the representations of actions in more detail.

Using such qualitative methodologies necessitated working with a smaller dataset than that in Chapter 5. Whereas Chapter 5 discussed the linguistic features of the overall manosphere using data from five subreddits, in Chapter 6, I created a sample of Reddit manosphere data which is much smaller than that used in Chapter 5, but is still representative of much of the manosphere. For this reason, I selected posts from the *TRP* subreddit for analysis, as these users tend to discuss gender dynamics in a manner that acts as an ideological underpinning for the entire manosphere. Within *TRP*, I gathered posts which users had tagged with “flair” (a tagging system which is used to filter content) that signalled affiliations with three sections of the manosphere (namely MRAs, MGTOWs, and PUAs). By tagging posts with flair, users signal that the content of their post is relevant to a specific sub-set of the manosphere or those interested in a specific topic. Thus, these users behind these posts aligned themselves with both *TRP* as a whole and other manosphere sub-groups. Examining such posts aimed to capture potential differences in the sub-groups’ approaches towards gendered social actors, while acknowledging that they shared common underlying beliefs about these social actors. With these aims in mind, I hereby present Chapter 6: ‘The *men* and *women*, *guys* and *girls* of the ‘manosphere’: A corpus-assisted discourse approach’. This paper was published in the critical discourse analysis journal *Discourse & Society* in July 2020.

Chapter 6: Study 2 – The men and women, guys and girls of the ‘manosphere’: a corpus-assisted discourse approach. (*Discourse & Society*).

Abstract

This study investigates how the lemmas *woman*, *girl*, *man* and *guy* are used to discursively represent and construct gender identities in an anti-feminist forum on the discussion website *Reddit*. The lemmas were analysed using corpus-assisted social actor analysis and appraisal theory. Similarities and differences within three sub-communities of the *TRP* subreddit were considered: *Men's Rights* (activists who believe that men are systemically disadvantaged in society), *Men Going Their Own Way* (who abstain from relationships with women), and *Red Pill Theory* (primarily pick-up artists).

The corpus was characterised by bare assertions about gendered behaviour, although the masculine gender role was less well-defined than the feminine one. *Women* and *girls* were dehumanised and sexually objectified, negatively judged for morality and veracity, and constructed as desiring hostile behaviour from male social actors. Conversely, *men* were constructed as victims of female social actors and external institutions and, as a result, as unhappy and insecure.

Key words: “manosphere”, online sexism, corpus linguistics, social actor analysis, appraisal theory, systemic functional linguistics, *Reddit*, critical discourse analysis

Content Warning

This study mentions sexual assault and rape. Inspired by Jane's (2014) discussion of sexist “e-bile”, I believe that showing full examples from my data is valuable so that the sexist nature of the data is not masked, and is thus taken seriously. Full examples begin in Section 3.

1. Introduction

This study explores how men's rights activists, male separatists, and pick-up artists represent and construct male and female social actors in relation to each other, what actions and attitudes these actors are ascribed, and how they are evaluated. This paper thereby contributes to a growing literature on the online anti-feminist network known as the “manosphere” (an internally applied label, which assigns global status to the movement). According to Ging (2017), the “manosphere” has five distinct groups: men's rights activists (who believe that men are systemically disadvantaged in society), men-going-their-own-way (who abstain from relationships with women, hereafter referred to as *MGTOW*), pick-up artists (who seek to have sex with as many women as possible), traditional Christian conservatives, and gamers/geeks. Ging (2017) separately considers involuntary celibates (incels), who are unable to find a romantic/sexual partner despite desiring one. Jane (2018) observed that these groups are united by a tendency to threaten women by referencing their perceived physical unattractiveness, sexual history, lack of intelligence, mental illness, and misinformed political opinions.

The “manosphere” community of interest for this study, the *TRP* subreddit, referred to as such to maintain its anonymity, describes itself as encouraging “discussion of sexual strategy in a culture increasingly lacking a positive identity for men” (van Valkenburgh, 2018:2) and includes three sub-groups: *Men's Rights*, *Men Going Their Own Way*, and *Red Pill Theory* (primarily pick-up artists). *TRP* is characterised by reductive statements about both men and women, discussed below in Section 2. The *TRP* subreddit had approximately 300,000 regular subscribers before being “quarantined” in October 2018, meaning that the subreddit is labelled as controversial, does not appear in *Reddit* searches (but is still accessible to those who know the link, and through search engines) and the subscriber count is hidden.

Following participation in the “manosphere”, a small minority of members have acted on their beliefs in the offline world in a way which constitutes criminal behaviour. For instance, one pick-up artist, Adnan Ahmed from Glasgow, was jailed in October 2019 for intimidating and assaulting women using pick-up artist tactics (BBC, 2019). There have also been several cases where incels, such as 23-year-old Elliot Rodger from Isla Vista, California, have committed mass murder to express their frustration at others having sexual and romantic relationships when they themselves cannot.

Ging (2017) observes that compared to the many journalistic articles on the “manosphere” which express shock at its content, there are relatively few academic articles conducting empirical analyses. Furthermore, the majority of past literature on the “manosphere” has investigated the content of “manosphere” websites (summarised below in Section 2.1). By applying a deductive linguistic framework as opposed to a content analysis approach, I investigated how over two hundred community members used non-specialist language to interpret the sexist beliefs the community is based on (van Valkenburgh, 2018).

The paper is structured as follows: I begin by discussing the previous research done on the “manosphere”, then I outline the corpus-assisted discourse analysis methodology that I used. I then discuss each gendered social actor term individually while considering the differences in use between the three sub-communities. I then conclude with my overall findings, a discussion of the implications of using sexist language, and possible future directions for this research.

2. Background

2.1 TRP and the “manosphere”

At the time of writing, two studies have been conducted on the TRP subreddit. Firstly, paying particular attention to scientific rationalisation based on evolutionary psychology and economics, van Valkenburgh (2018) conducted an inductive content analysis of the 26 readings (approximately 130,000 words) that would-be members are required to be familiar with before participating on the TRP forum, according to the rules of the subreddit. The author found that the community argue that evolutionary psychology concepts (such as men seeking sexual contact whereas women seek commitment) are scientific truths that feminists deny, that feminism is a sexual strategy for women, and that women cannot love unconditionally whereas men can.

van Valkenburgh (2018) also noted that TRP endorse Sexual Economics Theory, which states that women exchange sex with men for men’s resources. Fetterolf and Rudman (2017) found that endorsing Sexual Economics Theory coincides with high scores on two scales: the 15-item Adversarial Heterosexual Beliefs Scale (Lonsway and Fitzgerald, 1995), which includes items such as ‘it is natural for one spouse to be in the control of the other’; and Glick and Fiske’s (1996) Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, which distinguishes between hostile sexism (negative stereotypes such as women being less capable than men) and benevolent sexism (positive stereotypes such as women being more caring than men).

Secondly, Dignam and Rohlinger (2019) used an inductive content analysis method to investigate 1,762 comments from the four most popular posts in the years 2013-2016 from the *Field Reports* (where users share anecdotes of applying manosphere beliefs offline) and *Men’s Rights* subsections of the TRP subreddit. As well as observing that women were dehumanised by the community, the authors found that members were encouraged to pursue individual acts of self-improvement, and discouraged from political involvement, although supporting Donald Trump was then encouraged for the 2016 US presidential election. Although these

studies provide a window into the beliefs of *TRP*, the community has not yet been analysed using a systematic linguistic framework. This is also true for the past literature which considers the content of the three sub-communities, which is summarised below.

Analysing three men's rights activist websites, Gotell and Dutton (2016) found that activists argue that sexual violence is a gender-neutral problem, that false rape allegations against men are a widespread issue, that feminists are responsible for silencing men's voice in discussions on sexual violence, and that rape culture is a fictional concept made up by feminists. Thus, the men's rights activists of the "manosphere" position themselves as a strongly anti-feminist movement, who argue that the legal system ignores male discrimination.

Turning to *MGTOW*, these men abstain from relationships with women to varying degrees, such as abstaining from marriage, long-term relationships, short-term relationships, sexual contact, and even all contact with women. In their inductive analysis of various *MGTOW* websites and interviews with community members, Lin (2017) found that *MGTOW* believe men are trapped in the role of silent breadwinners, and that society is "gynocentric" (centred around women). However, according to Lin (2017), *MGTOW* do not seek to change this. In addition, they view themselves as empowered individuals who are less anger-driven than the wider "manosphere" community.

Lastly, pick-up artists use formulaic tactics known as "game" to convince women to sleep with them. Dayter and Rüdiger (2016:338) gathered a corpus of 27 posts, comprising 37,000 words of running text, from the *Field Reports* section of a pick-up artist forum. They observed that the users were concerned with achieving physical intimacy as opposed to developing a mutual connection, and that the community use terms drawn from sales and marketing for kissing ("kiss-closed"), getting a woman's phone number ("number-closed") and chatting ("used the common travellers' lines"). This research demonstrates that pick-up artist terminology reveals the emotional distance that pick-up artists maintain from their targets.

Similar trends were found in Denes' (2011) analysis of the pick-up artist guide *The Mystery Method: How To Get Beautiful Women Into Bed*, as she observed two types of dehumanisation (Haslam, 2006) of women. Firstly, there is animalistic dehumanisation, in which uniquely human attributes such as logical thought and a sense of morality are denied, which results in animal comparisons. Secondly, we find mechanistic dehumanisation, in which individual agency and attributes which require emotion (such as compassion) are denied, which results in object/automata comparisons. Although Haslam (2006) considers these types as independent from each other, they overlap in *The Mystery Method* to reductively focus on sexual behaviour. Women are described as animals (typically cats) who can be trained to suit the desires of the pick-up artist, which amounts to animalistic dehumanisation. Furthermore, humans, but women in particular, are described as "biological machines embedded within sophisticated behavioural systems designed to align with others to maximize their chances for survival and replication" (Denes, 2011:415). This amounts to a combination of animalistic and mechanistic dehumanisation, as it is claimed that the sexual behaviour of all women results only from biological drives (hence animalistic), and that these animalistic drives are genetic in origin and solely focused on reproduction (hence mechanistic).

The three sub-communities of the "manosphere" investigated in the previous literature are united by an understanding of biological essentialism which supports heteronormativity, the dehumanisation of women, and anti-feminism. However, each sub-community responds to this worldview differently, and thus their conceptualisations of men and women may differ.

2.2 Gendered social actors in general corpora of English

Past linguistic research has used a corpus-based approach to analyse representations of gendered social actors. For instance, Pearce (2008) used SketchEngine's Word Sketch tool (Kilgarriff et al., 2014) to analyse the pre-modifying and verbal collocates (as determined by LogDice score) of *man* and *woman* in the 100-million-word British National Corpus. Pearce (2008) found that *men* were represented in more powerful positions than *women*, as physically strong, and as responsible for violence and crime, whereas *women* were more often identified as emotional, as romantic and sexual partners, as victims of physical abuse and sexual violence, and as physically attractive. Furthermore, both Pearce (2008) and Sigley and Holmes (2002) note that the singular *man* occurred more often than the plural, whereas the opposite was true for *woman*, suggesting that men are individualised more often than women.

This is further supported by Caldas-Coulthard and Moon (2010), who analysed the top 50 adjectival collocates of *man*, *woman*, *girl* and *boy* in a 157-million-word newspaper subsection of the Bank of English corpus. Collocates had to occur more than twice, and within a window of three words to the left of the headword. Collocation strength was assessed using two statistical criteria, namely t-scores, which returns high scores for combinations including high-frequency function words, and mutual information, which returns high scores for low-frequency content words (Gablasova, Brezina and McEnery, 2017). Using the functionalisation, identification, and appraisal aspects of van Leeuwen's (1996) social actor network, they found that across both broadsheets and tabloids, *men* were individualised, and evaluated (positively overall) in terms of function, behaviour, and social status. On the other hand, in tabloids, *women* were sexualised, judged in terms of their social esteem, and stereotyped as either overly emotional or as motherly. Furthermore, *girls* referred to both children/adolescents and young adults, and *girls* were sexualised to a greater extent than *women* and *boys*, the latter of whom were mostly evaluated for their behaviour. As Pearce (2008) and Caldas-Coulthard and Moon (2010) utilised corpora of the order of 100 million words, these findings reflect public trends of gendered social actor representations. Caldas-Coulthard and Moon's (2010) work also demonstrates that social actor analysis is a fruitful approach to investigating corpus findings qualitatively.

Sigley and Holmes (2002: 145) found the same trend in their overall word-form frequency analysis of *woman*, *girl*, *man* and *boy* in five different corpora of one million words each (the Wellington Corpus of Written New Zealand English, LOB and FLOB (British English), and Brown and Frown (American English)). They noted that "'girl' is three times more likely than 'boy' to refer to an adult', which reflected an infantilisation of adult women. By analysing the collocates within a five word window either word of the headword using WordSmith (Scott, 2019), they also found that *girl* was used to signal subordinate status, relationships to men, domestic skills, and positively evaluated youthful appearance.

These corpus studies demonstrate that it is fruitful to analyse *women* and *girls* as separate social actors, to utilise van Leeuwen's (2008) social actor analysis framework, and to consider both singular and plural word-forms. Furthermore, Sigley and Holmes (2002) demonstrate that an investigation of word frequencies supported by analysis of collocation patterns constitutes an appropriate approach for investigating smaller corpora.

2.3. Research questions

As the above previous analyses of "manosphere" communities have been inductive, and often lack a systematic linguistic analysis framework, the present study utilised a corpus-assisted

discourse approach (Baker et al., 2008) to investigate the reproduction of gendered stereotypes in the *TRP* community. This allowed for the quantitative and statistical analysis of a large dataset, which would not be feasible to read closely in its entirety, alongside a critical discourse analysis approach which reveals attitudinal information. The overarching research question is as follows:

1. How does the language of the *TRP* subreddit constitute online sexism?

Koller (2012) notes that combining social actor analysis with appraisal theory, a framework based on systemic functional linguistics, enables the comprehensive analysis of collective identities. Therefore, these methods were used, alongside collocation analysis, to answer the (further) questions below:

2. Are there differences in how male and female social actors are represented and constructed?
3. How are activation, passivation and agency used to reflect power relations between the social actor groups?
4. How are the viewpoints of social actors supported and refuted?
5. How are social actors evaluated via attitudinal positioning?

3. Methodology

3.1 Data collection

Approximately 70,000 words were collected from the most recent posts from the *TRP* subreddit (as of October 2018), along with their attached comments from each sub-community. Duplicates and lines of quoted text were identified and removed, resulting in a corpus of 214,269 words in total. The posts were then labelled for the originating thread, individual post number, username number, whether the post was an original post or a comment, the number of times the post had been upvoted, and whether the poster was a moderator or community-endorsed contributor. For example, Example (1) below comes from the eighth post of the MGTOW sub-corpus, is post number 1751 of 2697, was posted by user #723, was a comment, and received two upvotes.

(1) **Women are just not worth** my time and effort.

[MGTOW8/1751/723/C/2]

	First and last date of post	Words (original posts)	Words (comments)	Original posts	Comments	Posters
Men's Rights	06/12/2017 - 17/10/2018	9417	61652	15	1042	463
MGTOW	30/08/2017 - 18/10/2018	6658	63394	10	797	362
Red Pill Theory	10/08/2018 - 22/10/2018	10217	62931	17	858	529
Total:	N/A	26292	187977	42	2697	1354

Table 1: *TRP* corpus breakdown

Of the 1354 total posters, 951 contributed only once. Supporting Ging's (2017) findings, little overlap was found in the sub-communities that users posted in, as only 12 posters posted in all

three sub-communities, 42 posted in both Men’s Rights and MGTOW, 15 posted in both MGTOW and Red Pill Theory (hereafter referred to as RPT), and 16 posted in both Men’s Rights and RPT.

Using the log-likelihood measure of "keyness" within AntConc (Anthony, 2019) confirmed the gendered social actor terms *women*, *men*, *girls* and *girl* as highly statistically significant keywords for the TRP corpus as a whole, with the results shown in Table 2. Although the saliency of *women* and *girls* supports both Pearce’s (2008) and Sigley and Holmes’ (2002) findings that female social actors were more often collectivised than male actors in general corpora, Table 2 highlights that *men* were also collectivised in this manner, and the singular *girl* was also key. Thus, both singular and plural forms of the chosen keywords were analysed.

A 1.65-million-word sample of the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA) was used as a reference corpus for two reasons: because *Reddit’s* users are typically from the US (Alexa, 2019), and to capture features that are typical of online language which could carry a specific in-group meaning, which could otherwise be missed if a web-based corpus was used for comparison. However, due to the stylistic mismatch, the comparison contained artifacts denoting informality such as contractions and swearing, as shown in Table 2. Also, “X” appeared instead of apostrophes in the AntConc (Anthony, 2019) interface, and does not refer to kisses nor sex-chromosomes. Furthermore, although differences in relative frequency of most content words are systematically exaggerated when the reference corpus is much larger than the target corpus, this should not affect the relative significance of the results in Table 2 too greatly.

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keyword
1	1341	5115.776	x
2	1520	3320.060	women
3	849	3102.744	don
4	4759	3087.643	you
5	934	2127.807	men
6	443	1756.142	shit
7	1205	1142.226	your
8	4579	936.977	i
9	362	933.909	girls
10	368	923.350	sex
11	239	920.134	fuck
12	210	905.386	doesn
13	207	846.331	fucking
14	2050	798.129	t
15	190	696.499	etc
16	160	689.818	trp
17	327	652.784	girl
18	148	638.082	mgtow
19	1255	630.119	if
20	162	604.152	pill

Table 2: Top 20 keywords in the TRP corpus

Despite both Caldas-Coulthard and Moon (2010), and Sigley and Holmes (2002) identifying *boy* as an equivalent word-form to *girl* for analysis, the lemma *boy* only occurred 57 times in the

corpus, whereas *guys* was the 31st most significant keyword (frequency 253, keyness 470.153). From this, the lemmas *woman*, *girl*, *man* and *guy* were chosen for analysis.

Additionally, a frequency per million words comparison of these terms between the *TRP* corpus and COCA highlighted that *TRP* discussed gendered social actors at a much higher frequency than COCA, and collectivised actors were discussed more in *TRP* than in COCA, which indicated a tendency towards reductive generalisation.

	TRP	COCA
women	5919.96	483.84
woman	1344.52	385.30
girls	1356.74	78.55
girl	1271.18	124.56
men	3597.61	275.15
man	1690.83	607
guys	1030.80	109.22
guy	880.05	149.66

Table 3: Frequency of analysis terms per million words in the *TRP* corpus and COCA

Separate counts were obtained for the singular and plural forms of all four social actor terms in each sub-corpus, giving 24 counts. Separate random 10% samples of concordance lines were then drawn for each of these 24 subsets, using SketchEngine's shuffle function; the final sample is therefore representative of the full distribution by type and sub-corpus. The resulting distribution of concordance lines analysed is given in Table 4. Context for each concordance line was extended to the entire sentence in every case, with reference to more extensive context where necessary, for coding purposes. All but one instance of the 66 occurrences of *girl(s)* in this dataset referred to an adult, a tendency much more pronounced than that found by Sigley and Holmes (2002) in general corpora.

	Men's Rights	MGTOW	Red Pill Theory	Total
women	48	56	41	145
woman	10	15	10	35
girls	8	12	13	33
girl	5	9	19	33
men	44	30	16	90
man	15	14	15	44
guys	5	12	8	25
guy	5	7	10	22
Total	140	155	132	427

Table 4: Tokens of social actor terms retained for analysis, by sub-corpus

These 427 concordance lines came from 219 speakers (out of a total of 1134), 79 of whom came from Men's Rights, 73 from MGTO, and 67 from RPT, and who on average posted twice each. However, the same username number was assigned to users who had deleted their Reddit accounts, so their usernames appeared as "[deleted]" (12 in total). Therefore, the true number of posters within the dataset may be higher. These calculations confirm that the below findings were reflective of the communities as a whole, rather than a small number of prolific posters.

3.2 Data analysis

Three levels of qualitative linguistic analysis using the overarching Systemic Functional Linguistics approach (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2013) were then applied. This approach considers three metafunctions of language: ideational/experiential (describing one's experiences in the world), interpersonal (negotiating relationships with others), and textual (organising text in terms of theme/rheme and cohesion to render expression of the first two metafunctions possible).

To consider the ideational metafunction, four factors were considered. Firstly, the transitivity system was applied (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2013:179-259), by observing the processes that were ascribed to participants (material, mental, relational, behavioural, verbal, and existential), the roles they occupy (actor/goal, senser/phenomenon, carrier/token, behavior, sayer, and existent), and the circumstances of their actions. Secondly, I considered whether the social actor was represented as semantically agentive (as undertaking the relatively agentive material and verbal processes, as opposed to mental/relational/behavioural/existential processes which do not have a direct effect on the world; see Barty-Taylor, 2020:83). Lastly, the activation/passivation and individualisation/assimilation aspects of van Leeuwen's (2008) social actor network were applied, so that each instance of the gendered social actor terms was coded for whether the social actor occurred as grammatically active or passive, and whether they were represented as individuals or as part of a group. For instance, in Example (1) above, *women* are grammatically active but have relatively little semantic agency as the process is relational, and *women* are discussed as a broad social group, thus constituting assimilation.

Turning to the interpersonal metafunction, each gendered social actor term was coded using the appraisal theory framework (Martin and White, 2005). This consists of three sub-systems, the first of which is attitude. This comprises ascribed and authorial affect (attribution of emotion to others or self respectively; specifically (dis)inclination, (un)happiness, (in)security, and (dis)satisfaction), judgement (appraising human actors for their behaviour; with normality, capacity and tenacity denoting social esteem; and veracity (honesty) and propriety (morality) denoting social sanction), and appreciation (appraising objects and concepts for impact, quality, valuation, and composition). For instance, Example (1) constitutes a negative significance (valuation) appreciation. It should be noted that positive judgements indicate that a social actor is deemed capable/tenacious/normal, but that these judgements are not necessarily evaluated positively. Although Martin and White (2005) explicitly note that judgement is reserved for humans and appreciation is for objects, they acknowledge that appreciation can be used to aesthetically evaluate humans. That being said, it could be argued that appreciation at the expense of judgement could amount to evidence of objectification.

The second sub-system is engagement, which concerns how many viewpoints are represented, and which viewpoints are (dis)endorsed. Lines were coded as dialogically expansive when they discussed a range of opinions, quoted external sources, and hedged their assertions, whereas lines were coded as dialogically contractive when a bare assertion was stated, and only one viewpoint was given. Thus, Example (1) above is contractive, as it begins with the bare assertion "women are". Lastly, the graduation sub-system considers how concepts are intensified, mitigated, focused upon, or backgrounded, such as in Example (1), where "just" acts as an intensifier.

The following section will firstly consider each social actor term, and then focus on differences which emerged between the three sub-communities. Where possible, these findings were also

corroborated by pre-modifying and verbal collocates as determined by Word Sketches (minimum frequency 5), mirroring Pearce’s (2008) methodology. For the sake of brevity, the results section below includes both full concordance line examples, and quotations from concordance lines with the corresponding post label.

4. Results

Three initial generalisations can be made about the tokens analysed: firstly, all four social actor terms were more often used with reference to groups than to individuals (Table 5, also found in Table 3), and secondly, the statements made about the social actors were most often dialogically contractive (Table 6). An overall tendency for use in universal statements is also supported by the Word Sketches for these terms: all commonly appear with generalising quantifiers such as *many*, which co-occurred with *women/woman* 27 times, *girl(s)* 7 times, and *men/man* 15 times, and *most*, which co-occurred with *women/woman* 17 times, *men/man* 23 times, and *guy(s)* 12 times. Thirdly, the social actor and appraisal analyses revealed that *women/woman* and *men/man* (and, to a lesser extent, *girl(s)*) referred to gender roles, whereas *girl(s)* and *guy(s)* were used to discuss individual anecdotes about specific scenarios, most often dating and relationships.

The singular *man* was more often individualised than *woman*, and less dialogic expansion occurred for *women/woman* and *girl(s)* than *men/man* and *guy(s)*. In qualitative terms, the *men/man* and *guy(s)* datasets included quotations from external sources with varying opinions about how *men/man* and *guy(s)* act. Contrastingly, the dialogically expansive comments in the *women/woman* dataset brought up differing points of view to refute or sarcastically posit, and the *girl(s)* dataset quoted the hypothetical speech of female social actors. This indicates that the masculine gender role was less homogenously represented than the feminine one.

	<i>Women</i>	<i>Woman</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Girl</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Man</i>	<i>Guys</i>	<i>Guy</i>
Individualisation	6 (4.1%)	18 (51.4%)	0 (0%)	23 (69.7%)	0 (0%)	29 (65.9%)	0 (0%)	13 (59.1%)
Assimilation	139 (95.9%)	17 (48.6%)	33 (100%)	10 (30.3%)	90 (100%)	15 (34.1%)	25 (100%)	9 (40.9%)
Total	145 (100%)	35 (100%)	33 (100%)	33 (100%)	90 (100%)	44 (100%)	25 (100%)	22 (100%)

Table 5: Distribution of sampled tokens of social actor terms, classified by individualisation/assimilation

	<i>Women</i>	<i>Woman</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Girl</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Man</i>	<i>Guys</i>	<i>Guy</i>
Contraction	127 (87.6%)	32 (91.4%)	28 (84.8%)	30 (90.9%)	70 (77.8%)	40 (90.9%)	21 (84%)	18 (81.8%)
Expansion	18 (12.4%)	3 (8.6%)	5 (15.2%)	3 (9.1%)	20 (22.2%)	4 (9.1%)	4 (16%)	4 (18.2%)
Total	145 (100%)	35 (100%)	33 (100%)	33 (100%)	90 (100%)	44 (100%)	25 (100%)	22 (100%)

Table 6: Distribution of sampled tokens of social actor terms, classified by dialogic contraction/expansion

Table 7 shows that *men/man* were the most grammatically active social actor, and all other social actors were more often grammatically passive than active. The unclassifiable category includes examples such as ‘I’m sorry to hear that, man’ [RPT7/2120/808/C/1]. *Women/woman* and *girl(s)* were passivated using verbs which described dating and sexual relationships, such as “meet” (10 and 9 times respectively), “approach” (14 and 5 times respectively), and “fuck” (16 and 11 times respectively) (e.g. ‘Chasing/fucking women is like a drug’ [MGTOW2/1168/506/C/81]). By contrast, *men/man* and *guy(s)* were not passivated in this

manner, and shared only “want” (20 and 5 times respectively), and “be” (82 and 44 times respectively).

	<i>Women/woman</i>	<i>Girl(s)</i>	<i>Men/man</i>	<i>Guy(s)</i>
Grammatically active	81 (45%)	27 (40.9%)	62 (46.3%)	21 (44.7%)
Grammatically passive	91 (50.6%)	39 (59.1%)	62 (46.3%)	24 (51.1%)
Unclassifiable	8 (4.4%)	0 (0%)	10 (7.5%)	2 (4.3%)
Total	180 (100%)	66 (100%)	134 (100%)	47 (100%)

Table 7: Distribution of sampled tokens of social actor terms, classified by whether the social actor was represented as grammatically active or grammatically passive

The tokens coded as grammatically active in Table 7 are classified in more detail, according to the semantic category of the processes they appeared in, in Table 8. As social actors could participate in multiple processes in one concordance line, and each process was labelled, totals add to over 100%.

	<i>Women/woman</i>	<i>Girl(s)</i>	<i>Men/man</i>	<i>Guy(s)</i>
Material	30 (37%)	18 (66.7%)	34 (54.8%)	19 (90.5%)
Mental	26 (32.1%)	3 (11.1%)	16 (25.8%)	9 (42.9%)
Verbal	4 (4.9%)	8 (29.6%)	1 (1.6%)	1 (4.8%)
Relational	46 (56.8%)	8 (29.6%)	32 (51.6%)	7 (33.3%)
Existential	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Behavioural	0 (0%)	1 (3.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Totals	106 (130.8%)	38 (129.6%)	83 (133.8%)	36 (171.5%)

Table 8: Distribution of sampled grammatically active social actor tokens, classified by the semantic category of processes undertaken

Although *women/woman* and *men/man* were more often grammatically active than *girl(s)* and *guy(s)*, this was accounted for by a greater rate of relational processes. Furthermore, turning to semantic agency (including when the social actor was grammatically passive), *women/woman* were agentive in 48 (22.2% out of a total 216) processes, *girl(s)* in 30 (31.9% out of a total 94) processes, *men/man* in 56 (32.4% out of a total 173) processes, and *guy(s)* in 26 (37.1% out of a total 70). This shows that female social actors were represented as less agentive than male ones.

In terms of attitudinal positioning (Martin and White, 2005), as multiple instances of affect, judgement, and appreciation could occur in one line, each instance was labelled individually. As a result, due to the differences in dataset size between the four social actors, the numbers in Table 9 cannot be directly compared, although two general observations were made.

	<i>Women/woman</i>	<i>Girl(s)</i>	<i>Men/man</i>	<i>Guy(s)</i>
Affect	37	17	34	12
Judgement	45	21	59	19
Appreciation	24	18	10	13

Table 9: Number of attitudinal positioning occurrences in each social actor dataset

Despite having fewer concordance lines in the dataset than *women/woman*, *men/man* were judged more often than *women/woman*. Also, *men/man* were appreciated the least of any social actor group, despite having the second largest number of concordance lines in the dataset. As appreciation, in the appraisal theory sense, is typically reserved for objects and

abstract concepts, this indicates that male social actors were objectified less often than female social actors.

This was supported by the Word Sketches, which revealed that *women/woman*, *girl(s)*, and *guy(s)* to a lesser extent, were pre-modified by adjectives noting physical (un)attractiveness such as “attractive” (8 times for *women/woman*, 7 times for *girl(s)*), and “hot” (6, 17, and 5 times respectively). In comparison, *men/man* was pre-modified by adjectives which described a hierarchy of *men*, from “real” (13 times), “high value” (6 times), and “strong” (9 times), to “weak” (5 times).

Having considered the top-line distinctions between each social actor, a more detailed analysis of each social actor term now follows.

4.1 Women/woman

4.1.1 Negative construction as immoral, deceptive, incapable, and insignificant

Across all three sub-corpora, *women/woman* were constructed negatively overall (31 judgement instances), including negative propriety (12 instances), negative veracity (7 instances), and negative capacity (11 instances). These negative properties were presented as innate (as shown by use of absolute quantifiers such as “all” or “never”): *women/woman* were described as selfish or exploitative, as in (2); and deceptive, as in (3); and incapable of controlling such behaviour. Several examples, e.g. (4), explicitly ascribe the behaviour of *women/woman* to an assumed biological urge of “hypergamy” (seeking a partner with the highest social status).

(2) And if a man is a beta, a woman really **can't see him as anything other than a utility for her benefit**

[RPT1/1890/33/C/4]

(3) All women **lie** about sexual assault unless due process reveals otherwise.

[MR10/735/121/C/34]

(4) Unconditional love is something a woman **will never understand....because of hypergamy.**

[MGTOW5/1618/584/C/7]

It should be noted that the term “hypergamy” originated in the 19th century specifically to describe a cross-caste marriage pattern in India, where a woman could only be “married up” to a man from a higher-caste if her family could offer an increased dowry. By using the original technical term, which signals objectivity and academic rigour through neo-classical compounding, to instead refer to an assumed universal female trait and to imply (greater) female agency, the original meaning is inverted, and co-opted as a pseudo-scientific term.

Only the MGTOW sub-corpus included some minority of positive propriety judgements (5 instances), and these reference hypothetical *women*, who are described as modestly dressed, as in (5), as well as “feminine, loyal, and low-drama” [MGTOW2/1265/545/C/3].

(5) I could potentially find a **decent** woman but not the ones who wear jeggings and bikinis as work out gear.

[MGTOW5/1406/593/C/26]

Across the sub-corpora, interacting with *women/woman* was evaluated as insignificant (7 instances), when compared with other aspects of the lives of male social actors, as in (6).

(6) Building out your purpose and yourself is **far more rewarding and important than chasing women**.

[RPT5/2058/861/C/2]

Negative significance appreciations were most prevalent in the MGTOW sub-corpus, highlighting the separatist nature of this community of the “manosphere”.

4.1.2 *Dehumanisation and objectification*

As seen in (7), assumed biological drives lead to both animalistic and mechanistic parallels, in that *women* are both predetermined to view partners as an animalistic “mate”, and lack the ability to act otherwise due to their “programming”.

(7) You need to know that women don't work like that. Their **evolutionary programming** is to constantly test the fitness of her **mate**.

[RPT7/2116/889/C/6]

Evidence for objectification was also found in the prevalence of aesthetics appreciation, which accounted for 11 appreciation instances. Negative aesthetics was referenced across all three sub-corpora (4 instances), as *women/woman* were described as physically unattractive e.g. “fat” and “unfuckable” [RPT17/2720/822/C/5]. Although *women/woman* were more often appreciated for positive aesthetics in Men’s Rights and MGTOW, this framed *women/woman* as sex objects whose intellect does not matter in comparison to their “hot” and “feminine” appearance [MGTOW2/1265/545/C/3].

4.1.3 *Negative construction as irrational and unhappy*

Women/woman were also constructed as emotional through representations of mental processes and affect. Approximately a quarter of the processes where *women/woman* were grammatically active were mental ones. This was supported by the *woman* Word Sketch, which showed that many verbs used where *women/woman* were grammatically active were affective (“love” occurred 10 times, “hate” 5 times), cognitive (“know” 11 times, “think” 7 times, “feel” 10 times) and desiderative (“want” 34 times). In comparison, no mental processes were found in the corresponding collocates of *girl(s)*, “want” and “need” occurred 9 and 13 times respectively in the *men/man* dataset, and “think” occurred 5 times in the *guy(s)* dataset.

These verbal collocates overlap with instances of affect, which were equally positive and negative, with inclination accounting for 15 positive affect instances. Emotional needs of *women/woman* were ascribed to “hypergamy”, and to an assumed underlying drive to seek dangerous partners such as criminals and psychopaths, an attraction termed “hybristophilia”, as in (8). This was held to be a mate-selection mechanism similar to “hypergamy”, and was given a similarly pseudoscientific label. This assumption was further used to justify abusive behaviours towards *women/woman*, on the basis that “women love to be lead [sic] into shit” [RPT10/2221/846/C/4], thus excusing the behaviour of perpetrators.

(8) **Women are hybristophiliacs**, instincts dont care about morals.

[RPT15/2551/887/C/15]

Women/woman were also constructed as unhappy and insecure across the corpus (7 and 4 instances respectively), with *women* described as “miserable” five times in Men’s Rights and MGTOW. In three cases, no reason was given to support this representation, although in the

MGTOW sub-corpus, one user claimed that “feminism has made women miserable” [MGTOW5/1420/584/C/1], and another claimed that the unhappiness stemmed from having “failed to find a mate in their peak” [MGTOW3/1334/573/C/11]. In RPT, *women’s/woman’s* unhappiness was caused by *men* behaving in a way they do not like, which was also expressed in ascribed dissatisfaction (5 instances).

Lastly, insecurity was ascribed to left-wing *women/woman* who are said to use feminism as a coping mechanism for physical unattractiveness [RPT17/2720/822/C/5], as well as to how *women/woman* should be made to feel by the male in-group, as in (9).

(9) The only method to keep women somehow in control is **their fear of social stigma**.
[MGTOW6/1664/5/C/3]

This suggests that some portion of the “manosphere” seeks to control *women*.

4.2 Girl(s)

4.2.1 Negative construction as immoral, deceptive, unhappy, and insignificant

Much like the *women/woman* dataset, across all three sub-corpora, *girl(s)* were judged negatively (14 instances), including negative propriety (6 instances) and negative veracity (4 instances). *Girl(s)* were depicted as exploiting male social actors for their “resources” [RPT16/2638/31/C/1], acting “rude” when rejecting the in-group [RPT7/2130/876/C/2], and “compelling”, “allowing”, and “encouraging” *men* to commit rape, by “dressing like a slut” [MGTOW7/1674/683/C/1]. The latter example constitutes the same victim-blaming and perpetrator-excusing logic mentioned with reference to “hybristophilia” in Section 4.1.3. There was one positive propriety judgement in the *girl(s)* dataset, which occurred when the *girl* was submissive in comparison to a *man*, as in (10).

(10) If the man wins the quibbling dominance-sorting banter, then she will be the **nice girl** you always wanted. (both will be the happiest)
[RPT7/2107/834/C/4]

Turning to negative veracity, *girl(s)* were constructed as lying about their virginity in Men’s Rights [MR13/878/295/C/8], lying to other *girl(s)* and to an in-group member about being pregnant in MGTOW [MGTOW8/1698/432/C/16], and lying about how interested a *girl* is in dating an in-group member in RPT [RPT6/2081/874/O/11].

Across the corpus, *girl(s)* were ascribed unhappiness (7 instances). In Men’s Rights, external factors such as “society’s idea of what they should be” [MR14/976/440/C/24] were to blame for *girl(s)*’ unhappiness. However, *girl(s)* were “jealous of” other female social actors in MGTOW [MGTOW5/1524/627/C/4] and hostile towards them in RPT, as in (11).

(11) Like, i was out with a female colleague once, and i met the girl at the bar and **she just gave my colleague the "death stare"**.
[RPT16/2669/1036/C/1]

Lastly, as in the *women/woman* dataset, *girl(s)* were deemed insignificant (5 instances) in both MGTOW and RPT, to remind the in-group that *girl(s)* “aren’t everything” [RPT13/2465/1013/C/1].

4.2.2 Objectification

Half of the *girl(s)* appreciation instances were accounted for by aesthetics, and positive aesthetics appreciations were more common than negative ones for *girl(s)* (4 versus 2 respectively). This was supported by the pre-modifying collocates of *girl(s)* in the Word Sketch, which referenced physical (un)attractiveness e.g. “hot”, “attractive”, and “ugly”, and occurred more often in the *girl(s)* dataset than in the *women/woman* dataset. Although *girl(s)* were individualised more often than *women/woman*, individualised *girl(s)* were discussed exclusively in relational contexts. This suggests that *girl(s)* were constructed as sexual objects more often than *women/woman*.

Furthermore, the RPT sub-corpus included three examples of positive convenience, to show that *girl(s)* were in abundance, as in (12).

(12) Because there's **millions of other girls to mess up on** before you finally talk to girls right.

[RPT16/2659/1090/C/1]

4.2.3 Agentive in dating contexts

Where *girl(s)* were ascribed positive capacity (5 instances), these instances described ideal qualities in a dating partner. For instance, *girl(s)* were represented as being able to “talk about evolutionary biology, technology, exercise science etc.” [MGTOW2/1264/544/C/8], and as being “fun” and “teasing” in-group members [RPT10/2206/888/C/5].

Furthermore, the RPT sub-corpus accounted for the greater percentage of dialogically expansive concordance lines and verbal processes in the *girl(s)* dataset than in the *women/woman* dataset, as “shit tests” (female social actors asking male social actors questions in dating contexts to determine the male social actor’s social value) were discussed at length. As illustrated in Example (13) below, these posts provided the hypothetical voice of a female social actor asking questions, and the in-group posters provided hypothetical answers.

(13) Bonus: **How many girls you're seeing?** "Take a ticket and get in line." "There's always room for one more." "One at the time"

[RPT10/2214/877/C/12]

4.3 Men/man

4.3.1 Construction as victims of women and society

Men/man were constructed as wrongly victimised in the Men’s Rights sub-corpus, at the hands of both female social actors and external institutions, with the two occasionally conflated. This was shown through positive propriety judgements (5 instances in Men’s Rights, 9 across the three sub-corpora) to show that *men/man* were being treated unfairly, as in (14).

(14) **It's the view of the media (and most women) that needlessly locking up men** is just a necessary by-product of protecting women from being held responsible for their own actions.

[MR3/256/125/C/27/E]

Additionally, inclination instances in the *men/man* dataset (6 out of 8 occurred in MGTOW) argued that if *men/man* desire physically and emotionally intimate relationships with female social actors, they could be manipulated as a result, as in (15).

(15) **Men being infatuated with them and paying stupid amounts of money** to access their attention.

Across all three sub-corpora, when *men* were constructed as capable (16 instances), *men's/man's* capabilities were framed in opposition to *women/woman*. For instance, in (16), the in-group deemed it “strong” to control a *woman's* emotions.

(16) a **strong man** can snap a woman out of her hissy fits

[RPT1/1871/33/O/336]

Contrastingly, when *men/man* were constructed as incapable (13 instances), these instances reference being unable to retaliate, for example, *men* being “enslaved to women ad infinitum” by “Western law” [MR7/612/298/C/3].

This adversarial relationship construction coincided with affect, where 23 instances were negative, and as with *women/woman* and *girl(s)*, unhappiness occurred across all three sub-corpora (11 instances). For example, posters in Men's Rights discussed *men* being “5-10x more likely to commit suicide” [MR2/181/110/O/122], and posters in MGTOW discussed in-group *men* being “angry” at “disloyal and immoral” female social actors [MGTOW2/1237/531/C/10].

This unhappiness was accompanied by insecurity (6 instances) in both Men's Rights and MGTOW. *Men/man* were described as “afraid of a #metoo backlash” [MR2/181/110/O/122] and “scared” of out-group *men* who defend female social actors, as in (17). However, the poster expresses disapproval of this insecurity through the use of “please no”.

(17) And please no "I'm not scared of chicks **I'm scared of the men with guns they can summon!**"

[MGTOW8/1676/541/O/541]

Contrastingly, no instances of insecurity occurred in RPT. Although unhappiness also occurred in RPT, these instances referenced feminists who were directly quoted as viewing *men* as “wallowing” [RPT1/1871/33/O/336], which was introduced to be mocked. Thus, *men/man* were constructed as unhappy by the in-group, who were taken seriously, and a constructed view by RPT posters of an out-group of feminists.

4.3.2 Construction of how men are believed to be appraised by out-groups

Posters argued that they were being objectified and deemed insignificant by a constructed view of an out-group of feminists, and female social actors in general. As well as being supposedly viewed as “wallowing” in RPT as discussed above, another direct quotation on behalf of a feminist asserted that “all men are trash” [MR1/153/90/C/2], although this negative significance appreciation was read resistantly.

More generally, one poster in RPT claimed that *men/man* are expected to “be in shape, have money, know game, be social, funny” [RPT17/2706/1114/C/7] by female social actors, thus combining positive capacity judgements and positive aesthetics appreciations. Furthermore, another poster in RPT claimed that female social actors viewed *men* who have female friends as less masculine e.g. “gay or a dickless asexual” [RPT16/2609/797/C/2].

Hypothetical quotations were also used to provide the constructed opinion of out-group *men/man*, who consider “complain[ing]” to be “weak”, such as in (18). However, by using the metaphor “take the bait”, the poster asserts that “complain[ing]” is more assertive, and thus stronger than not complaining.

(18) These men take the bait and think: "dammit, **I must be strong, if I complain I'll be seen as a weak man**".

[MR1/178/108/C/1]

4.3.3 Construction as immoral (with perceived reason)

8 out of the total 13 negative propriety judgements across the corpus excused instances where *men/man* act immorally, by claiming that "women choose men who make them feel insecure" [MGTOW6/1625/657/O/79], or that *women* act in an equally immoral way, as in (19).

(19) **Men may manipulate women** to get sex out of them, but women manipulate us to get our emotional energy

[RPT1/1899/785/C/1]

Other negative propriety judgements were hypothetical arguments, which the in-group made on behalf of other social actors. For example, in Example (20), out-group *men* were referred to as "white knights" for defending a *woman*, and the in-group *man* who shared a personal relationship anecdote was described as "abusive". The use of quotation marks in the comment indicated that this opinion was read resistantly.

(20) Next day she takes off as there are plenty of **white knights** out there to save a woman from an **"abusive" man**

[MGTOW6/1654/671/C/1]

These negative propriety judgements absolved in-group *men* of responsibility when they were rejected by female social actors, when they were labelled as "abusive" by out-group male social actors known as "white knights", and when *men* manipulated *women* to further a physical relationship. This mirrors previous examples of victim-blaming and perpetrator-excusing logic found in the *women/woman* and *girl(s)* datasets. Although just over half (30) of *men/man* judgement instances were negative, a relatively lower rate than for *women/woman* and *girl(s)*, all but 4 of these were framed as out-group perceptions of the in-group, or resulting from the actions of female social actors and public institutions.

4.3.4 Differing approaches to female social actors

The relatively greater rate of dialogically expansive concordances in the *men/man* dataset, compared to the female social actors, was partly due to in-group *men/man* differing in their approaches towards gender relations, depending on which community they posted in. For example, MGTOW posters disagreed over whether having a relationship with *women* beyond intercourse was pointless [MGTOW5/1608/653/C/1], while RPT posters disagreed over whether *men/man* need to "lift" (i.e. body-build) to attract *girl(s)* [RPT16/2654/797/C/0]. This range of in-group opinions, plus instances of out-group disagreement with in-group assertions (see Example (21)) about gender roles indicated that posters were able to see themselves as individuals.

(21) you don't wanna take responsibility for your sexist thought. **Not all men are like you!!**

[MGTOW5/1419/5/C/0]

4.4 Guy(s)

4.4.1 Specific scenario use

Guy(s) was used to reference male social actors in specific scenarios, as opposed to discussing the masculine gender role. For example, *guy(s)* was used by posters to discuss their personal experiences, as in (22).

(22) I was a D1 athlete and looked the part of an alpha but internally **I was the nice, gentle guy** I was raised to be

[MGTOW1/1085/5/C/10]

Similarly to the dialogically expansive lines from the *men/man* dataset, differences found in the use of *guy(s)* reflected the approach of the three sub-communities. For example, positive capacity judgements occurred across all three sub-corpora (5 instances), and discussed *guy(s)* having “lots of money” [MGTOW5/1603/584/C/1], being “confident” with *women* [RPT16/2674/1098/C/1], and able to “sue for false termination” [MR10/741/157/C/3]. However, these were the only similarities in judgement between the three sub-corpora, and no similarities in affect were found.

4.4.2 “Nice guys”

All three sub-corpora distinguished between nice *guys* and “*nice guys*”. In positive propriety judgements (4 instances) in MGTOW and RPT, *guy(s)* were constructed as “nice” and “gentle” as in (22) above, and “nice” to their own detriment [RPT3/1999/822/C/2]. Contrastingly, “*nice guys*” were described as treating female social actors well for the sole reason of expecting something in return, and then experiencing unhappiness and dissatisfaction when female social actors did not reciprocate their attention, as in (23). “*Nice guys*” were discussed using negative propriety and veracity judgements (3 instances) for lying to female social actors about their intentions, and then harassing them, whereas *guy(s)* were broadly not judged for negative propriety nor veracity.

(23) You'd be amazed what a '**nice guy** ' **does when he doesn't get what he feels he's entitled to** in the covert contract. Beta and bad game = harassment.

[RPT1/1876/622/C/11/E]

4.4.3 Relational contexts

Much like *girl(s)*, *guy(s)* were constructed in relational contexts, particularly in RPT, which accounted for much of the dialogic expansion in the *guy(s)* data. Posters in RPT hypothetically and literally quoted *guy(s)* and potential dating partners in “shit tests”, and out-group male social actors were dis-endorsed in RPT for their approaches to romantic and sexual relationships. For example, in Example (24), out-group *guys* were represented as desiring romantic relationships without a sexual component, and this opinion was presented as a “claim”.

(24) "No way, **guys can want love without sex**, too", claims Mark.

[RPT12/2402/383/O/108/M]

In these relational contexts, *guy(s)* were appreciated positively overall (7 instances), and 10 instances referenced aesthetics. Men’s Rights and MGTOW solely referenced aesthetics, with “bigger muscle guys” more positively evaluated than “skinny guys” [MGTOW2/1221/527/C/10]. However, one poster in RPT also used negative effectiveness

appreciations to argue that a *guy* being “boring/lack of personality/beta” can negate the effectiveness of being a “super hot jacked guy” when flirting [RPT16/2669/1036/C/1].

5. Discussion and conclusion

To summarise, the corpus as a whole was characterised by assimilations and bare assertions about the behaviour of both female and male social actors, although the masculine gender role was represented less homogeneously than the feminine gender role. The terms *women/woman* and *men/man* were used to discuss essentialised gender roles, whereas *girl(s)* and *guy(s)* were used to discuss individuals in specific scenarios, particularly dating contexts.

Women/woman were judged negatively for features that were represented as innate to all *women*, namely selfishness, being manipulative, “hybristophilia”, and a *TRP* co-option of “hypergamy”. *Women/woman* were also dehumanised through animalistic and mechanistic means, and reduced to their physical appearance and their value in the eyes of male social actors.

Girl(s) were overwhelmingly represented in relational contexts, mirroring Sigley and Holmes’ (2002) findings. *Girl(s)* were constructed as exploiting *men/man*, and were blamed for manipulating *men/man* into assaulting them. Instances of agency in the *girl(s)* dataset were accounted for by *girls* acting in dating contexts, although some agentive instances such as “shit tests” were representations by in-group members rather than literal quotatives. Furthermore, *girl(s)* were appreciated for positive aesthetics and convenience.

Men/man were constructed as victimised at the hands of female social actors and external institutions, and as unhappy and insecure as a result, particularly in the Men’s Rights sub-corpus. Although female social actors were represented as less semantically agentive than male social actors, and *men/man* were the least appreciated social actor, the in-group argued that female social actors appreciated them for aesthetics and significance. Additionally, where *men/man* were judged as immoral, this was justified as being provoked by female social actors. Although Pearce (2008) and Caldas-Coulthard and Moon (2010) found that *men* were more often evaluated in terms of their behaviour than *women*, which was also true within the *TRP* corpus, they also found that *men* were more often constructed as more powerful than *women* in general corpora of English, which was not true for the *TRP* corpus.

Lastly, *guy(s)* was used as a generic term to refer to male social actors in specific scenarios, most often relational contexts. However, the term “*nice guys*” was used to describe out-group social actors who expect affection from female social actors for treating them well.

Since Pearce (2008) and Caldas-Coulthard and Moon (2010) noted that *women* and *girls* were described as emotional and as sexual objects in general corpora of English, this suggests that the conceptualisations of female social actors in the *TRP* corpus reflect popularly held opinions. However, these opinions were extended by posters in *TRP*. The negative propriety and veracity judgements which characterised the *women/woman* and *girl(s)* datasets demonstrate that overall, *TRP* is a hostile sexist community. Furthermore, across the datasets, victim-blaming and perpetrator-excusing logic, including the pseudo-scientific terms “hypergamy” and “hybristophilia”, was used to justify harmful actions towards female social actors, such as rape. Although a link between online words and offline action is not inevitable, it would be naïve to argue that some members of the “manosphere”, like those mentioned in Section 1, could not be encouraged to act in a hostile manner towards women, having read generalisations about female social actors characterised by pseudo-scientific language

presented as fact. Thus, the implications of enabling such language should be carefully considered by online platforms such as *Reddit*.

Turning to limitations of this research, the use of corpus linguistic methods has been limited due to the relatively small size of the corpus, and the data thinning required to qualitatively focus on the key gendered social actor terms limited the precision possible for more detailed numerical results. Additionally, the constraints imposed by concordance context prevented analysis of the in-group discussion as a polylogue. Future directions for this research include analysing the interactions between in-group users on the comment threads, which would enable an analysis of socialisation and interactive mechanisms for radicalisation. Future research could also consider the functions of references to different parts of the “manosphere”, as the community names *MGTOW* and *TRP* appeared as keywords in the *TRP* corpus.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Dr Veronika Koller at Lancaster University for her continued guidance and support, and the anonymous reviewer for their invaluable comments on an earlier iteration of the present study.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no funding to undertake this research.

References

- Alexa (2019) reddit.com Traffic Statistics. Available at <https://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/reddit.com?ver=classic> (accessed 30 July 2019).
- Anthony, L (2019) AntConc (Version 3.5.8). [Computer Software]. [Last accessed 05 December 2019]
- Baker, P, Gabrielatos, C, KhosraviNik, M, Krzyzanowski, M, McEnery T, and Wodak, R (2008) A useful methodological synergy? Combining critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics to examine discourses of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK Press. *Discourse & Society* 19(3): 273-306.
- Barty-Taylor, M. (2020). Gender, Leadership and Online News: How Scottish Young People Perceive Constructions of Women Political Leaders and Digitally-Mediated Politics. PhD thesis, Lancaster University.
- BBC (2019) YouTube terminates Addy A-Game and Street Attraction Channels. Available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-49957059> (accessed 06 December 2019).
- Caldas-Coulthard, C and Moon, R (2010) 'Curvy, Hunky, Kinky': Using Corpora as Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis. *Discourse & Society* 21(2): 99-133.
- Darics, E and Koller, V (2019) Social Actors "to Go": An Analytical Toolkit to Explore Agency in Business Discourse and Communication. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly* 82(2): 214-238.
- Dayter, D and Rüdiger, S (2016) Reporting from the field: the narrative reconstruction of experience in pick-up artist online communities. *Open Linguistics* 2(1): 337-351.
- Denes, A (2011) Biology as consent: Problematizing the scientific approach to seducing women's bodies. *Women's Studies International Forum* 34(5): 411-419.

- Dignam, P and Rohlinger, D (2019) Misogynist Men Online: How The Red Pill Elected Trump. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 44(3): 589-612.
- Fetterolf, J and Rudman, L (2017) Exposure to Sexual Economics Theory Promotes a Hostile View of Heterosexual Relationships. *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 41(1): 77-88.
- Gablasova, D, Brezina, V, and McEnery, T (2017) Collocations in Corpus-Based Language Learning Research: Identifying, Comparing, and Interpreting the Evidence. *Language Learning* 67(1): 155-179.
- Ging, D (2017) Alphas, Betas, and Incels: Theorizing the Masculinities of the manosphere. *Men and Masculinities*: 1-20.
- Glick, P and Fiske, S (1996) The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory: Differentiating Hostile and Benevolent Sexism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 70(3): 491-512.
- Gotell, L and Dutton, E (2016) Sexual Violence in the 'manosphere': Antifeminist Men's Rights Discourses on Rape. *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy* 5(2): 65-80.
- Halliday, MAK and Matthiessen, M (2013) *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. 3rd ed. London: Routledge.
- Haslam, N (2006) Dehumanization: an integrative review. *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 10(3): 252-264.
- Jane, E (2014) 'Back to the kitchen, cunt': speaking the unspeakable about online misogyny. *Continuum* 28(4): 558-570.
- Jane, E. 2018. Systemic misogyny exposed: Translating Rapeglish from the manosphere with a Random Rape Threat Generator. *International Journal of Culture Studies*. 21(6), 661-680.
- Kilgarriff, A, Baisa, V, Bušta, J, Jakubíček, M, Kovář, V, Michelfeit, J, Rychlý, P, and Suchomel, Y (2014) The Sketch Engine: ten years on. *Lexicography* 1(1): 7-36.
- Koller, V (2012) How to analyse collective identity in discourse: textual and contextual parameters. *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis Across Disciplines* 5(2): 19-38.
- Lin, J (2017) Antifeminism Online: MGTOW (Men Going Their Own Way). In: U Frömming, S Köhn, S Fox and M Terry (eds) *Digital Environments. Ethnographic Perspectives across Global Online and Offline Spaces*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 77-96.
- Lonsway, KA and Fitzgerald, LF (1995). Attitudinal antecedents of rape myth acceptance: A theoretical and empirical reexamination. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 68(1): 704-711.
- Martin, J and White, P (2005) *The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pearce, M (2008) Investigating the collocational behaviour of MAN and WOMAN in the BNC using SketchEngine. *Corpora* 3(1): 1-29.
- Scott, M (2019) WordSmith Tools version 7. Stroud: Lexical Analysis Software.
- Sigley, R and Holmes, J (2002) Looking at girls in Corpora of English. *Journal of English Linguistics* 30(2): 138-157.
- Van Leeuwen, T (1996) The representation of social actors. In: CR Caldas-Coulthard and M Coulthard (eds) *Text and Practices: readings in critical discourse analysis*. London: Routledge, pp. 32-70.
- Van Leeuwen, T (2008) *Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Analysis*. Oxford: OUP.
- Van Valkenburgh, S (2018) Digesting the Red Pill: Masculinity and Neoliberalism in the manosphere. *Men and Masculinities*: 1-20.

Autobiographical note

Alexandra Krendel is currently a PhD student in Linguistics at Lancaster University, and her PhD project investigates how gender and sexuality are represented by different communities within the "manosphere". This entails a combination of corpus-based methods to identify the

shared language across the main “manosphere” groups, and corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis to identify how this language is used in context. Her current research interests include online hostility, and how gender and hate speech intersect.

Transition II – From appraisal analysis to in-group speech act analysis

Both Chapter 5 and 6 established how gendered social actors are represented in the manosphere using two different datasets made of Reddit posts and comments, and a combination of corpus linguistic and discourse analysis methods. In both of these studies, the Reddit manosphere data were treated as “text”, defined by Androutsopoulos (2013) as a researcher-led approach where online language use is analysed in terms of its specific linguistic features. This is distinct from a “place” approach, which considers computer-mediated communication as a social process.

Furthermore, in both studies, manosphere users make a distinction between in-group and out-group male social actors, whose representation was less homogeneous than the representations of female social actors. Whereas out-group male social actors are referenced using derogatory terms (e.g. *cuck* in Chapter 5, “nice guys” in both studies), linguistic items which reference the relationships between members of the in-group are harder to identify. Although sub-groups of the manosphere are statistically key to various extents in both Chapter 5 and 6 (the key-key-word *incel* in Chapter 5, and keywords *trp*, *mgtow*, and *pill* in Chapter 6), these terms capture wider discussions on boundaries between the sub-groups and their opinions of each other, as opposed to the building and maintenance of personal relationships between individuals. However, it should be noted that in Chapter 5 (Section 5.3.3), there is some discussion of interactions between in-group members, including giving advice to one another.

This is a fruitful starting point for Chapter 7, in which I consider the Reddit manosphere as “place” (Androutsopoulos, 2013), and thus investigate the extent to which the Reddit manosphere constitutes a social community. With this approach, I aimed to establish whether the Reddit manosphere has the potential to attract members by providing social support and an enjoyable place to participate in, in a similar manner to, for example, the white supremacist site Stormfront (Meddaugh and Kay, 2008; Bowman-Grieve, 2009). Although studies of “place” typically utilise ethnographic methods such as interviews, to integrate first-hand user perspectives into the analysis, such an approach could constitute a safety risk to myself, as I am a woman, conduct my research from a feminist theoretical approach, and do not seek to present the manosphere as a positive phenomenon (see Massanari, 2018). Thus, I instead investigate the way users engage with each other on the platform from a distance, by analysing how users employ impression management strategies to influence how other users

view them, and how speech acts which threaten, enhance, and maintain the face of others are used.

As with Chapter 6, *TRP* was selected as the community for analysis for Chapter 7, as *TRP* situates itself as a manosphere space for multiple sub-groups. This was done with the goal of establishing findings which could potentially be relevant for other manosphere spaces. However, unlike Chapter 7, I did not collect posts which were tagged with flair that showed the posts were aligned to a certain manosphere sub-group (namely MRAs, MGTOWs, PUAs). This was because the results of Chapter 6 showed that making this distinction did not reveal much that was specific to a certain sub-group. Furthermore, as the *TRP* subreddit as a whole has rules for posting content and interacting with others, it is unlikely that user interactions would differ depending on the flair on a given post. With the computer-mediated communication as “place” approach in mind, I hereby introduce Chapter 7: ‘Self-help and masculinity: speech acts in an online men’s group’. This paper has been accepted for publication in the pragmatics journal *Pragmatics and Society*.

Chapter 7: Study 3 - Self-help and masculinity: speech acts in an online men's group. (*Pragmatics and Society*).

Abstract

This study investigates the interactional norms of a manosphere discussion forum known as *The Red Pill (TRP)*, and asks whether it can be conceptualised as a self-help group. 2104 posts and comments from regular users and high-status users in the community were analysed qualitatively to determine how the community is characterised by certain speech acts, and how these speech acts correspond to face-enhancement and face-threat as well as to certain impression management strategies.

Since personal disclosure, advice-giving, and face-enhancement are key characteristics of *TRP*, it could be argued that *TRP* shares some functional characteristics with self-help communities. However, much of the advice given is unsolicited, a disproportionately high rate of face-enhancement is directed towards high-status users, and speech acts such as elaborating, and some advice-giving and personal disclosure seem to be used for self-promotion purposes. Furthermore, the prevalence of unhedged face-threats sets *TRP* apart from traditional supportive communities.

Keywords: impression management, manosphere, masculinity, relational work, self-help, speech acts

1. Introduction

This study investigates the speech acts, relational work, and impression management utilised by a community known as *The Red Pill* (hereafter referred to as *TRP*), and seeks to determine to what extent *TRP* can be described as a supportive self-help community. *TRP* is a subset of a wider group known as the ‘manosphere’, which is a loose network of anti-feminist online websites and discussion forums. They are united by the belief that “feminist values dominate society, that this fact is suppressed by feminists and “political correctness,” and that men must fight back against an overreaching, misandrist culture to protect their very existence” (Marwick and Caplan, 2018:4). As well as its opposition to feminism, the manosphere is also defined by its sexist stance towards women, and its focus on issues relating to men and masculinity. The manosphere can be split into five groups: men’s rights activists (who foreground legal issues), men-going-their-own-way (who advocate that men separate themselves from women to varying degrees), pick-up artists (who use formulaic tactics to seduce women), involuntary celibates (who believe that women will not have sexual and romantic relationships with them, and resent women and people who do have these relationships), and *TRP* (who broadly identify with the manosphere but not with one

sub-group in particular). The purpose of *TRP*, according to their rules page, is to benefit men by discussing what it means to be a man in the modern era, and to construct a notion of masculinity which *TRP* perceives as an alternative to the mainstream.

Although Mountford (2018) claims that the content of *TRP* amounts to self-help advice, and Dishy (2018) notes that *TRP* regularly discuss self-improvement, there has not yet been a linguistic investigation into whether *TRP* can be categorised as a self-help or support group.

While O'Neill (2016), Dayter and Rüdiger (2016) and Rüdiger and Dayter (2020) have investigated the role that social interaction has in pick-up artist communities, most academic and journalistic articles which concern the manosphere have foregrounded the potentially harmful representation of female social actors. The past literature acknowledges that the manosphere broadly refers to women in derogatory and dehumanising ways (Dayter and Rüdiger, 2016; Heritage and Koller, 2020; Lawson and McGlashan, 2017; Krendel, 2020). For instance, Krendel (2020) analysed 42 *TRP* posts and their associated comment threads, and found that women and girls are represented as dehumanised, dishonest, and seeking to both manipulate men and be harmed by men. While this is an important approach to take, past research also emphasises that the social aspect of online communities leads to membership acquisition and retention and, in the case of extremist online communities, to radicalisation (see Bowman-Grieve, 2009). Presently, the intra-group dynamics of the manosphere are widely under-researched, and so the current study addresses this research gap by considering the following core research question:

- 1) To what extent can *TRP* be described as a supportive self-help community in terms of its discourse?

By investigating how similar or dissimilar *TRP* is to such groups for men, we can further understand what makes *TRP* an appealing community to actively participate in. Furthermore, if *TRP* does share the characteristics of supportive self-help groups, this could give the sexist ideas espoused in the community an image of legitimacy by being couched in self-help language.

To answer the core question, I consider the subsequent specific research questions, which pertain to how *TRP* members act within the community in relation to other in-group members:

- 2) What speech acts characterise *TRP*, and to what extent can these be characterised as face-enhancing and face-threatening?
- 3) How do *TRP* members manage their self-image?
- 4) Does the *TRP* hierarchy affect the way *TRP* members relate to each other?

Turning to the structure of the paper, I first discuss the past literature on men's talk and online communities which situate themselves as helping men, and then describe the structure and norms of the *TRP* as a community of practice. Following that, I introduce the ten posts in the dataset, and describe the speech acts and impression management strategies in them. I then discuss the findings of this study in comparison to men's self-help communities and men's talk more widely and outline the implications of such findings.

2. Men, self-help, and self-disclosure

Historically, men's talk has been characterised as more information-focussed and competitive than women's talk, which has been characterised as more collaborative (Tannen, 1990). For instance, women were found more likely to give compliments and reference personal attributes in these compliments, whereas men were shown to compliment work performance or skill (Holmes, 1988). A lack of public self-disclosure has also been associated with men's talk, as emotionality is perceived as a feminine trait (Coates, 2003). This manifests in men being less likely than women to seek help for health issues (O'Brien, Hunt, and Hart, 2005), and in men who discuss reading self-help books perceiving the practice as carrying a social stigma (McLean and Vermeulen, 2019).

The self-help literature targeted towards men focuses on career success or managing one's finances (McLean and Vermeulen, 2019), as well as on romantic and sexual success. However, most academic research on this topic deals with pick-up artist guidebooks, which claim to teach men how to seduce women using formulaic techniques. Apart from Mountford's (2018) discussion of *TRP*-adjacent content, the pick-up artist subsection of the manosphere is the only subsection to be consistently referred to as a self-help community. Indeed, Hendriks (2012) characterised pick-up artist guidebooks as advice literature and also noted that both guidebooks and offline pick-up artist experts advocated external actions and internal changes such as valuing self-improvement, self-discipline, and pushing oneself out of one's comfort zone, which Hendriks (2012) argues are established features of the self-help genre. Furthermore, the

structure of offline pick-up artist courses, involving an expert who is positioned as infallible teaching a group of paying students, indicates that interacting with others is an integral element to the community, a sentiment which is echoed by London-based pick-up artists (O'Neill, 2016).

The pick-up artist community has also grown online, with many popular pick-up artist forums being hosted on the same website as *TRP*. Lawson and McGlashan (2017) conceptualise these online seduction communities as self-help groups, where users share (alleged) offline experiences and tactics with each other in so-called 'field reports' (Dayter and Rüdiger, 2016). These field reports are characterised by self-praise (Rüdiger and Dayter, 2020), supporting Tannen's (1990) assertion that men compete with each other through language use. However, Dayter and Rüdiger (2016) also found that some pick-up artists respond to failure stories with advice and sympathy.

Other online communities which specifically cater to men focus on issues which have been historically considered taboo, namely men's mental and physical health. In such communities, men feel able to talk freely and anonymously, without fear of being judged as unmanly (Hanna and Gough, 2018), and thus emotional support features consistently. For instance, Flynn and Stana (2012) found five types of social support used by the members of a men's online eating disorder forum: personal disclosure in 33.8% of the 358 posts analysed, emotional support in 23.2%, as well as advice (9.3%), providing information (9.1%), and emotional venting (9.1%). Thus, empathy, sympathy, agreement and encouragement were more characteristic of the community than action-oriented advice. However, the opposite trend was found by Gough (2016), who analysed men's talk on an online support forum for depression. She noted that although replies to posts sought to provide reassurance to the original poster that their experiences were shared, many posters gave hedged action-oriented advice, such as recommending exercise. Together, these studies of male-oriented online spaces demonstrate that norms of stoicism typically associated with masculine behaviour are not necessarily applicable to online spaces, as online support communities are characterised by both emotional and factual support to differing degrees.

2.1 *TRP*

Turning to the community of interest to this study, and following Heritage and Koller (2020), who analyse an involuntary celibate community, *TRP* can be conceptualised as a hybrid between a community of practice and an imagined community (Anderson,

1983). This is because while some members seek connection with, and recognition from, others, due to the size of *TRP* (approximately 300,000 users subscribed in October 2018, when subscriber numbers were last publicly viewable), most members are unknown to each other. Furthermore, due to the online nature of the forum, many members will be unknown to those who actively post, as many members will subscribe to the forum and read what is posted, but not post themselves.

TRP meets three of the four criteria which define communities of practice (Wenger, 1998:76; Lave and Wenger, 1991). Firstly, *TRP* is defined by the practice of users discussing men's issues using their shared repertoire of in-group jargon (see Krendel, 2020), and specific linguistic routines (e.g. field reports, as discussed in Dayter and Rüdiger, 2016). This is done after users undergo a standardisation process of reading texts which outline the community's anti-feminist beliefs (detailed in Van Valkenburgh, 2018), before they post in the community.

Secondly, these practices have the jointly negotiated and agreed goal of promoting discussions on how to enact a masculine identity in a world which is perceived as being hostile towards men. Van Valkenburgh (2018) noted that the masculine identity of *TRP* is inherently neoliberal, as the core texts of the community (which one has to read before posting on the forum) claim that men must take actions as individuals to optimise themselves, which is also a feature of self-help texts (Hendriks, 2012). Following this initial standardisation process, through subsequent discussions and the upvoting and downvoting of contributions, a *TRP* masculine identity is mutually negotiated by posters. Also, Mountford's (2018) analysis of a *TRP*-adjacent website found that 46% of the posts analysed mentioned the topic of goals and personal growth, and 20% mentioned teaching and learning. This suggests that *TRP* positions itself as an anti-feminist self-help community, which provides men with the knowledge and resources they need to navigate modern society. Thirdly, members regularly interact with each other on the forum. Although it is impossible to know how many users are currently active or how many users view *TRP* content without posting or upvoting/downvoting, there were a total 8316 post upvotes and 921 users in the dataset used for the present study.

However, as opposed to the community being made up of core and peripheral members, as Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) predict in their definition of communities of

practice, members of *TRP* are structured in a hierarchy. The *TRP* hierarchy is made up of moderators (who curate the content of the website), the Vanguard (members who have contributed for years), senior endorsed contributors and endorsed contributors (whose opinions are valued), and users who are awarded ‘point flair’ (a number which appears next to their username) and are thus on their way to becoming endorsed contributors. Additionally, the rules assert that users in the *TRP* hierarchy should be respected and thanked by other members of the community as their contributions are the most valuable. In comparison, regular users who are not part of this hierarchy are arguably less valued by the community. It should also be noted that this detailed hierarchy is a feature specific to *TRP*, as other groups on the same site typically have only regular users and moderators. Dishy (2018) argues that by participating in the forum posts, regular *TRP* members aim to become endorsed and to climb this hierarchy.

To date, only two studies consider the bonding strategies that members use to relate to each other in the manosphere. In their analysis of a men-going-their-own-way forum (the separatist subsection of the manosphere), Wright, Trott, and Jones (2020:921) observed multiple supportive behaviours between users, such as agreement, encouragement, advice and support, avoidance of arguments, and storytelling, which together “build a sense of solidarity and community around shared struggles and experiences”. Similarly, Dishy (2018) found in his analysis of *TRP* posts that anecdotal evidence was used to back up 58.5% of claims made in the data (695 of a total 1188 claims), and that agreement was present in 12.3% of the total 6780 *TRP* posts and comments, whereas disagreement was only present in 1.6% of posts and comments. These results indicate that supportive actions via personal disclosure and agreement are undertaken in the manosphere more widely, and in *TRP* specifically. However, Wright, Trott, and Jones’ (2020) study considers more directly supportive speech acts than Dishy’s (2018), and thus their findings are not necessarily applicable to the *TRP* subset of the manosphere. Furthermore, although Dishy (2018) argues that regular *TRP* members seek approval from the hierarchy members, this claim has yet to be substantiated through linguistic analysis. This sets the context for the present study, which investigates the nature of interaction between *TRP* users on a broader scale, to determine what could make *TRP* an appealing community to participate in.

3. Data selection, collection and preparation

When choosing which posts and comment threads to analyse, I chose posts' popularity as my criterion. Popularity was determined by the number of upvotes the posts had received from users. I collected the ten most popular posts of the past thirty days at the time of data collection (15th July 2020) along with their associated comment threads. This was done to capture the interactional behaviour of the community at the time of conducting the study. This resulted in a total of 10 original posts and 2094 comments associated with these posts, with 6 original posts and 1911 comments from 884 regular users (91.2% of the dataset), and 4 original posts and 183 comments from 37 members in the *TRP* hierarchy (8.8% of the dataset). These posts and comments are polylogic in nature, in that multiple people respond to both the original posts and to individual comments on the original post. A content summary of the original posts, plus the number of upvotes and comments they each received, is displayed in Table 1.

Post number	Upvotes	Comments	Summary
1	1400	343	A regular user discusses a woman who used to be a porn star and now wants the online pornographic videos of herself removed
2	1200	267	A moderator warns users that the group may be banned and that they should move to a replacement website
3	939	139	A regular user argues that too many <i>TRP</i> posts focus on out-groups instead of the in-group
4	922	225	A user with point flair gives weight loss advice and encourages feedback
5	713	235	A regular user discusses feeling more fulfilled after a personal achievement than a sexual encounter
6	690	98	A user with point flair writes a fable style narrative about the internet keeping men placated while they are young
7	665	250	A regular user discusses another post on the host website about an unsuccessful open marriage
8	664	159	A regular user discusses another post on the host website where a man catches his wife cheating on him
9	598	203	A moderator provides a space for members to give advice about avoiding, and dealing with, false rape accusations
10	525	175	A regular user gives advice about improving one's appearance and taking pictures for online dating profiles
10 posts total	8316 upvotes	2094 comments	

Table 1: The ten most popular posts of the past 30 days in *TRP*, as of 15th July 2020

I did not seek informed consent from the authors of the posts and comments for two reasons. Firstly, the website from which the data was collected is free to access for

anyone with a website account and thus arguably constitutes a quasi-public space (see Franzke et al., 2020). Secondly, researching the manosphere presents a potential security risk to myself, as this community holds hostile views towards both women and feminists, and has a history of harassing feminists in a networked manner (Marwick and Caplan, 2018). For these reasons, instead of obtaining informed consent, the name of the website and the titles of the posts have not been given, and when I provide quotations from users, they are anonymised.

I uploaded each of the ten posts and their associated comment threads to ATLAS.ti version 9 for Windows in ten separate documents. Each post/comment was assigned a unique reference number corresponding to the document it came from and its position within that document (e.g. 1:1 refers to the first post/comment in the first document). This numeral reference is given in brackets alongside each example. I also labelled the posts and comments for whether the author and direct addressee are regular users or part of the *TRP* hierarchy (i.e. a moderator, Vanguard, senior endorsed contributor, endorsed contributor, or a user with point flair). This hierarchy information is given as part of the numeral references alongside each example, with regular and hierarchy members marked with the letter R and H respectively. Furthermore, to interrogate the effect of the *TRP* hierarchy on speech act use, a distinction was made between speech acts used laterally between peers, upwards from regular members to hierarchy members, and downwards from hierarchy members to regular members. This information was marked using the letters L (lateral), U (upwards), and D (downwards). Due to the low frequency of posts between hierarchy members (only 35 in total), I did not create separate categories to discuss posts between regular members and posts between hierarchy members.

4. Methodology

Firstly, I read each post and comment and inductively compiled a list of the speech acts which occurred in them. For this study, I used Searle's (1969) definition of 'speech act' as the intended function of communication that a speaker wishes to perform via language. Searle (1976) theorised five types of speech act, although these can overlap: representatives, which can be true or false statements about the world (e.g. describing, stating or asserting); directives, which attempt to get the hearer to take action (e.g. ordering, advising, asking); commissives, which commit speakers to future actions (e.g. offering, promising); expressives, which express speakers' attitudes and emotions (e.g.

thanking, praising, apologising); and lastly declaratives, which require felicity conditions to render them true (e.g. a boss firing their employee). While the list of speech acts identified in the present dataset (see Section 5) is not exclusively based on Searle's (1976) taxonomy, the latter is still used in an inductive manner to consider what can be classified as a speech act. As I solely focus on how *TRP* members act in relation to other in-group members, only speech acts which were directed towards the in-group were identified.

Following Trosborg's (1995) lead, I argue that speech acts are characterised by their communicative function as opposed to their formal expression at the sentence level. Thus, for this study, the whole post or comment was treated as the unit of analysis. For example, if a comment which consisted of multiple sentences elaborated on a point which was previously made, it was tagged as one instance of the 'elaborating' speech act (discussed further in Section 5). The same post/comment could be labelled with multiple speech acts, such as in (1), which was labelled for both complimenting/praising and thanking.

- (1) This is a phenomenal post. Thanks for laying it out in such a way that is easy to read and understand. (10:135/R/U)

After identifying these speech acts, I considered the role they play in users negotiating relationships with each other, as well as managing their own self-image. To do this, I classified each speech act as either broadly face-enhancing or face-threatening, in accordance with Locher and Watts' (2005) relational work framework. This is done within the context of my *TRP* data and is not intended to be used as a general typology. Furthermore, although many of the speech acts are labelled as broadly face-enhancing or face-threatening, multiple behaviours can be combined so that users enact both face-enhancement and face-threat in the same post or comment, e.g. defending one user while disagreeing with another. These combined cases are discussed in more detail in Section 5.

I also considered how the speech acts could correspond to certain impression management strategies, i.e. conscious or unconscious attempts to influence other people's perceptions of ourselves (Goffman, 1959). This allowed me to make claims about what speakers could wish to project about themselves in using these speech acts. To do this, I used the five impression management strategies posited by Jones and

Pittman (1982): ingratiation (conforming to in-group norms, doing favours, and praising others, to be regarded as likeable), self-promotion (emphasising one's own good qualities and name-dropping important people, to be regarded as competent), exemplification (taking on extra duties, to be regarded as dedicated), intimidation (making threats and expressing anger, to be regarded as threatening), and lastly supplication (acting submissively, to be regarded as in need to help).

However, it was impossible to categorise every speech act in this manner. For example, it could not always be gleaned whether speech acts such as elaborating and advice-giving were face-enhancing or face-threatening in their context. In these instances, the speech acts were only categorised in terms of impression management (see Section 5.2). For other speech acts, they could only be identified as face-enhancing or face-threatening. Indeed, while impression management strategies could be applied to all the face-enhancing speech acts identified in this study, it was not a useful framework for considering three of the four face-threatening speech acts in the dataset: disagreeing, criticising, and correcting other users. This is because disagreeing with another user, criticising their contributions, or correcting the way they interpreted a previous post or comment by providing clarification does not necessarily mean that the speaker wants to be seen as either a competent or a threatening person. Instead, it may indicate that they wish to express a potentially face-threatening difference of opinion. This being said, the remaining face-threatening speech act, insults, could be categorised as intimidation impression management, and some corrections of other users constituted self-promotion impression management because they provided original information by way of correction.

Lastly, I considered how all the speech acts were modified by face-saving linguistic strategies. This also included face-enhancing speech acts because users may employ face-saving strategies to pre-empt interpretations of face threat and imposition from other members in the community. Such strategies can also be used to express ambiguity about the topics discussed, in order to minimise the possibility of being incorrect and triggering a conflict within the community. Although two of the three face-saving strategies were classified as ingratiation impression management, the remaining strategy of hedging could not be categorised consistently as indicating a desire to be likeable, competent, dedicated, threatening or in need of help. This is because users could hedge

for multiple reasons, including minimising an imposition, expressing deference, and expressing genuine ambiguity or nuance on a topic.

5. Results and discussion

In this section, I firstly discuss the face-enhancing and face-threatening speech acts identified in the data, and the face-saving linguistic strategies which modify them. I then consider the speech acts which were neither face-enhancing nor face-threatening, and the face-saving strategies which modify them.

5.1 Face-enhancing and face-threatening speech acts

All the speech acts identified in the dataset which corresponded to either face-enhancement or face-threat are given in order of frequency in Tables 2 and 3. For reasons of space, only speech acts which occurred over 70 times are discussed in detail. These speech acts are used to address both individuals or groups; for example, a compliment can be extended to an individual or the whole *TRP* community.

Speech act	Definition	Impression management	Example	Total
Agreeing	Agreeing with another user	Ingratiation	“Agree with everything you said” (2:80/R/L)	534 (57.1%)
Complimenting/praising	Compliment another user and/or their contribution	Ingratiation	“Fantastic story” (4:42/R/U)	173 (18.5%)
Thanking	Thanking another user	Ingratiation, supplication	“Thank you for sharing and writing this out” (3:176/R/L)	87 (9.3%)
Expressing positive emotions	Expressing appreciation, affection, enthusiasm and happiness towards other users	Ingratiation	“I appreciate it man, I’m glad it helped you out” (3:177/R/L)	28 (3%)
Sympathising	Expressing compassion for another user	Ingratiation	“What a shame” (9:202/R/U)	24 (2.6%)
Empathising	Personally relating to another user’s experiences	Ingratiation	“Same for me” (5:24/R/U)	21 (2.2%)
Encouraging	Motivating other users	Ingratiation	“Work on yourself and everything will be fine” (6:101/R/L)	19 (2%)
Accepting advice	Explicitly accepting advice given by another user	Ingratiation, supplication	“Nice, going to check it out” (10:6/R/L)	14 (1.5%)
Defending another user	Showing solidarity with another user after they incur a face-threat	Ingratiation	“I don’t understand why you’re being downvoted” (3:38/R/L)	13 (1.4%)
Congratulating	Congratulating another user	Ingratiation	“Congratulations on losing and keeping the weight off” (10:102/H/D)	9 (1%)
Wishing luck	Wishing another user luck	Ingratiation	“Good luck!” (8:53/R/L)	8 (0.9%)

Agreeing to disagree	Foregrounding respect for another user while acknowledging an irreconcilable difference of opinion	Ingratiation	“I can appreciate that at least. We can disagree with each other without being a little shit about it” (1:62/R/L)	6 (0.6%)
Total				936 (100%)

Table 2: Face-enhancing speech acts found in *TRP*

Speech act	Definition	Impression management	Example	Total
Disagreeing	Disagreeing with another user	N/A	“they were criticised lol” (9:20/R/L), in response to “They can’t be criticised in any way and they can do whatever the hell they want” (9:18/R/L)	348 (56.4%)
Criticising	Criticising an element, or the importance, of another user’s contribution	N/A	“Posting shit like this is counterproductive. It’s stupid garbage nobody should waste their time or energy on.” (1:257/H/D)	153 (24.8%)
Correcting another user	Correcting an aspect of what another user has said	N/A or self-promotion	“I never said it was RP men who did it” (6:118/R/U) “That’s calorie restriction not fasting” (10:87/R/L)	63 (10.2%)
Insulting	Explicitly insulting (an)other user(s) via personalised negative vocatives and assertions (Culpeper, 2011)	Intimidation	“you fat lazy bastards” (10:171/R/U) “you guys can’t read” (10:196/R/L)	53 (8.6%)
Total				617 (100%)

Table 3: Face-threatening speech acts found in *TRP*

In total, 936 instances of face-enhancing speech acts were identified, compared to 617 face-threatening ones, and 12 different types of face-enhancing speech act were found compared to 4 face-threatening ones. This suggests that, overall, *TRP* can be classified as more supportive than combative. However, while agreeing is the most frequent speech act, it is followed by disagreeing, complimenting/praising, and criticising. This illustrates that despite being characterised by face-enhancement over face-threat, *TRP* contains more face-threatening work than may be expected from a traditional self-help environment (e.g. Locher, 2006). Furthermore, three face-saving linguistic features which modified all speech acts were identified, as shown in Table 4. The fact that these only occurred in 5.8% of the posts and comments analysed suggests that face-saving behaviours are not typical in this *TRP* sample.

Face-saving strategy	Definition	Impression management	Example	Total
Hedging	Making assertions vague/conditional	N/A	“That’s not normal. Maybe do some tests.” (3:6/R/L)	104 (86%)
Use of politeness markers	Politeness markers such as “please” used non-sarcastically	Ingratiation	“Please post this on NoFap” (4:66/R/U)	12 (9.9%)
Pre-empting face-threat interpretation	Seeking to mitigate a potential face-threatening act before it happens	Ingratiation	“Not attacking genuinely asking” (1:273/R/L)	5 (4.1%)
Total				121 (100%)

Table 4: Face-saving linguistic strategies in *TRP*

Considering face-enhancement in more detail, the three most common face-enhancing speech acts were agreeing (accounting for 57.1% of all face-enhancement) complimenting/praising (18.5%) and thanking (9.3%). Users explicitly compliment the contributions and alleged actions of other individual users, as opposed to their intrinsic qualities, and thank each other for useful posts using strongly evaluative language. For example, in (1) in Section 4, the post is positively evaluated via ‘phenomenal’ and ‘easy to read and understand’. This is arguably less personal than complimenting someone’s personality, which is in alignment with Holmes’ (1988) findings on men’s complimenting patterns. Moreover, gendered terms of affection such as ‘bro’ and ‘brother’ are used alongside agreeing and complimenting/praising, and thus the presumed masculine identity of other users is foregrounded.

Although the majority of these speech acts are used to address individual users, the whole *TRP* community is also addressed in some instances, particularly in Post 2. For instance, in (2), a regular user compliments and thanks the whole group for having a positive influence on their life.

(2) I'm so grateful I stumbled upon this [group] 6 years ago when people were saying it was sexist. I have changed so much people don't even recognise me. I couldn't even speak to girls and I finally feel like I have an abundance. You posters and commenters genuinely changed my life trajectory. Thank you. (9:91/R/U)

Examining the distribution of these face-enhancing speech acts reveals that 23.8% of all face-enhancement was directed upwards, whereas 71.5% of face-enhancing speech acts occurred between peers and 4.7% was directed downwards. Hierarchy members authored 8.8% of the total posts and comments, so if hierarchy did not have an effect on

commenting behaviour, we could expect 8.8% of the speech acts to be directed towards them. Thus, the disproportionately high rate of upwards face-enhancement suggests that some of it is done strategically in *TRP*, in that users may seek to climb the *TRP* hierarchy by enhancing the face of hierarchy members. Indeed, over half of all complimenting/praising and thanking instances are directed upwards. Contrastingly, hierarchy members direct a smaller proportion of face-enhancing speech acts towards regular users than vice versa, with only one hierarchy member accounting for 28.2% of downwards face-enhancement. This demonstrates that although *TRP* may appear to be a broadly supportive community, these supportive behaviours are affected by whether the interlocutor is a member of *TRP* hierarchy. This was also the case for face-saving, where 76.9% of face-saving was done laterally, 16.5% of all face-saving was directed upwards but only 6.6% was directed downwards.

Turning now to face-threats, their prevalence in *TRP* sets the community apart from traditional self-help groups. Disagreement, which accounts for 56.4% of total face-threat, is only hedged in 62 of 346 instances (17.9%). Criticism accounts for 24.8% of face-threat and tends to target individuals as opposed to the whole group. However, criticism can be expressed in more or less threatening ways. For instance, in (3), one user criticises another user in an unhedged manner for how they are interpreting a given discussion, and in (4), the criticism of multiple users' comments is maximised via taboo language. Moreover, only 13 of the 153 instances of criticism co-occur with a face-saving strategy.

(3) You're not listening to what people are actually saying (6:68/R/L)

(4) jesus christ the state of these fucking comments (8:127/R/L)

However, the fact that agreeing and disagreeing co-occur 60 times indicates that some disagreement posts discuss multiple viewpoints on a given topic and hedge their assertions. For example, in (5), one user responds to another user who claims that there are no reasons for men to be married.

(5) Agree that marriage is a certain loser for a man, but if you want to raise children right, there's no other option (6:103/R/L)

Conversely, when criticism co-occurs with face-enhancing speech acts, this reveals a competitive element within the group which is absent from traditional support communities. For instance, users compare one another, as in (6), where individual face

is enhanced at the expense of group face using taboo language. Alternatively, users criticise an element of a post while agreeing with the overall message, as in (7) where the original post (1:1/R/L) is followed by the critical response (1:298/R/L). Taken together, such instances of criticism suggest that *TRP* is a more hostile space than traditional support communities.

(6) much better than the bullshit advice that gets upvoted [in this group] (8:19/R/L)

(7) So [a woman] has started a petition to get her pornhub videos removed and it has garnered 1.1 million signatures...she talks about how much she regrets doing porn and was "taken advantage of" for doing it and being paid so little. But she was paid market rate... And chose to do it... Along with additional videos after the fact... It [sic] literally the equivalent of a retroactively withdrawing consent.

(1:1/R/L)

Badly written post but I get what you mean. She gave consent to the relevant parties to have her porn videos up. (1:298/R/L)

These face-threatening speech acts are not restricted to peer-to-peer interaction, as 13.9% of face-threatening speech acts are directed upwards at the *TRP* hierarchy (whereas 9.6% are directed downwards). In upwards instances, users attempt to position themselves as more knowledgeable than the hierarchy member, as in (8). The first utterance (1:97/H/D) is by an endorsed contributor, and the second (1:98/R/U) is an unhedged disagreeing response from a regular member, which is framed informally via 'nah' and boosted via the intensifier 'exactly'. Thus, the regular user does not show any deference.

(8) She regrets that she isn't as hot as she used to be and gets far less attention so lets pay her even less now (1:97/H/D)

Nah, she doesn't regret anything. She knows exactly what she's doing.

(1:98/R/U)

This indicates that despite the prevalence of lateral and upwards face-enhancement in the dataset, *TRP* is not characterised by unwavering deference from regular members to hierarchy members. Furthermore, the fact that 39.7% of the speech acts discussed in this section constituted face-threats suggests that *TRP* is not a traditional supportive group.

Having considered the speech acts which corresponded to face-enhancement and face-threat, I will now consider the rest of the speech acts.

5.2 Other speech acts

The rest of the speech acts identified in the dataset are listed below in Table 5 by frequency. As in Section 5.1, only those speech acts which occur over 70 times are discussed in detail.

Speech act	Definition	Impression management	Example	Total
Elaborating	Building on a previous point made in the discussion	Self-promotion	“They banned 2000 [groups]” (9:97/H/L), responding to “[host website] may ban TRP” (9:1/H/L)	636 (35.9%)
Personal disclosing	User discloses their positive or negative feelings, inner thoughts, and personal experiences	Ingratiation, supplication, self-promotion	“I had anabolic french toast for dinner last night” (10:36/RL) “I couldn’t get laid to save my life lol thank god I found TRP” (3:96/R/L) “The easiest way for me to lose weight is by doing extended (3-day) fasts” (10:169/R/U)	389 (22%)
Advice-giving	Giving advice in declarative, directive, interrogative, conditional, or indirect forms	Self-promotion	“Stop watching porn” (1:296/R/L) “It’s unwise to sabotage your potential at growing in this area.” (6:24/R/L)	344 (19.4%)
Asking questions and making requests	Asking non-rhetorical questions and making requests	Supplication	“So you mean that keto is a scam?” (8:38/R/L)	197 (11.1%)
Answering questions and requests	Answering non-rhetorical questions and requests	Self-promotion	“The way it’s marketed, yes”, responding to “So you mean that keto is a scam?” (8:40/R/L)	152 (8.6%)
Joking	Making jokes and using sarcasm	Ingratiation ⁹	“Her pussy haunted lmao” (5:14/R/L)	37 (2.1%)
Apologising	Apologising directly, or indirectly through admitting fault	Supplication	“My apologies for my arrogant message” (9:200/R/U) “Bad wording on my part” (4:11/R/L)	10 (0.6%)
Offering assistance	Offering to write specific posts and direct messages for other users	Exemplification	“I’ll do a post on my protocol” (10:29/H/D)	7 (0.4%)

⁹ Although there is the occasional instance of contestive humour in this dataset, it cannot be accurately categorised as intimidation, nor any other impression management strategy.

Total	1772 (100%)
--------------	----------------

Table 5: The remaining speech acts found in *TRP*

Elaboration is the most common of these speech acts (and indeed the most frequent speech act overall), followed by personal disclosing (third most frequent overall), advice-giving (fifth most frequent overall), asking questions, and answering questions. Thus, the most common impression management strategies used in *TRP* overall are ingratiation and self-promotion. In elaborating, users self-promote by introducing new factual information in response to other users' contributions and thus present themselves as a source of relevant and original information. For instance, in (9), a user directly responds to Post 7 (5:1/R/L), which discusses another post on the host website about a man whose wife has cheated on him. The responder (5:163/R/L) both agrees with the premise of the original post (i.e. negatively evaluating the woman for her behaviour and the man for excusing her initial flirting with a co-worker) and contributes with an 'even worse' story. By doing this, the responder intensifies the severity of the perceived issue being discussed.

(9) This post ended up making its way to the front page and I couldn't help but gag.
 “[UPDATE] You were right. I ignored every single one of your comments and eventually caught my wife with the other man.”...This man allowed a small indiscretion to become a larger indiscretion and it cost him nothing more than his pride and sanity. In the previous post we learn of a “man” who caught his wife in a compromising situation. (5:1/R/L)

There's an even worse one today, where some kid 'takes a break' and his virgin girlfriend promptly sleeps with 3 guys in a month, and now wants back with him, and he wants to take her back. (5:163/R/L)

The fact that elaborating co-occurs with 43.1% of agreeing and 40.5% of disagreeing shows that elaborating is used to back up user's evaluative stances regardless of face-enhancement or face-threat. The prevalence of elaborating differentiates the group from traditional support communities, as members make original topic contributions more often than engaging in either personal disclosure or advice-giving.

On the other hand, the prevalence of personal disclosing in the dataset suggests that *TRP* is also a space to share one's personal feelings and experiences, which mirrors the purpose of traditional support communities. However, in this dataset, personal

disclosure serves multiple impression management purposes. Firstly, personal disclosure can be considered an ingratiation strategy, as the past literature has identified self-disclosure as a key facet of communication for developing relationships and bonding with others (Altman and Taylor, 1973). This is best illustrated in examples such as (10), where users reciprocally disclose their feelings and experiences on a shared topic. In (10), users in (1:48/R/L) and (1:49/R/L) share their surprise and upset about finding out that their shared role models, Jesse and Kong, experienced a falling out after Jesse's ex-girlfriend, Kel, began a relationship with Kong.

(10) Oh and fun fact about [a pick-up artist YouTube Channel], that super hot girl Kel dumped Jesse and started fucking his best friend and business partner Kong. (1:74/R/L)

Damn, I had no idea about the whole Kel and Kong hookup! I used to follow [a pick-up artist YouTube channel] quite religiously and it was my gateway into pick-up when I was young. (1:48/R/L)

Yeah it was really sad when I found out. They were like my role models getting into pick-up. (1:49/R/L)

Personal disclosure can also be used as a supplication strategy in *TRP*, as users can disclose that they need assistance. For example, in (11), a user discloses their negative personal experience with a diet program and admits to needing better dieting advice than the programme is giving. They thank the original poster for the help they provide, and compliment both their guidance as 'detailed', 'convenient', and 'useful', and their personality as 'awesome'.

(11) Dude, thank you for writing this and providing detailed convenient options. I'm in a official paid diet program right now and nothing they're provided so far is even close to as useful as the info you provided here. You are awesome. (10:131/R/L)

Personal disclosure is also used as a self-promotion strategy, as users construct themselves as experts using their own thoughts and experiences. For instance, personal disclosure is used to express personal opinions, as in (12), where the user also presents themselves as a spokesperson for the group via the first-person plural pronouns 'us' and 'our'. Personal disclosure can also be used to explicitly brag, as in (13), where the user

provides positive feedback on an advice post while stating that they themselves do not need such advice. However, such instances are rare.

(12) I think there's nothing wrong with sex, it feels amazing. It's just not something us men should prioritize and chase as much as our goals (3:169/R/L)

(13) I can't be arsed reading all that because I don't need the advice but it looks good (8:19/R/L)

Furthermore, the fact that 22.6% of personal disclosure was directed upwards (and only 6.9% was directed downwards) indicates that, like face-enhancement, this can be done in a strategic manner. This is particularly prevalent in the responses to Post 2, in which regular users respond to a moderator, who says that the group is likely to be shut down, by disclosing their personal positive experiences with *TRP* while signalling both metaphorical kinship and in-group identity. For instance, in (14), the masculine kinship term 'brothers' and the collective 'you' signal group face-enhancement towards the whole *TRP* community, in view of the moderator who originally posted.

(14) Brothers, it was a pleasure fucking around with you. Thanks to you, I have grown a lot in the past year and a half. (9:80/R/U)

It could be argued that by enacting whole group ingratiation in view of hierarchy members (and thus upwards), this ingratiation also constitutes a form of self-promotion, as regular members foreground their own membership in the community.

Moving on, while the prevalence of advice-giving might suggest that *TRP* shares the advising function of other support communities, this is not done in the question-and-answer format observed in the past literature (Locher, 2006). Indeed, only 20 instances of advice-giving are in response to a question in the comment section, and although two posts in the dataset (Posts 4 and 9) explicitly facilitate advice-giving between users, only 136 of the 344 instances of advice occurred in these posts. This indicates that over half of the advice in the dataset is unsolicited. This phenomenon is particularly visible in the comments of Post 8 (6:1/R/L), where users respond to a user sharing a story about a married couple who are external to *TRP*. In (15), a user responds to the original post (6:1/R/L) by directing advice at the out-group man, who will likely never see the advice.

(15) Wife demands Open Marriage or else divorce. Husband accepts for the kids.

Wife starts sleeping with a guy lined up immediately. Husband finds someone to sleep with. Wife becomes furious, demands Closed Marriage. (6:1/R/L)

make her know she doesn't have the power over you (6:48/R/L)

Giving advice in *TRP* is used to show other community members that they are knowledgeable and thus in a position to offer advice, constituting self-promotion. Furthermore, advice-giving is more often directed upwards (23.8%) than downwards (10.5%), which suggests that advice-giving is used strategically by regular users. Although the majority of this advice is directly elicited by hierarchy members in their own posts (Posts 4 and 9), by giving advice under the gaze of hierarchy members, regular users can promote themselves by demonstrating their knowledge.

In all directions of communication, advice is typically given in a directive form (48.5% of advice, or 167 comments, with only 8 instances hedged), or in a declarative form (33.7% of advice, or 116 comments, with only 13 instances hedged). This indicates that more potentially face-threatening forms of advice are preferred by most users in *TRP*, a finding which conflicts with past research on online advice-giving (Locher, 2006). As these instances of advice-giving can be interpreted as enacting self-promotion, the preference for directive and declarative forms could reflect the confidence the speaker may wish to project.

Lastly, considering how questions and requests occur in *TRP*, as mentioned above, users rarely ask for advice or reassurance. Rather, users ask other users for factual information and clarification, and for their opinions about certain topics. By positioning themselves as needing supplementary information, asking questions and making requests can be considered a supplication strategy in *TRP* overall. However, this supplication strategy saves the speaker's face to some extent, as the requests are relatively impersonal, particularly in comparison to the instances of personal disclosure in which a degree of vulnerability and supplication was expressed (see example (11)). Furthermore, the function of questions as directives prompting further contributions from other users (in either a face-enhancing bonding manner or a face-threatening critical manner) should also be acknowledged. In answering questions and requests which require specific factual knowledge, users aim to demonstrate that they have sufficient knowledge to answer said questions, and doing so therefore constitutes

another self-promotion strategy. Furthermore, 20.4% of answering is directed downwards whereas only 6.6% is directed upwards. Conversely, 31% of asking is directed upwards whereas 10.6% is directed downwards. Thus, regular users ask for a disproportionate amount of information from hierarchy users, who in turn provide it. This shows that hierarchy users are seen as trusted sources of information, which reinforces their powerful position within the community.

Overall, these findings reveal that although *TRP* is characterised by personal disclosure, advice-giving and information sharing, the way in which this occurs is not typical of the men's health self-help groups discussed in Section 2.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, although *TRP* shares the face-enhancing, personal disclosing, and advice-giving characteristics of traditional self-help groups, there are three reasons why it cannot be deemed a self-help group. Firstly, the prevalence of unhedged face-threatening speech acts in *TRP* demonstrates that the community is less supportive than traditional self-help groups. Secondly, the evidence would suggest that face-enhancing speech acts are used strategically. Indeed, although *TRP* is characterised by agreeing, complimenting/praising, and thanking, these are disproportionately directed towards members of the *TRP* hierarchy, as encouraged by the site rules. This suggests that face-enhancement could be done strategically to advance one's own position in the community. Thirdly, the prevalence of self-promotion via elaboration, advice given in directive and declarative forms (much of which is unsolicited) and self-promoting personal disclosure sets *TRP* apart from traditional self-help groups. Overall, *TRP* aligns with a traditionally masculine mode of communication where potentially face-threatening assertions, debate, and extended discussions which deal with information outnumber posts which offer emotional support and solicited advice.

Although *TRP* should not be considered a self-help group on the basis of the present findings, the fact that *TRP* shares the face-enhancing, personal disclosing, and advice-giving characteristics of such groups may give the community an image of legitimacy it can use to further its ideology. Indeed, in the present study, users discussed their experiences of personal growth since finding *TRP*, which could make them more likely to engage with the community more and to internalise the sexist beliefs which characterise it. As detailed in the past literature, the beliefs shared in *TRP* have the potential to harm women and gender relations (Krendel, 2020).

For further insight into how *TRP* users conceptualise their community, future researchers could conduct interviews with members of the community, to determine their personal reasons for joining *TRP*, and the factors which encourage them to actively participate in the forum. Indeed, the extent to which users actively intend to promote themselves as opposed to primarily support one another requires further research, although for the purposes of this paper, the impression management interpretations were based on the norms of this community, namely that explicit emotional support was not common and that there was a strict self-imposed hierarchy. Future research could also examine the popularity of different posts' topics, such as advice posts, using the host website's upvoting/downvoting system, which would allow for the analysis of a larger dataset. Overall, this study has shown that the formal features of online self-help groups can be utilised by otherwise hateful communities, to encourage members to actively participate in the forum.

Funding information

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the anonymous reviewers who were invaluable in shaping this paper, and Professor Veronika Koller for her ongoing support.

References

- Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso.
- Altman, Irwin and Taylor, Dalmás. 1973. *Social Penetration: The Development of Interpersonal Relationships*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Bowman-Grieve, Lorraine. 2009. "Exploring "Stormfront": A Virtual Community of the Radical Right." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32(11): 989-1007. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100903259951>
- Coates, Jennifer. 2003. *Men Talk: Stories in the Making of Masculinities*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Culpeper, Jonathan. 2011. *Impoliteness: Using Language to Cause Offence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dayter, Daria, and Rüdiger, Sofia. 2016. "Reporting from the Field: the Narrative Reconstruction of Experience in Pick-Up Artist Online Communities." *Open Linguistics* 2(1): 337-351. <https://doi.org/10.1515/opli-2016-0016>
- Dishy, Aaron. 2018. "Swallowing Misandry: A Survey of the Discursive Strategies of r/TheRedPill on Reddit." MA diss., Toronto University.

- Eckert, Penelope, and McConnell-Ginet, Sally. 1992. "Think Practically and Look Locally: Language and Gender as Community-Based Practice." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 21(1): 461–490.
- franzke, aline shakti; Bechmann, Anja; Zimmer, Michael; Ess, Charles and the Association of Internet Researchers. 2020. *Internet Research: Ethical Guidelines 3.0*. Available at <https://aoir.org/reports/ethics3.pdf>
- Flynn, Mark, and Stana, Alexandru. 2012. "Social Support in a Men's Online Eating Disorder Forum." *International Journal of Men's Health* 11(2): 150-169. <https://doi.org/10.3149/JMH.1102.150>
- Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday.
- Gough, Brendan. 2016. "Men's Depression Talk Online: a Qualitative Analysis of Accountability and Authenticity in Help Seeking and Support Formulations." *Psychology of Men & Masculinity* 17(1): 156–164. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0039456>
- Hanna, Esmée, and Gough, Brendan. 2018. "Searching for Help Online: an Analysis of Peer-to-Peer Posts on a Male-Only Infertility Forum." *Journal of Health Psychology* 23(7): 917-928. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359105316644038>
- Hendriks, Eric. 2012. "Ascetic Hedonism: Self and Sexual Conquest in the Seduction Community." *Cultural Analysis* 11(1): 1–14.
- Heritage, Frazer, and Koller, Veronika. 2020. "Incels, In-groups, and Ideologies: the Representation of Gendered Social Actors in a Sexuality-Based Online Community." *Journal of Language and Sexuality* 9(2): 153-180. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jls.19014.her>
- Holmes, Janet. 1988. "Paying Compliments: a Sex-Preferential Politeness Strategy." *Journal of Pragmatics* 12(1): 445-465. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(88\)90005-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(88)90005-7)
- Jones, Edward, and Pittman, Thane. 1982. "Towards a General Theory of Strategic Self-Presentation." In *Psychological Perspectives on the Self*, ed. by Jerry M. Suls, 2321-2362). New York: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Krendel, Alexandra. 2020. The men and women, guys and girls of the 'manosphere': A corpus-assisted discourse approach. *Discourse & Society* 31(6): 607-630.
- Lave, Jean, and Wenger, Étienne. 1991. *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lawson, Robert, and McGlashan, Mark. 2017. "You Need to Become Prime Dick": a Corpus-Based Analysis of Self-Help Discourses and Gender Constructions in Online Seduction Communities. 116th annual American Anthropological Association meeting, Washington D.C, 30th November 2017.

- Locher, Miriam. 2006. *Advice Online: Advice-giving in an American Internet Health Column*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
<https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.149>
- Locher, Miriam, and Watts, Richard. 2005. "Politeness Theory and Relational Work." *Journal of Politeness Research* 1(1): 9-33.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/jplr.2005.1.1.9>
- Marwick, Alice and Caplan, Robyn. 2018. "Drinking Male Tears: Language, the Manosphere, and Networked Harassment." *Feminist Media Studies* 18(4): 543-559.
- McLean, Scott, and Vermeulen, Laurie. 2019. "From Getting Ahead to Getting Back on One's Feet: Performing Masculinity as a Self-Help Reader." *Men and Masculinities* 22(4): 716-737. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1097184X17724188>
- Mountford, JB. 2018. "Topic Modeling the Red Pill." *Social Sciences* 7(3): 1-16.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci7030042>
- O'Brien, Rosaleen; Hunt, Kate; and Hart, Graham. 2005. "'It's Caveman Stuff, but That is to a Certain Extent How Guys Still Operate': Men's Accounts of Masculinity and Help-Seeking." *Social Science and Medicine* 61(3): 503-516.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2004.12.008>
- O'Neill, Rachel. 2016. "Homosociality and Heterosex: Patterns of Intimacy and Relationality among Men in the London 'Seduction Community'." In A. Cornwall, F. G. Karioris & N. Lindisfarne (Eds.), *Masculinities Under Neoliberalism*. (pp.261-276). London: Zed Books.
- Rüdiger, Sofia, and Dayter, Daria. 2020. "Manbragging Online: Self-Praise on Pick-Up Artists' Forums." *Journal of Pragmatics* 161(1): 16-27.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2020.02.012>
- Searle, John. 1969. *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Searle, John. 1976. "A Classification of Illocutionary Acts." *Language in Society* 5(1): 1-23.
- Tannen, Deborah. 1990. *You Just Don't Understand: Men and Women in Conversation*. New York: Morrow.
- Trosborg, A. 1995. *Interlanguage Pragmatics. Requests, Complaints and Apologies*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Van Valkenburgh, Shaun. 2018. "Digesting the Red Pill: Masculinity and Neoliberalism in the Manosphere." *Men and Masculinities*: 1-20.
<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1097184X18816118>
- Wenger, Étienne. 1998. *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wright, Scott, Trott, Verity, and Jones, Callum. 2020. “The Pussy Ain’t Worth it, Bro’: Assessing the Structure and Discourse of MGTOW.” *Information, Communication & Society* 23(6): 908-925.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2020.1751867>

Chapter 8: Discussion and conclusion

This chapter begins with a summary of, and comparison between, the findings discussed in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. By doing so, I will answer the first two research questions of this thesis, concerning how male and female social actors are represented in the manosphere, and how the manosphere functions as a community. I will then use these findings to answer the final two questions of this thesis, concerning the extent to which the language of the manosphere constitutes hate speech and whether the effects of the manosphere should be mitigated in some way. I conclude by discussing the limitations of the present research and outlining directions for future research on the language of the manosphere.

1. Summary of research findings

1.1 Corpus-based analysis of five manosphere subreddits

In Chapter 5, we (myself and my co-authors, Mark McGlashan and Veronika Koller) analysed how the five main manosphere communities as they manifest on Reddit (*r/MensRights*, *r/MGTOW*, *r/seduction*, *r/braincels*, *r/TheRedPill*) represent gendered social actors with different reference terms, and the topics, descriptions and actions associated with the most frequent reference terms: *men*, *women*, *girls* and *guys*.

Firstly, we found that the male social actor reference terms mostly came under the category of demographic classification (e.g. “men”), with four referencing relational identification (e.g. “boyfriend”) and two referencing negative appraisal (e.g. “cuck”). Conversely, although the female social actor terms were also mostly characterised as demographic classification (e.g. “women”, the second most common term category was negative appraisal (e.g. “bitch”), followed by relational identification (e.g. “girlfriend”). This indicates that there were more negative appraisal terms for female social actors used across the manosphere. Also, these terms were more explicitly negative for female social actors than for male ones (e.g. “bitch”, “slut” and “whore” versus “cuck” and “niceguys”). This finding is in line with the past literature (e.g. Ging, 2017) which observes how female social actors are negatively discussed in multiple manosphere subgroups. Despite the presence of some explicitly sexist language, this list of gendered social actor key-key-words notably lacks some of the overtly sexist terms identified in the past literature such as the PUA term “plates”, and the incel terms “femoids” or “foids”. Additionally, the incel-specific “Chad” and “Stacey” are absent from this key-key-word list (see Heritage and Koller, 2020, for more incel-specific social actor terms). This finding indicates that the incel sub-community is unique in its naming strategies for gendered social actors, and thus the specific hierarchies of gender and the explicit dehumanisation of women that these terms denote should be considered a unique feature of the incel sub-community.

Nevertheless, the fact that there were 432 c-collocates for the four gendered social actors in Chapter 5 provided support for Marwick and Caplan's (2018) and Bates' (2020) claim that the distinct manosphere communities identified in the past literature are in fact united by a common language. This implies that a shared ideology exists between the five manosphere sub-groups, despite the sub-groups being treated as broadly separate phenomena in much of the past literature (see Chapter 2). In this shared language, male and female social actors are represented in dichotomous relation to each other, with female social actors being represented as more privileged than male ones and as being violent towards male social actors. Male and female social actors are also represented as being in romantic and sexual relationships with each other. It is also notable that these representations were presented as immutable generalisations via the quantifiers "many" and "most" for both female and male social actors.

The linguistic representation of female social actors as privileged demonstrates that the five distinct manosphere groups are united by a combination of anti-feminist and post-feminist beliefs, as it is argued that feminism is no longer necessary and that excessive feminist gains in society have now rendered men less powerful than women. An undercurrent of post-feminism is also visible in the representation of women as widely unrecognised perpetrators of violence, as it is argued in the manosphere that both male and female social actors can be perpetrators of violence, but that male perpetrators receive a disproportionately high amount of media attention. This finding contradicts the idea that domestic violence and perceptions of female privilege are isolated to the MRA subsection of the manosphere.

Furthermore, representing women as lying about their experiences with sexual assault, and as having the freedom to choose career paths which are not typically male-led, undermines feminist talking points about empowering women to report assault and close the gender gap in fields such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM). These findings also provide linguistic evidence for Ging's (2019) assertion that post-feminism and anti-feminism are inextricably linked within manosphere discourse, as post-feminist logics are used to argue that women are capable of both making their own decisions (as well as committing violent acts), and so modern feminism is framed not only as unnecessary but as putting men at a disadvantage. Moreover, although *men* were represented as widely disempowered, this representation was inconsistent across the communities, as *men* were represented as achieving success in both their careers and their experiences of dating and having intimate relationships with women. Thus, it is notable that even in a community defined by the perceived disadvantages that men face, men are not framed as entirely powerless. This could

be interpreted as an inherent contradiction in manosphere logic in that they believe men hold more power over women and society than they explicitly claim.

These findings also supported my methodological decision to consider both male and female social actors in this thesis, who are discussed in relation to each other. This is particularly evident from comparatives such as “higher”, “less” and “more”, as well as the framing of the points discussed above. Furthermore, comparing how male and female social actors are represented was a useful benchmark for determining what constituted a sexist representation. Indeed, it was notable that female social actors were more sexualised, particularly in passive ways, than male ones. In contrast, male social actors were more often discussed in terms of their personalities than female ones. This mismatch indicates that women were depersonalised, as they were not framed as having varying personality traits but as sexual objects.

Despite the post-feminist and anti-feminist themes identified in this study, it was notable that much of the shared language of the manosphere across multiple subreddits is similar to representations of gendered social actors in general corpora of English. Indeed, framing women as sexual objects and as passivated in comparison to men cannot be considered more sexist or hateful than the language found in general English. Thus, these shared representations of women provide support for Bates’ (2020) assertion that the manosphere as a whole cannot be considered an extremist group which is separable from a wider society that frames women in this manner. Although this finding could be influenced by the choice to focus on the most commonly used gendered social actor terms (*men, women, girls and guys*), focusing on these terms allowed me to achieve a level of nuance in analysing how gender identity is represented beyond explicitly sexist terms. Indeed, anti-feminist sexist beliefs can be expressed in language which is not specific to the manosphere, and these findings should not be dismissed for being less shocking than explicit slurs or calls to violent action, as they reflect the extent to which manosphere conceptualisations of gender are mirrored in, and influenced by, mainstream language.

I now compare the findings of Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, as both chapters consider the manosphere as “text” (Androutsopoulos, 2013). Whereas in Chapter 5 I take a broad corpus-based approach to gender representation in five manosphere subreddits, I take a more qualitative approach in Chapter 6. This approach allowed me to analyse gender representations in more detail, by considering the representations in language that corpus linguistic methods could not capture. For this reason, Chapter 6 only focuses on the *TRP*

subreddit which is a manosphere community in its own right, but also captures elements of the MRA, MGTOW and PUA communities.

1.2 Sexism in *The Red Pill*

In Chapter 6, I first collected a relatively small corpus of posts and comments totalling 214,269 words from *r/TheRedPill*. The corpus was made of posts tagged as being of interest to one of three manosphere communities: men's rights (corresponding to MRAs), MGTOW, and Red Pill Theory (corresponding to PUAs). I then identified the top 20 keywords in the whole dataset, and identified four gendered social actor terms to be analysed more closely. In both Chapters 5 and 6, the gendered social actor terms of interest were *women*, *men*, *girls*, and *guys*. However, whereas the c-collocate analysis in Chapter 5 was inductive, I took a deductive approach in Chapter 6. This was done using a corpus-assisted discourse approach, where I firstly calculated the collocates of each gendered social actor term. I then undertook a transitivity analysis (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2013, pp. 179-259) of verb processes, determined how agentive each of these processes were (see Darics and Koller, 2019), determined how grammatically active and passive each social actor was, and undertook an appraisal analysis (Martin and White, 2005) of the use of each term. I also considered the extent to which these social actors were presented as individuals or as a group. This varied approach allowed me to consider the gendered social actor representations in more detail than in Chapter 5.

Many of the findings of Chapter 5 were also visible in the results of Chapter 6. For instance, much like Chapter 5, the dataset was characterised by bare assertions about male and female social actors (i.e. constructions such as "men are..." and "women are...", and the use of quantifiers such as "many" and "most"). This was also reflected in the prevalence of dialogically contractive statements in the dataset. Additionally, as in Chapter 5, male and female social actors were represented in essentialised relationships, although in Chapter 6, these relationships are more adversarial. Also, both Chapter 5 and 6 indicate that the terms *men* and *women* are used to refer to broad gender roles, whereas *girls* and *guys* are used to discuss social actors in specific scenarios.

Although some dialogically expansive comments were present in the Chapter 6 dataset, these were not indicative of a more varied representation of *women/woman* and *girl(s)*. Instead, these were used to discredit opinions that women and feminists are perceived as holding. Contrastingly, and again similarly to Chapter 5, *TRP* users acknowledged a variety of behaviours and personalities for male social actors, and *men/man* and *guy(s)* were presented as individuals more often than *women/woman* and *girl(s)*, who were instead presented as a

homogeneous group. Thus, the feminine gender role was more strictly defined than the male one. This being said, in both Chapter 5 and 6, *girls* were represented less homogeneously than *women*, as the term *girls* was used to describe individual female social actors in scenarios concerning dating and relationships. It was only in this context that *girls* were judged in a positive manner in Chapter 6 (i.e. as desirable partners with attractive qualities). This indicates a manosphere belief that female social actors can only be evaluated positively when they are desirable partners for men, which reduces them to sexual objects. It was also notable that *girls* in Chapter 5 was used to refer to both teenage girls and young adult women, whereas the term in Chapter 6 almost solely referred to adult women. This indicates that adult women are infantilised to a degree in the manosphere, but also that this is not the sole use of the term *girls*.

In both Chapter 5 and 6, female social actors were sexually objectified and passive in dating/sexual contexts, particularly in comparison to male social actors. In Chapter 6, *men/man* were judged the most and appreciated the least of any social actor. Thus, male social actors were more often discussed in terms of their behaviour whereas female social actors were consistently referred to in terms of their physical attractiveness and suitability as romantic partners. This being said, in both Chapter 5 and 6, *guys* was used to discuss male social actors in specific scenarios which included relational contexts, with *guys* lacking sexual agency in Chapter 5. Furthermore, in both chapters, *guys* were described in terms of their aesthetics (how tall they are in Chapter 5, and how muscular they are in Chapter 6), whereas *men* were not. This indicates that sexualised ascriptions were not unique to the female social actors, and thus should not be considered the benchmark for determining what constitutes unequal representation of men and women. However, they do indicate that height and musculature are salient in representing men in the manosphere.

However, unlike Chapter 5, the results of Chapter 6 highlighted the extent to which female social actors were dehumanised. Indeed, two types of dehumanisation were present in the representation of *women*. *Women* were represented as both animals and as robotic machines in that they were represented as having a biological drive which compels them to act in a pre-defined manner. This finding is notable because this characteristic of manosphere language has been associated with only the PUA and incel communities in the past literature (e.g. Denes, 2011; Chang, 2020). However, the results of Chapter 6 indicate that it would be appropriate to characterise the manosphere as a whole in this fashion.

In both Chapters 5 and 6, the perceived emotionality of female social actors is referenced. To some extent, in Chapter 6, this is linked to the manosphere's post-feminist and anti-feminist beliefs, as it was argued that feminism has led female social actors to feel unhappy and insecure. However, many of the emotional ascriptions in Chapter 6 can be considered explicitly sexist. Although both chapters discuss desiderative processes of wanting, the manosphere users in Chapter 6 utilise pseudo-academic terms to justify the assertions made about the desires and behaviour of *women*. The term "hybristophilic" is used to describe the supposed pre-requisites for a woman finding a man attractive. Indeed, "hybristophilic" refers to people who have a sexual paraphilia for partners who have committed dangerous crimes such as sexual assault or murder. This ascription of women's desires cannot be separated from the widespread cultural trope of women solely being attracted to men who are bad for them, often expressed through adages such as "nice guys finish last" and "treat them mean, keep them keen" (Urbaniak and Kilmann, 2003). However, in the manosphere, this trope is taken to the extreme and can be used to justify harmful behaviour towards women. Indeed, in the same dataset, there is one instance of a user claiming that when *girls* dress in a certain way, it compels men to commit rape. Thus, victim-blaming logic was used to justify sexual assault, although it should be noted that such explicit assertions were rare. Rather, victim-blaming assertions were done more implicitly in both datasets, as *women* were represented as lying about being sexually assaulted. Of course, making the assertion that some female social actors want to be raped is not the same as perpetuating rape culture by disregarding accounts of women's experiences. Nevertheless, the prevalence of victim-blaming logic in Chapter 5 and 6 illustrates that the manosphere as a whole expresses a strong distrust of women who report having experienced sexual violence. This provides linguistic evidence that the topic of (and perceived prevalence of) "false" rape accusations are central to the manosphere as a whole. The prevalence of this topic in the manosphere should not be considered in isolation from mainstream conceptualisations of gender relations, as women face offline barriers to reporting sexual violence and having their cases taken seriously. Indeed, only 1.6% of reported rape cases in 2020 in the England and Wales resulted in a charge or summons (Barr and Topping, 2021), and the majority of sexual assault survivors do not report their experiences (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, n.d.).

Central to the representation of *women* and *girls* in Chapter 6 was the perception that they are immoral, selfish and exploitative in their supposed approach to romantic partners. This was done using a co-opted definition of the term "hypergamy". In its original context, the term hypergamy was used in India to refer a woman being "married up" to a man with more wealth

and social status than her family, on the condition that one's family could pay an increased dowry to the groom's family (Shah, 2010). However, in the *TRP* dataset used in Chapter 6, hypergamy refers to the act of women constantly seeking partners who are the most attractive and have the most social status and wealth. This is framed as an innate trait of all women and thus situates them as shallow, as prone to cheating on their partners, as incapable of unconditional love, and as unable to develop feelings and have relationships with men of lower socio-economic statuses and a range of appearances. This use of the term "hypergamy" was originally coined by far-right white nationalist figure Francis Roger Devlin, writer of the 2006 article *Sexual Utopia in Power* which is one of the required readings on the *TRP* sidebar. By representing *women* and *girls* as "hybristophiliacs" and as hypergamous, they are represented as incapable of controlling their behaviour. Thus, female social actors are not conceptualised as fully autonomous people which, when combined with the prevalence of passivation in dating/sexual contexts and presenting them as sexual objects, constitutes unambiguous dehumanisation. The use of pseudo-academic language supports findings from the past literature which show that manosphere users reference concepts from academia, specifically evolutionary psychology, to support their beliefs (e.g. Van Valkenburgh, 2018).

It should also be noted that in Chapter 6, *men* were also represented as immoral but with a perceived legitimate justification for this immorality. This justification was that either women also act in an immoral way (because of hypergamy), or that women desire such behaviour (because of hybristophilia). Thus, throughout the findings of Chapter 6 runs a logic which excuses perpetrators of assault against women, and blames the victims of such assaults. This being said, not all perceived immoral behaviours towards women are condoned in *TRP*. Indeed, in both Chapter 5 and 6, "nice guys" were framed in a negative manner for being manipulative and deceptive towards women. In this context, "nice guy" refers to a man who is only nice to women in the hopes that they will be attracted to him, and who gets angry if his feelings are not reciprocated. This finding is notable because the "nice guy" trope has been associated with the incel community (e.g. Vito, Admire and Hughes, 2018), in that incels resent that their supposed nice personalities and treatment of women have not translated into romantic and sexual relationships with women. This finding suggests that "nice guys", and by extension incels, are viewed negatively in *TRP*, and thus it is inappropriate to categorise all manosphere communities as attempting to manipulate women by feigning friendship. This sets incels apart from the rest of the manosphere for condoning this behaviour.

One predictable shared finding between Chapters 5 and 6 was that female social actors were broadly represented as more passive than active (with the exception of *girls* in Chapter 5). It

was also predictable that when male social actors were grammatically active in Chapter 6, they were represented in more semantically agentive processes (see Darics and Koller, 2019) than female social actors. However, what I did not expect was that male social actors would be represented as relatively passively as they were: *men* in both Chapters 5 and 6 were represented as equally active and passive, *guys* were represented as more active in Chapter 5, but more passive in Chapter 6. Furthermore, *men* were represented as both capable and incapable in Chapter 6. This shows that male social actors are represented as simultaneously having power and not having it. The passive aspect of this finding could reflect the feeling of powerlessness that manosphere users report experiencing at the hands of women and a society which is overly feminist. Indeed, a shared finding from Chapter 5 and 6 is the conflation of these two concepts. On the other hand, the instances where male social actors are represented as active could reflect the parts of life which male social actors are represented as having control over. However, the verbs which occur to the right of *men* and *guys* in Chapter 5 do not indicate any consistent themes, and in Chapter 6, the active verbs are only categorised by process type. Indeed, one limitation of Chapter 6 is that I did not have the space to elaborate on the particular verbs which constituted material processes for each social actor. This means the information we can glean from the active verbs is limited. Nevertheless, when *men* were represented as capable in Chapter 6, which indicates a level of potential semantic agency, these capabilities were framed in opposition to the capabilities of *women*. Thus, despite *men* being characterised as powerless overall, an effort is made to represent them as more powerful than *women* in some regard.

As in Chapter 5, *men* were represented as victimised and as disadvantaged in society in Chapter 6, particularly in the MRA sub-corpus. However, the appraisal analysis in Chapter 6 took this finding one step further by associating these notions with two emotions: unhappiness and insecurity. *Men* were represented as being unhappy in two ways: being more likely than women to commit suicide more generally, and unhappy about the way that female social actors were represented as acting. When *men* were represented as insecure, this was expressed through adjectives denoting fear (“afraid” and “scared”), which provides linguistic support for Blais and Dupuis-Déri’s (2012) assertion that masculinist movements are driven by fear. It is interesting to note that anger was not a common emotion in this dataset, which suggests that describing the whole manosphere as a category motivated by “aggrieved entitlement” (Kimmel, 2013) may be a slight misnomer. Indeed, while the findings indicate that the manosphere is driven by a sense of entitlement to certain behaviours from women, this is not necessarily expressed in an aggressive manner.

Despite splitting the *TRP* dataset in Chapter 6 by the flair associated with the MRA, MGTOW and PUA sub-communities, the number of shared findings between the communities was notable. However, the findings which were unique to a given subcorpus provided evidence for the beliefs which underpin the distinct communities. Indeed, *men* were represented as victims most prevalently in the MRA subcorpus, and *women* and *girls* were seen as insignificant in the MGTOW subcorpus. In the PUA sub-corpus, *girls* were represented in terms of convenience and abundance, and *men* were not represented as insecure nor unhappy from an internal perspective (although feminists were said to claim they were unhappy). Interestingly, in only the MGTOW subcorpus were some *women* represented as being hypothetically moral. However, the fact that *women* were deemed to be so unambiguously immoral across all three subcorpora rather relativises this representation.

Overall, the number of shared findings between the communities in this study indicated that although it is useful to conceptualise the manosphere as containing distinct groups, the number of shared beliefs between them about gendered social actors has been downplayed in the past literature.

The purpose of both Chapter 5 and 6 was to consider my first principal research question:

1. How are male and female social actors represented in the manosphere?
 - 1a. To what extent and in what ways are these representations homogenous and different from one another?

To do this, I chose methodologies which enabled the analysis of the Reddit manosphere as “text” (Androutsopoulos, 2013). There is no doubt that the manosphere represent male and female social actors as immutably different from one another, and in a homogeneous manner. Furthermore, the content analysed for this thesis is vehemently sexist. I now turn to Chapter 7, which considered the *TRP* as “place” and thus considered *TRP* in terms of social dynamics in order to answer my second research question.

1.3 Speech acts between users in *The Red Pill*

Lastly, in Chapter 7, I analysed how users acted in relation to one another in *TRP* within a sample of 10 posts and their associated comment threads. This was done to investigate my second principal research question: how *r/TheRedPill* functions as a community. In particular, I considered the extent to which *TRP* shares characteristics with men’s online self-help groups. To do this, I investigated the speech acts which characterised their posts and comments and

how they corresponded to relational work and impression management strategies. I also investigated whether user prestige within *TRP* affected the choice of speech acts.

Overall, I found that *TRP* was characterised more by face-enhancement than by face-threat, although the amount of face-threat found was uncharacteristic of traditional men's online self-help groups. Face-enhancement consisted of mostly agreement, complimenting/praising, and thanking other users for their contributions. This suggests that a degree of social support occurs within *TRP*, and thus users could be drawn to posting in the *TRP* community, as doing so would enable them to receive such support. This is also supported by the prevalence of personal disclosure in the dataset, some of which expressed the vulnerabilities of *TRP* members. Indeed, Bates (2020) observes that some people who join the MGTOW sub-community do so for social acceptance, as do some who join the incel sub-community (Regehr, 2020). This study has allowed me to extend this same observation to the wider manosphere.

This being said, I also found that the posts and comments were focused on factual information as opposed to personal disclosure and explicit emotional support (i.e. via speech acts such as sympathising, empathising, or expressing positive emotions). This information focus was also reflected in the prevalence of self-promoting speech acts such as giving advice to other users (much of which was unsolicited) and elaborating on pre-existing topics with new factual information. This sets *TRP* apart from traditional men's online self-help communities, as the emotional support was secondary to all the information provided in *TRP*. The prevalence of self-promoting speech acts in *TRP* could signal two possibilities. It could indicate that users wish to help their fellow community members by providing them with information to inform their worldview. It could also show that, by actively participating in the manosphere by demonstrating their knowledge, users wish to climb the *TRP* hierarchy, as Dishy (2018) claims they do. However, without interviewing manosphere members, these interpretations cannot be confirmed (and even then, interview responses could be disingenuous). Thus, the extent to which we can claim to know why users choose to participate in the manosphere is limited, although this thesis has established potential avenues for manosphere participation by determining how *r/TheRedPill* functions as a community.

Furthermore, a disproportionate amount of face-enhancement was directed upwards from regular users to members of the *TRP* hierarchy. This finding could be interpreted in two ways. It could mean that users wish to climb the hierarchy by seeking to make hierarchy members like them. It could also indicate that the contributions of hierarchy members are considered more in-line with in-group norms than those of regular members. If hierarchy members do

receive face-enhancement for this latter reason, it could encourage regular members to produce similar contributions in the future, but again I cannot confirm this interpretation.

I found that hierarchy members had an information giving role within the community, which was reflected in the rate they answered questions from regular members and the rate regular members asked questions to hierarchy members. This supports observations in the past literature on right-wing extremism (Bowman-Grieve, 2009; De Koster and Houtman, 2008; Gaudette, Scrivens and Venkatesh, 2020) that older and more informed members play a key role in mentoring newer ones. However, in *TRP*, this mentoring takes the form of information giving, and does not typically involve emotional support. Furthermore, the fact that regular members disagree with hierarchy members indicates that the opinions of the hierarchy are not taken as gospel. Although this slightly lessens their influence on the community, the prevalence of upwards face-enhancement does nevertheless indicate that being a hierarchy member comes with a positive reputation which other users may aspire to.

It should also be noted that the topic of self-improvement and advice was prevalent in both Chapters 5 and 7. Indeed, in Chapter 5, in-group men were represented as wishing to better themselves, as coming to the subreddit for help with some aspect of their lives, and as giving advice to other manosphere members. The analysis in Chapter 7 considered the form this advice took in *TRP*, namely unhedged and in a directive or declarative form, as well as the topics which users gave advice on and sought advice for. Users gave advice for weight loss strategies, dieting, and improving one's appearance and taking pictures for a dating website, as well as how to avoid a "false" accusation of rape from women one sleeps with. Indeed, it should be noted that "false" rape accusations were a common topic across all three studies, which indicates that encouraging men to not believe women who report assault is a salient feature of the manosphere community. The existence of an advice thread for this specific situation also suggests that the manosphere believe that false accusations happen frequently enough to pose a significant threat that one needs to prepare for. However, it should be noted that not all the advice given in this thread was harmful. For instance, one popular comment on the thread encouraged users to not have intercourse with women who are drunk, despite believing that women can consent to intercourse while drunk. However, none of the advice in the thread emphasises the importance of ongoing and enthusiastic consent. It instead endorses getting written messages of consent, recording interactions they have with women, and avoiding women who are viewed as more likely to make a false accusation, e.g. feminists.

The fact that discussions about “false” rape accusations and working on one’s physical appearance occur side-by-side in the same space could lead Reddit users who originally came to the community to find advice on men’s health and dating to find potentially harmful content which dismisses women’s lived experiences of sexual assault. Furthermore, the fact that the advice is presented in an unhedged and thus confident manner could encourage users to, if not participate actively in the subreddit, then to read what is perceived as accepted wisdom in the subreddit as practical advice.

Although the sheer frequency of agreement indicates that the beliefs of the community are relatively set, I did not expect disagreement to be so frequent in the dataset. This potentially challenges the claim made in some past literature (e.g. KhosraviNik, 2017) on extremist online spaces that such spaces function as echo chambers. However, the disagreement in *TRP* did not occur on an ideological level (i.e. everyone agreed with the basic tenets of the space), which suggests that the manosphere still functions as an echo chamber to some extent. Rather, disagreement occurred when members shared differing opinions on the topics discussed, such as the advice given on dating and health, the popularity of a given porn star, and wider issues such as the importance of sex and marriage in a man’s life. Some differences of opinion clearly demonstrated an affiliation with a particular subset of the manosphere. This finding confirms that although the manosphere as a whole shares key characteristics, an approach which considers the nuances of each manosphere group separately in their own right is also valid. Furthermore, the prevalence of debate within *TRP* suggests that some manosphere members could be open to changing their minds about given topics. However, applying this suggestion to the renunciation of manosphere ideals is perhaps too optimistic, as these disagreements rarely apply to the deceptive and immoral nature of women as described in Chapter 5 and 6.

In summarising Chapter 7, I highlighted the extent to which users provide support for one another and considered how the supportive and self-promoting nature of posts and comments, and the status of hierarchy members, could potentially lead to user retention. In doing so, I have answered Research Question 2 and its sub-questions, which are as follows:

2. How does *r/TheRedPill* function as a community?

2a. To what extent and in what ways do users in *r/TheRedPill* provide support for one another?

2b. To what extent and in what ways do *r/TheRedPill* users act in relation to one another in a manner which could lead to user retention?

Having summarised the findings of Chapters 5, 6, and 7, I will now consider to what extent the language used to discuss gendered social actors in the manosphere can be classified as hate speech (Research Question 3). To investigate this, I sought to answer the following sub-questions:

3a. Can these representations of gender be classified as hate speech in a legal sense, in that there are calls to abusive action, or incitement of violence, discrimination, or hatred?

3b. Can these representations of gender be classified as hate speech in an academic sense, in that gendered social actors are dehumanised and there is incitement of hatred and other negative emotions towards these gendered social actors?

This is done using the definitions of hate speech established in Chapter 2.

2. Hate speech in the Reddit manosphere

In Chapter 2, I established four measures for whether manosphere language could be considered hateful: whether there are any calls to abusive actions or incitements of violence towards women, whether there was incitement of hatred or other negative emotions towards women, whether social actors were dehumanised, and whether gendered social actors were represented as different from one another in a homogeneous, de-individualised way. These measures are based on two distinct definitions of hate speech: one of which concerns what is legally prosecutable (i.e. incitement to violence), and one of which concerns what constitutes hateful beliefs towards a certain group in terms of content. The latter definition is not necessarily legally prosecutable. I will consider each of these measures in turn, starting with calls to abusive action and incitement to violence, as this measure is explicitly mentioned across both legal and academic definitions of hate speech (see Chapter 2). I will then consider incitement to discrimination, hate and other negative emotions separately, along with how the content of the manosphere conforms to past definitions of hate speech.

In terms of whether the manosphere language I have discussed in this thesis is legally prosecutable hate speech under the Malicious Communications Act, 1988, or Section 127 of the Communications Act, 2003, the answer is categorically no. This is because in my thesis, I did not find any threats or insults directed towards women who were present in the dataset. I also did not find any evidence that networked harassment attempts were organised within the fora, nor did I find any explicit incitement to violence. This finding demonstrates that although the incel sub-group of the manosphere has received much media and academic attention for carrying out incel-motivated violent attacks and explicitly advocating violence towards women or harassing women, this behaviour is not discussed in all the manosphere sub-groups and not

specifically in *r/TheRedPill*. Thus, the manosphere data analysed in this thesis does not meet the legal criteria for prosecutable hate speech.

This finding shows that, based on the data analysed in this thesis, it is more appropriate to describe the manosphere broadly as a sexist community as opposed to a misogynistic one, to use Manne's (2018, p.20) definitions. This is because the manosphere is more concerned with providing a "patriarchal ideology that justifies and rationalises a patriarchal social order" as opposed to enforcing such an order through harassment or violence. Indeed, as Manne (2018, p. 79) puts it, "sexism often works by naturalizing sex differences, in order to justify patriarchal social arrangements, by making them seem inevitable, or portraying people trying to resist them as fighting a losing battle". This is what the manosphere unequivocally does in their comparisons of male and female social actors. However, it is also important to note that there is evidence in the past literature to indicate that incels are a misogynistic community as well as a sexist one (e.g. Hoffman et al., 2020). Furthermore, the absence of extreme misogyny in my dataset could be influenced by the fact that I collected data from Reddit as opposed to 4chan or alt-tech platforms such as Gab and Telegram.

I will now turn to whether the manosphere language analysed has the same linguistic features and topics mentioned that established forms of hate speech as defined in the academic literature have. To summarise, these features are: the homogenisation of an entire social group; the target group being condemned and described in terms of immorality, burden, disgust and as a threat to the in-group; dehumanisation of the target group; and presenting these hateful assertions as factual claims (e.g. Waldron, 2012; Croom, 2013; UNESCO, 2015). Firstly, beginning with homogenisation, it is clear from both Chapter 5 and 6 that gendered social actors in general are homogenised. However, the extent to which female social actors are homogenised is certainly greater. This means that they are less likely to be considered as individuals with distinct personalities. However, this alone does not constitute hate speech.

Secondly, female social actors are certainly condemned within the manosphere. For instance, they are referred to using gendered derogatory terms which are often sexualised, such as "bitch", "slut" and "whore". They are also consistently represented as deceptive, as immoral, irrational, and as incapable of controlling their actions towards men. Furthermore, female social actors are conceptualised as a threat, as they are represented as having more power in wider society than male social actors, and as being violent towards them. This sense of threat could in turn be used to justify hostile behaviours towards them, although this assertion is again made tentatively.

Thirdly, the manosphere meets the linguistic criterion of dehumanising female social actors. This is visible in the argument that female social actors cannot determine their own behaviour due to predetermined biological drives in both an animalistic and mechanistic manner. Additionally, female social actors are sexually objectified and are represented as relatively passive (both syntactically and semantically) in comparison to male ones. However, I do not wish to make the argument that this alone constitutes dehumanisation. Rather, it is an imbalance in the way gendered social actors are objectified which indicates inequality between them. It should be noted that in neuroscientific research, it is argued that those who dehumanise women are more likely to be hostile towards them (Rudman and Mescher, 2012; Murrow and Murrow, 2015). However, the presence of dehumanising language does not inevitably lead to people harming others, and thus manosphere language which is dehumanising in nature cannot be considered legally prosecutable on the basis of this linguistic criterion.

Lastly, the condemning and dehumanising assertions made about women as a homogeneous social group are framed as factual claims. These claims include pseudo-academic terms such as “hypergamy” and “hybristophilia” in Chapter 6, and are also presented in an absolutist and mostly unhedged manner. This could in turn play a role in convincing those who read such language that the sexist assertions made about women in the manosphere are factual (see Meddaugh and Kay, (2009; Sorial, 2015). The fact that the manosphere language studied in this thesis homogenises women, condemns them and conceptualises them in terms of threat, dehumanises them, and presents these assertions about women as factual claims shows that such language can be classified as hate speech on an academic feature-based level.

It should be noted that the term “hate speech” is used here to refer to the negative views that the manosphere hold about women, and not to the assumed internal emotions of the producers of such language (Manne, 2018). Indeed, both Manne (2020) and Over (2021) make the assertion that language being hateful does not presuppose that its producer feels the emotion of hatred. My research has confirmed this assertion, as the internal emotions of manosphere users are more likely to be a feeling of entitlement to women’s bodies, fear, and to a much lesser extent anger, than explicit hatred. Although *hate* co-occurred to the left of *women* in Chapter 5, this was done to refute the notion that manosphere members hate women. This being said, similar findings have been reported by van Dijk (1992), who found that explicit denials of racism were a common feature in racist discussions. Nevertheless, this suggests that the hate speech produced in my datasets does not take the form of explicit vitriol and instead is produced using more subtle language.

The matter of whether such language is legally prosecutable under the Public Order Act (1986) for inciting hatred, fear, anger or discrimination towards women is ambiguous. Indeed, I argue that the language discussed in this thesis could certainly result in this incitement. However, the threshold for speech being likely to stir up “hatred” under the Public Order Act (1986) is very high and thus the potential for emotion incitement in the manosphere does not meet the legal requirement of being beyond a reasonable doubt for the following reasons. Firstly, although the content of the speech is undoubtedly sexist and perpetuates harmful attitudes towards women, it is impossible to determine how many readers of such language feel these negative emotions and harm women as a result. Secondly, other contextual factors indicate that the risk of incitement cannot be perceived as sufficiently dangerous to warrant the label of legally prosecutable hate speech. For instance, there is no proof to indicate that the wider social status of manosphere users is sufficiently high to enable the spread of manosphere discourse on the basis of speaker authority, despite in-group status having a strong effect on the language used within the *TRP* community (see Chapter 7). Furthermore, as parts of the Reddit manosphere are banned and quarantined, the reach of such speech is arguably limited. Lastly, although the past literature has found a clear link between the incel subgroup and violent action (e.g. Hoffman et al., 2020), this link cannot be so explicitly drawn in the case of the other manosphere groups.

Overall, this section indicates that although manosphere language can be classified as hate speech in an academic sense, given its current application, it cannot be considered legally prosecutable under the Malicious Communications Act (1988), Section 127 of the Communications Act (2003), nor the Public Order Act (1986). This is an original research finding, which aims to contribute to the fields of linguistics (specifically language, gender and sexuality) and criminology. This finding also has implications for which mitigation strategies would be appropriate for the manosphere, as detailed below in Section 3.

3. Mitigating the manosphere phenomenon

The following section will answer the final research question, which is as follows:

4. Should steps be taken to mitigate the effects of the manosphere and, if so, what form should these take?

Despite not constituting legally prosecutable speech, it could be argued that engaging with the manosphere has the potential to incite abusive actions towards women in a more implicit manner. For instance, manosphere language could encourage its readers to act in an adversarial manner towards women when approaching them for dating and sexual

relationships. For instance, the claim that women are hybristophiliacs and thus seek and choose abusive partners could encourage manosphere members to act in an abusive manner towards women. Furthermore, manosphere language could encourage its members and readers to downplay the seriousness of sexual assault, as seen in the consistent mentions of “false” rape accusations, as well as the one-off claim in Chapter 6 that girls compel men to commit rape by dressing in a certain way. This language could encourage manosphere members to commit sexual assault, as members could ignore signs of discomfort and withdrawals of consent from the women they are themselves intimate with. However, it is impossible to determine whether consuming manosphere language would inevitably lead to these harmful outcomes, and whether all users are similarly predisposed to committing such behaviours. It is this lack of inevitability that means that manosphere language cannot be unambiguously considered to incite violence and abusive actions towards women.

Nevertheless, this risk should not be dismissed out of hand. Wright (2020) makes a similar, and equally tentative, assertion in his study of PUAs. He argues that the combination of potentially dangerous opinions about “last-minute resistance” (women withdrawing consent for sexual activities once they have started or are about to start), in-group story telling about their experiences with last-minute resistance and advice for overcoming such resistance makes PUAs more likely to act on this advice offline. Thus, the advice-giving aspect of the manosphere potentially makes its assertions about gender dynamics more dangerous.

Elsewhere, a tentative link has been made between hate speech, be it online or offline, and violent actions. For instance, Williams (2021) links the prevalence of online hateful language to offline instances of hate crime. Indeed, Williams (2021, p. 220) argues that the online behaviour of former US President Donald Trump (i.e. anti-Semitic and xenophobic tweets, and tweets supporting white supremacist groups) led to an increase in far-right terror. Similarly, Allport (1954) proposed that prejudice works on a sliding scale, in that less extreme behaviours (e.g. antilocution, or negative speech/hate speech about an out-group) may lead to more extreme ones, such as avoiding members of the out-group, discriminating against them, physically attacking them, or even calling for their complete extermination. This is certainly the case for some sub-groups of the manosphere, as MGTOWs advocate separatism from women (thus constituting avoidance) and incels have been linked to instances of offline physical attacks (see Hoffman et al., 2020). Thus, it could be argued that the antilocution which characterises the manosphere has the potential to lead to more harmful behaviours, and so the antilocution needs to be curtailed. Indeed, although no direct link can be drawn between the views espoused in this dataset and the offline behaviour of users, it is reasonable to

assume that holding such views would affect one's behaviour towards women to some degree. For instance, a connection has been made in the past literature between men who hold sexist views about women and go on to commit acts of violence (Bates, 2020), although as mentioned previously, violence was not explicitly advocated for in my datasets.

In their study of online rape threats on Twitter, Hardaker and McGlashan (2016, p. 89) acknowledge the linguistic similarities in the posts of users who pose a low-risk to others (offensive material with no linguistic evidence of "intent to cause fear or threat of (sexual) harm") and those who pose a high-risk ("intent to cause fear of (sexual) harm; harassment; and potentially illegal behaviour"). They then argue that these similarities "could facilitate a user's gradual escalation from low-risk (unpleasant) through to high-risk (illegal) online interaction" (Hardaker and McGlashan, 2016, p. 92). Although Hardaker and McGlashan (2016) make this claim tentatively, there is arguably research on the manosphere which proves such an association. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 2, Reddit manosphere users move to more toxic communities within the manosphere (Ribeiro et al., 2020) and also migrate to alt-right communities over time (Mamié et al., 2021). Thus, thinking of the manosphere as dynamic is crucial in determining what measures are necessary for mitigating this phenomenon. Furthermore, as the studies in this thesis have demonstrated, the manosphere groups share underlying beliefs, and so no group can be considered entirely free of potential harm. This finding provides support for a mitigation approach to the manosphere that broadly considers the phenomenon as a whole. However, it is also appropriate to argue that the incel sub-group require additional restrictions.

Although not the main focus of this thesis, it would be remiss of me to not state that incels pose an offline threat to people all of genders, due to their history of violent attacks and glorification of incel-motivated attacks in their fora. The studies I undertook for this thesis indicate that much reported incel language (e.g. femoids, see Chang, 2020) and the explicit glorification of violence (Regehr, 2020) discussed in the past literature is specific to the incel community. Thus, this community needs to be treated as separate in terms of potential harm mitigation, as it would be appropriate to classify incels as high-risk users, to use Hardaker and McGlashan's (2016) term. Several researchers argue that the incel community should be classified as a terrorist threat (Hoffman et al., 2020; Regehr, 2020; Tomkinson et al., 2020). Furthermore, Ging notes in her appearance on the podcast Tech Against Terrorism (2020) that mass murders perpetrated by incels amount to stochastic terrorism i.e. incidents which are unpredictable individual incidents and which aim to cause terror in the public. It is also noteworthy that the UK's counter-terrorism strategy Prevent consider incels to be within their

remit (Leidig, 2021). I agree that, based on the findings of this thesis, this is an appropriate approach for the incel subsection of the manosphere, but not the manosphere more widely. Tomkinson et al. (2020) also warn against applying a terrorist classification to the manosphere as a whole. This is because the rest of the manosphere does not pose such an explicitly violent risk to others, and so a terrorist classification could further entrench feelings of censorship and persecution and radicalise more manosphere members.

Lastly, although the majority of this section has focused on the potential harms towards women from men that manosphere participation could lead to, it should also be noted that contact with the manosphere can be detrimental to the mental health and wellbeing of men and boys themselves. For instance, ex-PUA Neil Strauss argues that his experience in the PUA community left him unable to not view women in terms of their physical attractiveness and unable to stay committed to his wife (Strauss, 2015). Furthermore, representing male social actors as afraid and powerless across the manosphere as found in my research could enable male readers to see themselves in this way. To quote Bates (2020, p. 243), “men who hate women make other men afraid of women”. Participating in the manosphere could lead men and boys to feel like they lack power in wider society, or to feel unfulfilled in their interactions with women, if they view women as incapable of giving the love they wish to receive. Furthermore, much research on the incel subsection of the manosphere specifically highlights their negative mental health (e.g. Anti-Defamation League, 2020). Thus, for the sake of these men and boys, it is important to dispel the gender stereotypes that the manosphere perpetuates.

The tactics for dealing with such speech should not be too heavy-handed, given that they need to be proportionate to the severity of the speech and potential harms associated with it (UNESCO, 2015). Thus, mitigation tactics for the rest of the manosphere which do not involve legal sanctions for hate speech should be considered, and I discuss these in the next section.

3.1 Deplatforming

The first mitigation tactic I discuss is the benefits and pitfalls of moderating and deplatforming manosphere subreddits. Deplatforming as a tactic for limiting hate speech online has been gaining popularity despite the internet being historically considered a libertarian space which is not widely regulated for hate speech. A survey by the UK advocacy group Hope Not Hate (2021) found that 83% of their 1512 respondents agreed with a statement arguing that sexist content should not be allowed on social media, and 73% of respondents agreed that social media platforms should be in charge of removing this content. To an extent, this change in attitude is reflected in Reddit’s changing approach to removing groups from the platform (see

Chapter 2). Indeed, during the course of this PhD, *r/MGTOW* was quarantined in January 2020 and then banned from Reddit in August 2021, *r/braincels* was banned in September 2019 (one year after the main incel subreddit *r/incels* was banned). However, at the time of writing, *r/TheRedPill* remains quarantined, and both *r/MensRights* and *r/seduction* operate freely and have gained members over the course of this PhD.

The Reddit guidelines explicitly prohibit the promotion of hate based on identity or vulnerability (2020), including on the basis of gender. However, the examples Reddit gives of hateful activities are very explicit and do not account for more subtle formulations of hateful beliefs. Examples include “describing a racial minority as sub-human and inferior to the racial majority” and arguing that raping women should be legal. Neither of these assertions apply to the manosphere, as women are not a gender minority and I found no evidence in my datasets to suggest that the manosphere support the legalisation of rape.¹⁰ However, despite not being a gender minority, women are indeed marginalised in wider society, and the manosphere dehumanises female social actors and argues that they desire harmful behaviours from men. Thus, despite not aligning directly with the examples provided by Reddit, manosphere language constitutes the promotion of hateful beliefs based on identity. Furthermore, the Reddit guidelines specify that they do not protect “those...who try to hide their hate in bad faith claims of discrimination”. I argue that the Reddit manosphere couches their hateful beliefs about women in false claims of discrimination against men. Thus, in accordance with Reddit’s own rules, the manosphere subreddits which I have discussed in this thesis should be deplatformed, if they have not been already. Indeed, social media platforms must enforce the rules which already exist on their site as a first step towards combatting hate.

The research presented in this thesis provides evidence for the argument that automated methods of content moderation would not be appropriate for determining which subreddits break these rules. This is for two reasons. Firstly, as discussed in Chapter 5, manosphere beliefs can be expressed without the use of manosphere-specific jargon, and so a content moderation system which relies on the use of such terms would not capture much of the sexist beliefs prevalent in these spaces. Secondly, an automated moderation system would not be able to distinguish where manosphere-specific jargon is shared in order to be mocked, as in manosphere watchdog subreddits such as *r/IncelTear*. I argue that manosphere-specific language in this context is used to call to attention the sexist and inflammatory nature of such

¹⁰ It should be noted that Bates (2020) does find support for the legalisation of rape in her incel dataset, which reinforces the point that incels should be treated as especially dangerous compared to the wider manosphere.

language, and thus should not be considered hateful. Rather, it is necessary for Reddit to recruit independent moderators to manually check subreddits for how such explicit vocabulary is used, and whether subreddits are expressing hateful beliefs using more subtle language. Indeed, Mark McGlashan (one of my co-authors in Chapter 5) and I are currently in talks with the London Grid for Learning and their contacts about online language monitoring in schools. Based on the research in this thesis, we argue for an approach to language monitoring which combines using a list of manosphere-specific keywords with more manual moderation to determine where more subtle extremist beliefs are discussed.

Deplatforming is recognised in the literature as an effective way to mitigate the spread of hateful ideas and thus potential harm on mainstream websites. Rogers (2020) argues that deplatforming limits the visibility of hateful individuals and communities and limits the maintenance of their audience and any income that hateful individuals make from their audiences. For example, Rogers (2020) observes that alt-right figureheads Milo Yiannopoulos and Alex Jones moved to alt-tech¹¹ platforms Gab (a Twitter clone) and Telegram (a messaging application) after being removed from mainstream social media platforms and saw their audiences and income plummet. Similarly, Berger and Perez (2016) found that suspending ISIS supporter accounts on Twitter (even repeatedly) reduced their number of followers, and Alba et al. (2021) found that former US President Donald Trump's social media posts received approximately 90% less engagement after his Facebook account was banned and reinstated. Speaking about incels specifically, Baele et al. (2019, p. 20) argues that "without a way to relate and discuss, these individuals would have had no way to recognize themselves as 'Incels' and learn the culture and particular idioms that cements the Incel worldview". Thus, disrupting the mechanisms that allow these communities to form could help to mitigate their development if not their creation. Furthermore, Iganski (2020) argues that it is important to publicly take a stance against hate, as public denouncements send an inclusionary and supportive message to the people who are being targeted. This anti-hate stance could in turn encourage people from marginalised groups and those who are at risk of harassment (e.g. feminists) to use the Reddit platform more freely than they otherwise would, given its reputation as a "toxic technoculture" (Massanari, 2017). I argue that deplatforming serves these purposes as well as limiting the reach of hateful ideas.

The efficacy of deplatforming has also been established on Reddit specifically. For instance, Chandrasekharan et al. (2017) found that after the fatphobic subreddit *r/fatpeoplehate* and

¹¹ Websites with less stringent content moderation policies than mainstream platforms

racist subreddit *r/coontown* were banned from Reddit, the users who frequented them either left the platform or migrated to other subreddits. This migration did not lead to an increase in hate speech in their new subreddits, which shows that the amount of explicitly hateful language on Reddit decreased overall. It should also be noted that although there were approximately 150,000 subscribers in *r/fatpeoplehate*, there were only 1536 users with the same usernames on the alt-tech Reddit clone called Voat. Thus, even when users move to alt-tech platforms, the size of the communities shrink drastically. Chandrasekharan et al. (2020) also examined the efficacy of quarantining the controversial subreddits *r/TheDonald* as well as the manosphere subreddit *r/TheRedPill* and found that the number of new users to the subreddits decreased by 58% for *r/TheDonald* and 79.5% for *r/TheRedPill*. The quarantining also lowered the number of new users in each subreddit, although their existing levels of racism and sexism remained constant. Furthermore, Chandrasekharan et al. (2020) did not find proof of people from other subreddits moving to the controversial quarantined ones to view their contents. Deplatforming the Reddit manosphere subreddits would therefore limit their potential to recruit more members using a mainstream platform.

However, the approach of deplatforming has a number of valid critiques. Firstly, after hateful individuals and communities are deplatformed, both supporters and critics of these individuals and communities are still able to spread messages on behalf of the original person(s) (Alba et al., 2021). Thus, their influence is not entirely diminished. This is certainly the case for the Reddit manosphere, as many standalone websites for manosphere groups exist, they have presences on alt-tech websites, and some of their beliefs about gender dynamics are rooted in how gendered social actors are conceptualised in wider society. This being said, alt-tech platforms are not as stable as mainstream ones, with Reddit clone Voat shutting down on 25th December 2020 and WhatsApp clone Parler having to find another webhost after Amazon Hosting Services withdrew their services following Parler's implicated role in the January 6th Capitol Riot in the US (Papenfuss, 2021). Furthermore, these platforms do not attract as many users as mainstream platforms, so if one takes a purely utilitarian perspective in terms of number of people who could be potentially radicalised by hateful content, this decreases massively if it is removed from mainstream sites. Nevertheless, it is important to monitor the presence of manosphere sites on non-mainstream platforms.

Some researchers argue that banning hateful communities from mainstream platforms has the potential to radicalise them further and to encourage users to migrate to spaces which are less regulated for hateful language. For instance, Copland (2020) found that when both *r/TheRedPill* and *r/braincels* were quarantined, users felt victimised, and *r/TheRedPill* users

took the quarantine as a warning sign to start organising elsewhere. Indeed, deplatforming manosphere subreddits could exacerbate feelings of victimisation which are already prevalent across the manosphere. Furthermore, Jasser et al. (2021) argue that the alt-tech platform Gab is used as a hub for people who have been banned from mainstream platforms, and that together they form a community based around a perceived sense of online victimhood over their deplatforming. This could lead to deplatformed groups of differing beliefs (be they far-right, sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, etc.) coalescing and radicalising each other in new ways. For example, removing groups from more moderated platforms could lead to them using more hateful and explicit language on alt-tech platforms and standalone websites. Ribeiro et al. (2021) found this was the case for the subreddit *r/TheDonald*, as their use of language considered “toxic” increased after being banned from Reddit and moving to a standalone website. However, they found that stand-alone websites for incels did not show this increase in toxicity after the subreddit *r/incels* was banned. Thus, while deplatforming may lead to further radicalisation of hateful groups, more monitoring and research is required to determine how universal this possibility is across different groups.

Another criticism of the deplatforming argument is a classically liberal one: that deplatforming does not allow for hateful beliefs to be debated in the free marketplace of ideas, and that people should attempt to change people’s minds as opposed to censoring them (Mill, 1859). Indeed, Tirrell (2019) argues that counterspeech is important as the first line of defence against hate speech, and Williams (2021) observes that counterspeech is more frequent than hate speech following trigger events for hate on Twitter (e.g. terror attacks). I theoretically agree with this assertion: censorship should be avoided where possible, and hateful beliefs should be debunked and refuted. However, I do not think this is an effective approach for the specific context of the Reddit manosphere. The extent to which counterspeech will reach *r/TheRedPill* is limited due to how heavily moderated it is for alignment with in-group values. Thus, any counterspeech posted in *r/TheRedPill* is likely to be deleted. Although the findings of Chapter 7 suggest that a degree of debate occurs within *r/TheRedPill*, this does not occur on an ideological level. This suggests the potential for effective counterspeech within the manosphere is very slim. Furthermore, the very design of Reddit encourages groups with differing beliefs to form distinct spaces as opposed to sharing space (Massanari, 2015).

It is also important to note that the discussion of these hateful beliefs has the potential to affect how the in-group treat women, and the potential to make men feel victimised and at odds with women. Thus, these beliefs do not exist in a vacuum and so it is important that the negative effects of such speech are mitigated. Indeed, Mill (1859) himself states that it is

important to censor speech which constitutes incitement and leads to harm. Although the extent to which the manosphere meets this threshold is debatable, the fact that the language discussed in this thesis meets the linguistic criteria for hate speech means that this risk should not be underestimated.

One criticism of banning manosphere subreddits is that this may result in a situation where new manosphere subreddits get created and Reddit administrators need to ban the new ones. Although Reddit was slow to ban the replacement subreddit *r/braincels* for *r/incels*, it was quick to ban replacement subreddits for *r/MGTOW* and so I do not foresee this being an issue on the platform. This being said, there is still the risk that manosphere users could evade future bans by expressing their beliefs in more subtle language (see Chapter 5 for such examples). This is undoubtedly a risk which needs to be monitored going forward.

Lastly, before moving on to further mitigation strategies, I would like to mention why I do not consider de-anonymising the people who participate in these communities to be a potential solution to the manosphere phenomenon. Anonymity is not a prerequisite for engaging in harmful behaviours online, for instance harassing women on dating websites (Thompson, 2018), and so I do not believe this would be an effective deterrent from engagement. Furthermore, disallowing anonymity online more generally would set a potentially dangerous precedent for individuals who rely on anonymity for their personal safety. For instance, it is important to uphold anonymity for people such as investigative journalists or whistle-blowers, as well as members of marginalised groups exploring aspects of their identity which are considered taboo (e.g. in countries which criminalise LGBT individuals).

I acknowledge that historically speaking, social media platforms have been reticent to regulate themselves, as the more people who access their sites, the more advertisement views and revenue these sites receive (including Reddit, see Massanari, 2017). Indeed, according to a recent poll from the UK advocacy group Hope Not Hate (2021, p. 6), 74% of 1512 respondents agreed that they “do not trust social media companies to decide what is extremist content or disinformation on their platforms”. One promising way in which this could be achieved is having an external regulator who motivates social media companies to regulate their platforms for hateful content.

Such a system is currently being suggested by the UK Government’s Department for Culture, Media and Sport, in the form of the Draft Online Safety Bill (2021). The Bill (2021) states that user-to-user services (e.g. social media platforms) and search services (e.g. Google) are to be regulated by the independent regulator Ofcom for the presence of illegal content (most

prominently terrorism offences and child sexual exploitation and abuse), legal content that is harmful to children, and legal content that is harmful to adults. Only Category 1 services, which are the largest user-generated content platforms (which would include Reddit), need to consider harms to adults. Category 1 services must also ensure that content of “democratic importance” and “journalistic content” are protected.

There are several aspects of the Bill (2021) which unambiguously signal positive changes for how online content is moderated. For instance, service providers would have a duty to have clear Terms of Service which prohibit illegal and harmful content, specify in their Terms of Service how such content is to be dealt with (2021, p. 45) and establish processes for swiftly removing this content from their platform in a consistent manner. This would encourage platforms to have clearly defined Terms of Service and to consistently moderate for harmful content. Furthermore, the Bill (2021, p. 14) specifies that service providers must have a clear process for users to report content and a procedure for users to make formal complaints about the service. This could be particularly helpful in the case of Reddit, as it is currently unclear how one is able to report an entire subreddit for violating the Terms of Service, as users are discouraged from reporting and downvoting posts indiscriminately (Massanari, 2017, p. 339). Furthermore, the Bill (2021, p. 96) allows for super-complaints to be made to Ofcom in cases where content is “causing significant harm to users of the services or members of the public” or “significantly adversely affecting the rights to freedom of expression within the law of users of the services or members of the public”. Thus, there is a formal process for making complaints about speech which does not fall unambiguously in their definition of legal but harmful speech. However, it remains to be seen whether these super-complaints would affect Ofcom’s decisions.

However, parts of the Bill (2021) require further elaboration, to determine how this legislation can be practically applied. For instance, what constitutes harmful but legal content in the Bill is ambiguously defined as: “if the provider of the service has reasonable grounds to believe that the nature of the content is such that there is a material risk of the content having, or indirectly having, a significant adverse physical or psychological impact on a child/an adult of ordinary sensibilities” (Draft Online Safety Bill, 2021, pp. 40-41). This can apply to a child/adult who is the subject of the content as well as “a member of a class or group of people with a certain characteristic (or combination of characteristics) targeted by the content” (2021, p. 43). Thus, content which is harmful to both individuals and groups is considered. However, this definition of legal but harmful speech is so ambiguously worded that it is unclear what topics could be referenced in this speech, or the linguistic form this speech could take. Furthermore,

it is not clear what constitutes “content of democratic importance” or “journalistic content” as these are not defined explicitly in the Bill. This further muddies the waters on what speech this legislation targets.

Although the Draft Online Safety Bill (2021) does not mention online misogyny, the subsequent Joint Committee on the Draft Online Safety Bill (2021) does mention it. In light of the Law Commission’s (2021) recommendation to make stirring up hatred on the basis of sex and gender a criminal offence (which came out after the Draft Bill was published), the Joint Committee (2021, p. 165) argue that “where the abuse and harassment of women and girls leads to serious psychological harm, it should be criminalised”. This suggests that platforms should seek to limit women and girls being directly harassed, as opposed to policing the behaviour of somewhat isolated groups such as the manosphere.

It is also important that the sanctions that regulating such communities would involve are proportionate to the severity of the speech at hand. Indeed, the anti-censorship group Save Online Speech Coalition (n.d.) argue that legal speech should not be included in the Draft Bill. Similarly, Judson (2021) notes that if platforms moderate beyond what Ofcom require, this is likely to be met with resistance from anti-censorship individuals and organisations. However, considering the historical reticence to regulate online platforms and the commitment to “protecting users’ right to freedom of expression within the law” (2021, p. 11) outlined within the Bill, I do not think that over-moderation is a likely outcome.

The final issue I will mention with the Bill (2021) is that the most stringent content regulations are limited to Category 1 services, i.e. the largest platforms, which means that smaller platforms are much harder to regulate. This means that although hateful beliefs about women could be regulated for on a large platform such as Reddit, smaller stand-alone websites may remain unregulated. Unfortunately, this problem is beyond the scope of this thesis, as I have focused on the production of hate speech on mainstream platforms, so this is a problem for future legal scholars to consider.

Although banning *r/MensRights*, *r/seduction* and *r/TheRedPill* would remove a large proportion of manosphere content from the internet, considering how long they have been left to organise and proliferate, this would not be enough to mitigate the phenomenon completely. Furthermore, seeing as some of their beliefs about gender dynamics are rooted in more mainstream beliefs (see Chapter 5), an approach which solely focuses on explicit manosphere groups would not be sufficient. Indeed, as Tomkinson et al. (2020) note, it is important to address sexism and misogyny as a society-wide issue, as opposed to solely

focusing on named groups, as doing so deals with the beliefs which underpin them. Similarly, the Anti-Defamation League (2018) highlight the need to take actions which address widely held ideals about misogyny in wider society as well as establishing a legal and policy precedent for mitigating the spread of such language online. So far, this section has considered strategies for mitigating the manosphere phenomenon as it already exists online through deplatforming. The remaining recommendations I make below focus on preventing young men and boys from joining manosphere groups in the future.

3.2 Education

The first prevention strategy I will consider is providing comprehensive sexual and relationships education (SRE) in schools. The way SRE is taught in many EU countries and the UK is currently not fit for purpose, as the majority of SRE focuses on the biological elements of sexual intercourse between a man and a woman, and on how to avoid sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancy (Gender and Policy Insights, 2018). There is a dearth of information on LGBT identities; on experiencing pleasure during intercourse; on how power dynamics can affect relationships; on domestic abuse and online gender-based violence such as image-based sexual abuse and harassment; on what constitutes a healthy relationship; and what consent is in an intimate relationship. This dearth is certainly visible in the way manosphere members discuss intimate relationships with women in my datasets. This suggests that SRE, as it currently stands, does not fully equip adolescent boys and girls with the knowledge needed to navigate intimate relationships in a healthy, sexually satisfying and safe manner. Multiple researchers of the manosphere phenomenon have indicated that explicitly teaching adolescents about consent in sexual relationships could make it more likely for young boys and men to reject the sexist assertions about sex and relationships that are given in the manosphere (Eddington, 2020; Wright, 2020). Furthermore, Eddington (2020) recommends explicitly debunking the myths about sex which are central to manosphere beliefs. This involves discussing how much sexual activity is typical for teenagers and young adults to target feelings of inexperience and subsequent sexual inadequacy, and discussing where dominant heterosexual sexual scripts come from in order to formulate alternative scripts which are more healthy. Thus, comprehensive SRE plays a vital role in challenging abusive behaviour, and preventing it from occurring in the first place (Gender and Policy Insights, 2018).

It should be noted that such a programme has been developed in the UK via the Department for Education's Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education guidance (2020). This guidance highlights the importance of teaching about consent, LGBT identities, abuse, sexual violence and harassment, as well as sexism and misogyny.

Indeed, the policy indicates that “schools should be alive to issues such as everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and gender stereotypes and take positive action to build a culture where these are not tolerated, and any occurrences are identified and tackled” (2020, p. 14). What is particularly relevant to the manosphere is that the guidance also targets the potential harms associated with gender stereotypes, and explicitly acknowledges how these stereotypes may normalise non-consensual behaviour and prejudice (2020, p. 28). Thus, this approach would be ideal for disproving the claims made in the manosphere about gender dynamics. It is also positive that the RSE guidance outlines that students should be taught that pornography does not typically depict realistic sexual relationships. Indeed, Bridges et al. (2010) found that 88.2% of the 304 pornographic scenes they analysed featured physical aggression from men towards women. This could in turn convince inexperienced viewers that sexual relations are supposed to be aggressive, and these viewers may wish to emulate these scenes (Martellozzo et al., 2016). This does not mean that people should be discouraged from experimenting with power play dynamics in their sexual relationships if all parties consent to such a dynamic, but to portray these dynamics as integral to intercourse is harmful. The efficacy of this relatively new guidance change remains to be seen, especially given the unforeseen circumstance of the COVID-19 pandemic which disrupted students’ access to education and changed the way content was taught. Furthermore, given the widespread nature of such gender stereotypes, it would be naïve to think that improved RSE would be enough to nullify the cultural influence of such stereotypes. It is, however, a step in the right direction. It should also be noted that early conversations at home about healthy relationships and gender relations would make young people less susceptible to harmful beliefs about gender relations.

In the event that children, adolescents or adults come across manosphere content online, it is important that it is not viewed as potential self-help content for men (see Chapter 7) but as perpetuating harmful stereotypes against heterosexual relationships between men and women, and gender dynamics more widely. To this end, it is paramount that media literacy and also an element of gender studies is taught in schools, so that children and adolescents can critique these sources of information (Eddington, 2020; Williams, 2021). It is also important that teachers and designated safeguarding leads in schools are trained to spot the signs which show a student is engaging with manosphere content. This could include using specific items of vocabulary (such as the ones outlined in this thesis) and discussing manosphere talking points such as “false” rape accusations and female hypergamy in both implicit and explicit terms. This is indeed an application of my research, as I (alongside Veronika Koller and Mark McGlashan) have discussed the findings of our manosphere research

(both together as in Chapter 5, but also separately as in Chapter 6 and 7, and the findings of Heritage and Koller, 2020) with the internet safety NGOs the London Grid for Learning, Internet Matters, and the Breck Foundation. These NGOs support wider UK government efforts to educate teachers on online threats to children and teenagers, including various forms of radicalisation. Our discussions with these NGOs have resulted in us presenting our work at the UK Council for Internet Safety vulnerable users working group in October 2021, which was attended by representatives from safeguarding charities, Ofcom, as well as the Welsh government. As we are using the findings of this PhD research to inform our recommendations on online safety to these organisations, this demonstrates the practical applications that this PhD research has enabled.

It is, however, important to consider the manosphere talking points which are in fact rooted in harmful gender stereotypes about men. Indeed, it is notable that men are represented in the manosphere as powerless, unhappy, insecure and afraid (see Chapter 5 and 6), and so the underlying reasons for such negative feelings need to be addressed. This is not to say that issues such as false accusations of rape should be treated as more of an issue than peer-reviewed science suggests. Rather, it is important to take seriously issues such as male domestic abuse and men who are victims and survivors of sexual violence (Bates, 2020), who are referenced in Chapter 5.

Furthermore, it is important to provide men and boys with spaces to express such emotions in a healthy manner. For this reason, Eddington (2020) calls for secondary and post-secondary educators to provide men and boys with emotional support so they do not seek such support on communities such as TRP. This support could involve discussion groups with other men to talk about their experiences as boys and men in a way which foregrounds caring and inclusive attitudes, including providing support on feelings about girls and sexuality. It could also involve providing young men with mental health resources, particularly in the case of the incel community (Hoffman et al., 2020). Similarly, not-for-profit organisation Promundo (Fried et al., 2020) advocate the cultivation of men's spaces with non-violent role models, and intervention programmes which acknowledge and challenge harmful gender norms. In addition to this, Promundo (Fried et al., 2020) advocate showing similarities between genders by encouraging mixed-gender spaces. As well as specialised resources, it is important to ensure that young men and boys have supportive friendships, so that they are less likely to seek these friendships in potentially harmful spaces.

Having considered multiple approaches for mitigating the manosphere phenomenon which are based on the research in this thesis, I will now present the limitations of the present research and present directions for future research.

4. Limitations of this research and directions for future research

This thesis has considered the language of the manosphere phenomenon as a whole, by analysing the overlap in how gendered social actors are represented between the five communities, and focussing on the *TRP* subset of the manosphere in more detail. I have established the extent to which representations of gender in the manosphere can be classified as hate speech, and the way the wider manosphere functions as a community. By providing original research findings gathered using linguistic methods, this thesis contributes to the academic past literature on the manosphere, which has been the topic of much journalistic discussion for the past seven years (e.g. Marche, 2016). This research has also formed the empirical basis for recommendations for mitigating the manosphere phenomenon.

Naturally, this research is not without its limitations. For instance, my analysis has only focused on the Anglophone manosphere, despite the phenomenon not being isolated to the Global North. Furthermore, my focus on the manosphere phenomenon as a whole has not allowed me to determine whether or not specific subsections of the manosphere pose more of a threat to women and indeed themselves than other subsections using linguistic means. My hope is that my study of the wider manosphere supplements existing studies of these individual groups (see Chapter 2).

I also acknowledge that the extent to which I can claim that the manosphere language discussed in this thesis leads to negative outcomes for women or for its readers is limited. It is difficult to determine this using purely text-based methods, although this is a fruitful direction for future research for scholars working with violent individuals who have participated or lurked in the manosphere. However, I hope to have illustrated that platforming the manosphere enables the spread of harmful gender stereotypes, with a variety of negative practical approaches to women espoused in these spaces.

Another limitation in this thesis is that my discussion of manosphere language is limited to its manifestations on Reddit. This was done to capture the way the manosphere discusses gender dynamics and functions as a community on a mainstream social media platform which attracts millions of views a month. However, as indicated above, it is also important that research considers manosphere language on platforms which are not as mainstream, such as alt-tech platforms and stand-alone websites, in order to determine whether such language constitutes

explicit incitement to violence, discrimination or hatred. For instance, I would be particularly interested to see a comparison between the language of *r/TheRedPill* and the stand-alone website *trp.red*.

Furthermore, although writing this thesis in alternative format has allowed me to disseminate my research while working on my PhD studies, thus speeding up the potential impact of the research, this approach has also limited the amount of space I can dedicate to data analysis in this thesis. Indeed, due to the word limit constraints of the academic journals, there are aspects of each study that I would have liked to have conducted more analysis on. For instance, I would have liked to analyse the rest of the gendered social actors identified in Chapter 5, particularly the terms which came under appraisal categorisation such as *bitch*, *slut*, *whore* and *cuck*. Furthermore, many of the c-collocates identified alongside *men*, *women*, *girls* and *guys* in Chapter 5 warranted further research, such as the use of modal verbs, which would enable manosphere researchers to investigate how gendered social actors are represented in terms of permissions, abilities and likelihood to carry out certain actions. Similarly, I did not have the space to analyse the specific verbs which constituted different types of processes in Chapter 6, although I hope this will be addressed in future research.

Additionally, although Chapter 7 allowed me to consider the speech acts which characterise the community as a whole, it was not possible to examine each of the speech acts in more detail due to the word limit. Moreover, it would have been illuminating to more closely analyse the content of the threads introduced in Chapter 7. For instance, one of the threads consisted of users giving each other advice on how to avoid “false rape accusations”, and discussing personal experiences which they considered relevant to the topic (see a brief summary in Section 1.3 of this chapter). Analysing this thread in detail would have enabled me to analyse how sexual violence is represented in a way which built on the findings of both Chapters 5 and 6. This would have enabled me to further assess the extent to which there is a link between online participation in the manosphere and offline harmful behaviours towards women.

By way of complementing the affective focus of the present research, future researchers could consider the argumentation strategies which are consistently used across multiple manosphere groups (on argumentative topoi and fallacies, see Reisigl and Wodak, 2001). Indeed, in Chapter 5, I found that the terms *fact* and *reasons* co-occurred with *women*, but there was no space to discuss how these terms are used to justify certain beliefs expressed about women. By analysing the argumentation strategies present in manosphere discourse,

these could be used to determine the internal logics of the manosphere beyond establishing their attitudes towards women and the way women allegedly affect men. Furthermore, establishing the argumentative topoi and logical fallacies which consistently occur across the manosphere could be used to determine what arguments could potentially convince manosphere users to reject anti-feminist and sexist beliefs.

Another avenue for future research which could seek to mitigate the manosphere phenomenon is the investigation of pro-feminist communities for men. For example, there are subreddits such as *r/MensLib* (short for men's liberation) which position themselves as a pro-feminist alternative to subreddits such as *r/MensRights*. Such communities acknowledge the influence of gender norms which harm men (e.g. discouraging men from expressing their feelings and seeking mental health support), and foreground men in their discussions without representing women in sexist ways. Although some preliminary comparative computational work has been undertaken using these two subreddits as datasets (see LaViolette and Hogan, 2019), there is much room for research which is explicitly linguistic in nature such as gendered social actor comparisons. Furthermore, it would be useful to establish how and why the members of pro-feminist men's communities seek out and participate in such communities as opposed to anti-feminist manosphere ones. By undertaking future research into these communities using a Positive Discourse Analysis approach (Martin, 2004), one could establish how to encourage men to participate in feminist communities which reject anti-feminist belief systems and encourage healthy behaviours in men.

Lastly, future research could consider the extent to which manosphere content is being mainstreamed and therefore is becoming viewed as more socially acceptable. This could be done in explicit or implicit ways. For instance, considering explicit mainstreaming, one could analyse the online diachronic spread of words which are central to expressing manosphere beliefs such as non-ironic references to "alpha" and "beta" masculinity, "cucks" (external to kink communities), and more recently "simp" (a man who does too much for or gives too much attention to a woman, without attention being reciprocated, see Marcus and Bromwich, 2020). However, such an approach would require a manual aspect to the analysis to determine whether such mainstreaming has resulted in these words being used in a different manner to how they are used within the manosphere (i.e. ironically). It should also be noted that, given my focus as a linguist, I did not analyse how users move between different communities on Reddit in the present research. Such an analysis in future research would enable us to determine whether there is overlap between manosphere subreddits and more mainstream ones, such as subreddits about jokes, gaming, or dating. Furthermore, one could analyse

mainstream dating subreddits such as *r/dating* and *r/relationships*, as well as subreddits such as *r/askTRP* to investigate whether manosphere users are attempting to recruit Reddit users to their subreddits and their worldview, as some journalistic reporting has claimed is happening (Myers, 2021a, 2021b).

As for implicit mainstreaming, one could also monitor whether manosphere talking points are espoused using less specialised language on more mainstream platforms such as news outlets and non-mansphere social media. For example, Bates (2020) notes the prevalence of manosphere references on fora for bodybuilding. By analysing processes of mainstreaming, this would establish the extent to which the manosphere can be considered a fringe community by enabling researchers to establish the popularity of different manosphere ideas outside their main channels.

There are countless avenues for future research which may be of purely academic interest to manosphere scholars. This being said, above all, it is imperative that future research is done in order to carry out future-related prospective critique (Reisigl and Wodak, 2015, p. 45), that is, to aid in bringing about positive societal change. For manosphere scholars, this could manifest in seeking to mitigating harms against women including physical and emotional abuse by limiting the spread of manosphere communities. This research could also seek to promote healthy relationships between men and women, and to promote alternative communities for men to discuss their gender identity. This research should engage with disciplines outside of linguistics such as law, sociology and media studies to create a unified approach to combatting hate which utilises the strength of multiple disciplines. It should also not be limited to the realms of academia, to ensure that the work that is done results in material changes for how gender dynamics are discussed online and offline.

To conclude my thesis, I wish to quote the late UK MP Jo Cox (Hansard, 2015), who said in her maiden speech to Parliament that “we are far more united and have far more in common than that which divides us”. Indeed, it is paramount that we rail against attempts to portray people of different genders as homogeneous groups who act in immutably different ways to one another, in both the manosphere and our wider cultural context. It is only by doing this that we can hope to achieve true gender equality.

References

- Adams, W. (2018, April 11). *Why you shouldn't have gay friends*. Return of Kings.
<https://www.returnofkings.com/167836/why-you-shouldnt-have-gay-friends>
- Alba, D., Koeze, E., & Silver, J. (2021, June 7). *What Happened When Trump Was Banned on Social Media*. New York Times.
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/06/07/technology/trump-social-media-ban.html>
- Alexa. (n.d.) *reddit.com Comparative Analysis, Marketing Mix and Traffic*. Alexa.
<https://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/reddit.com>
- Allan, J. (2016). Phallic Affect, or why Men's Rights Activists Have Feelings. *Men and Masculinities*, 19(1), 22-41.
- Allport, G. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Addison-Wesley.
- Altman, I., & Taylor, D. (1973). *Social Penetration: The Development of Interpersonal Relationships*. Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Amnesty Global Insights. (2017, September 4). *Unsocial Media: Tracking Twitter Abuse Against Women MPs*. <https://medium.com/@AmnestyInsights/unsocial-media-tracking-twitter-abuse-against-women-mps-fc28aeca498a>
- Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined Communities*. Verso.
- Androutsopoulos, J. (2013). Online Data Collection. In C. Mallinson, B. Childs & G. Van Herk (Eds.), *Data Collection in Sociolinguistics: Methods and Applications*. (2nd ed., pp. 236-250). Routledge.
- Anthony, L. (2019). *AntConc* (Version 3.5.8) [software].
<http://laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/>
- Anti-Defamation League. (2018). *When Women Are The Enemy: The Intersection of Misogyny and White Supremacy*. <https://www.adl.org/resources/reports/when-women-are-the-enemy-the-intersection-of-misogyny-and-white-supremacy>
- Anti-Defamation League. (2019, November 6). *The Extremist Medicine Cabinet: A Guide to Online "Pills"*. <https://www.adl.org/blog/the-extremist-medicine-cabinet-a-guide-to-online-pills>

- Anti-Defamation League. (2020, September 10). *Online Poll Results Provide New Insights into Incel Community*. <https://www.adl.org/blog/online-poll-results-provide-new-insights-into-incele-community>
- Austin, J. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words*. Clarendon Press.
- Baele, S. J., Brace, L., & Coan, T. G. (2019). From “Incel” to “Saint”: Analyzing the violent worldview behind the 2018 Toronto attack. *Terrorism and Political Violence*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2019.1638256>
- Baider, F. (2018). “Go to hell fucking faggots, may you die!” framing the LGBT subject in online comments. *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics*, 14(1), 69-92.
- Baider, F. (2020). Pragmatics lost? Overview, synthesis and proposition in defining online hate speech. *Pragmatics and Society*, 11(2), 196–218.
- Bailey, M. Z. (2013). *Race, Region, and Gender in Early Emory School of Medicine Yearbooks* [Doctoral thesis, Laney Graduate School]. Emory Theses and Dissertations. <https://etd.library.emory.edu/concern/etds/5x21tg05s>
- Baker, P. (2004a). ‘Unnatural acts’: Discourses of homosexuality within the House of Lords debates on gay male law reform. *Sociolinguistics*, 8(1), 88-106.
- Baker, P. (2004b). Querying keywords: Questions of difference, frequency, and sense in keywords analysis. *Journal of English Linguistics*, 32(4), 346-359.
- Baker, P. (2006). *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis*. Continuum.
- Baker, P. (2012). Acceptable bias? Using corpus linguistics methods with critical discourse analysis. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 9(3), 247-256.
- Baker, P. (2014). *Using Corpora to Analyze Gender*. Bloomsbury.
- Baker, P., Gabrielatos, C., KhosraviNik, M., Krzyzanowski, M., McEnery T., & Wodak, R. (2008). A useful methodological synergy? Combining critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics to examine discourses of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK Press. *Discourse & Society*, 19(3), 273-306.
- Baker, P. & Levon, E. (2015). Picking the right cherries? A comparison of corpus-based and qualitative analyses of news articles about masculinity. *Discourse & Communication*, 9(2), 221-236.

- Banet-Weiser, S., & Miltner, K. (2016). #MasculinitySoFragile: culture, structure and networked misogyny. *Feminist Media Studies*, 16(1), 171-174.
- Banks, J. (2010). Regulating hate speech online. *International Review of Law, Computers & Technology*, 24(3), 233-239.
- Bargiela-Chiappini, F. (2003). Face and politeness: New (insights) for old (concepts). *Journal of Pragmatics*, 35(10-11), 1453-1469.
- Barr, C., & Topping, A. (2021, May 23). *Fewer than one in 60 rape cases lead to charge in England and Wales*. The Guardian.
<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/may/23/fewer-than-one-in-60-cases-lead-to-charge-in-england-and-wales>
- Barthélemy, H. (2020, August 14). *How Men's Rights Groups Helped Rewrite Regulations on Campus Rape*. The Nation. <https://www.thenation.com/article/politics/betsy-devos-title-ix-mens-rights/>
- Bartlett, T. (2012). *Hybrid voices and collaborative change: contextualising positive discourse analysis*. Routledge.
- Barty-Taylor, M. (2020). *Gender, Leadership and Online News: How Scottish Young People Perceive Constructions of Women Political Leaders and Digitally-Mediated Politics* [Unpublished doctoral thesis]. Lancaster University.
- Basu, S. (2016). Looking through Misogyny: Indian Men's Rights Activists, Law, and Challenges for Feminism. *Canadian journal of women and the law*, 28(1), 45-68.
- Bates, L. (2020). *Men Who Hate Women*. Simon & Schuster.
- BBC. (2019, October 7). *YouTube terminates Addy A-Game and Street Attraction Channels*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-49957059>
- BBC. (2019, October 22). *'Pick-up artist' Adnan Ahmed jailed for two years for threatening behaviour*. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-50137960>
- BBC. (2020a, September 18). *Adnan Ahmed: 'Pick-up artist' conviction quashed on appeal*. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-54011850>
- BBC. (2020b, December 15). *Gabrielle Friel: Man guilty of weapons haul terrorism charge*. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-55317874>

- Beauchamp, Z. (2019, April 23). *Our incel problem*. Vox. <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/4/16/18287446/incel-definition-reddit>
- Belknap, J. (2010). Rape: Too Hard to Report and Too Easy to Discredit Victims. *Violence Against Women*, 16(12), 1335–1344.
- Benatar, D. (2012). *The Second Sexism: Discrimination Against Men and Boys*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Bentwick, R. (2018). *The Pence Principle*. Randall Bentwick.
- Benwell, B. (2001). Male Gossip and Language Play in the Letters Pages of Men's Lifestyle Magazines. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 34(1), 19-33.
- Berger, J. M. and Perez, H. (2016). *The Islamic State's Diminishing Returns on Twitter: How suspensions are limiting the social networks of English-speaking ISIS supporters*. Program on Extremism at George Washington University. <https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/downloads/JMB%20Diminishing%20Returns.pdf>
- Billig, M. (2008a). The language of critical discourse analysis: the case of nominalization. *Discourse & Society*, 19(6), 783-800.
- Billig, M. (2008b). Nominalizing and de-nominalizing: a reply. *Discourse & Society*, 19(6), 829-841.
- Blais, M., & Dupuis-Déri, F. (2012). Masculinism and the Antifeminist Countermovement. *Social Movement Studies*, 11(1), 21-39.
- Blommaert, J. (2005). *Discourse: A critical introduction*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bly, R. (1990). *Iron John: A Book About Men*. Addison-Wesley.
- Bowman-Grieve, L. (2009). "Exploring "Stormfront": A Virtual Community of the Radical Right." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 32(11), 989-1007.
- Braithwaite, A. (2016). It's About Ethics in Games Journalism? Gamergaters and Geek Masculinity. *Social Media and Society*, 2(4), 1-10.
- Brandenburg v. Ohio, 395 U.S. 444. (1969). <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/395/444/>

- Bratich, J., & Banet-Weiser, S. (2019). From Pick-Up Artists to Incels: Con(fidence) Games, Networked Misogyny, and the Failure of Neoliberalism. *International Journal of Communication*, 13(1), 5003–5027.
- Brezina, V., Timperley, M., & McEnery, T. (2018). #LancsBox (Version 5.1.2) [software]. <http://corpora.lancs.ac.uk/lancsbox/>
- Bridges, A. J., Wosnitzer, R., Scharrer, E., Sun, C., & Liberman, R. (2010). Aggression and Sexual Behavior in Best-Selling Pornography Videos: A Content Analysis Update. *Violence Against Women*, 16(10), 1065–1085.
- Bridges, T., & Pascoe, C. (2014). Hybrid Masculinities: New Directions in the Sociology of Men and Masculinities. *Sociology Compass*, 8(3), 246-258.
- Brindle, A. (2018). The Object of Subordination is Immaterial: Discourse Constructions of Masculinity in a Far-Right Online Forum. In P. Baker and G. Balirano (Eds.), *Queering masculinities in language and culture*. (pp. 251-275). Springer.
- British Association for Applied Linguistics. (2021). *Recommendations on Good Practice in Applied Linguistics*. <https://www.baal.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/BAAL-Good-Practice-Guidelines-2021.pdf>
- Brookes, G., & McEnery, T. (2019). The utility of topic modelling for discourse studies: A critical evaluation. *Discourse Studies*, 21(1), 3-21.
- boyd, d. (2011). Social network sites as networked publics: Affordances, dynamics, and implications. In Z. Papacharissi (Ed.), *A networked self: Identity, community and culture on social network sites* (pp. 39–58). Routledge.
- Breeze, R. (2011). Critical Discourse Analysis And Its Critics. *Pragmatics*, 21(4), 493-525.
- Brown, A. (2017). What is so special about online (as compared of offline) hate speech? *Ethnicities*, 18(3), 297-326.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1978). Universals in Language Usage: Politeness Phenomena. In E. Goody (Ed.), *Questions and Politeness: Strategies in Social Interaction* (pp. 56-310). Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press.

- Bruckman, A. (2002). Studying the amateur artist: A perspective on disguising data collected in human subjects research on the internet. *Ethics and Information Technology*, 4(3), 217-231.
- Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2005). Identity and interaction: a sociocultural linguistic approach. *Discourse Studies*, 7(4-5), 585-614.
- Burman, M., Lovett, J., & Kelly, L. (2009). *Scotland Country Report. Different Systems, Similar Outcomes? Tracking Attrition in Reported Rape Cases in 11 European Countries* CWASU London Metropolitan University. [https://www.sccjr.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Daphne_Scotland_Briefing-__Different_Systems,_similar_outcomes\(3\).pdf](https://www.sccjr.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Daphne_Scotland_Briefing-__Different_Systems,_similar_outcomes(3).pdf)
- Burnap, P., & Williams, M. (2015). Cyber Hate Speech on Twitter: An Application of Machine Classification and Statistical Modeling for Policy and Decision Making. *Policy and Internet*, 7(2), 223-242.
- Butler, J. (2004). *Undoing Gender*. Routledge.
- Caldas-Coulthard, C., & Moon, R. (2010). 'Curvy, hunky, kinky': Using corpora as tools for Critical Discourse Analysis. *Discourse & Society*, 21(2), 99-133.
- Catalano, T., & Waugh, L. (2020). *Critical Discourse Analysis, Critical Discourse Studies and Beyond*. Springer International Publishing AG.
- Cecco, L. (2020, May 19). *Canada police say machete killing was 'incel' terror attack*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/19/toronto-attack-incel-terrorism-canada-police>
- Chandrasekharan, E., Pavalanathan, U., Srinivasan, A., Glynn, A., Eisenstein, J., and Gilbert, E. (2017). You can't stay here: The efficacy of Reddit's 2015 Ban examined through hate speech. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, 1(2), 1-22. <http://comp.social.gatech.edu/papers/cscw18-chand-hate.pdf>
- Chandrasekharan, E., Jhaver, S., Bruckman, A., and Gilbert, E. (2020). Quarantined! Examining the Effects of a Community-Wide Moderation Intervention on Reddit. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2009.11483>
- Chang, W. (2020). The monstrous-feminine in the incel imagination: investigating the representation of women as "femoids" on /r/Braincels. *Feminist Media Studies*. DOI: [10.1080/14680777.2020.1804976](https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2020.1804976)

- Charteris-Black, J. (2004). *Corpus Approaches to Critical Metaphor Analysis*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chess, S., & Shaw, A. (2015). A Conspiracy of Fishes, or, How We Learned to Stop Worrying About #GamerGate and Embrace Hegemonic Masculinity. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 59(1), 208-220.
- Chouliaraki, L., & Fairclough, N. (1999). *Discourse in Late Modernity*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Christie, C. (2000). *Gender and language: Towards a feminist pragmatics*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Citron, D. (2009). Law's Expressive Value in Combating Cyber Gender Harassment. *Michigan Law Review*, 108(3), 373-415.
- Citron, D. (2014). *Hate Crimes in Cyberspace*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.
- Clark, H. (1996). *Using Language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Coates, J. (2003). *Men Talk: Stories in the Making of Masculinities*. Blackwell.
- Cohen-Almagor, R. (2011). Fighting hate and bigotry on the Internet. *Policy and Internet*, 3(3), 1- 26.
- Cole, K. (2015). "It's Like She's Eager To Be Verbally Abused": Twitter, Trolls, and (En)gendering Disciplinary Rhetoric. *Feminist Media Studies*, 15(2), 356-358.
- Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. (1997). *RECOMMENDATION No. R (97) 20* https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=0900001680505d5b
- Communications Act 2003. (2003). UK Government. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/21/contents>
- Communications Decency Act of 1996. (1996). Public Law No. 104, 110 Stat. 133. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-110/pdf/STATUTE-110-Pg56.pdf>
- Connell, R., & Messerschmidt, W. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender & Society*, 19(6), 429-459.
- Conway, M. (2021). Online Extremism and Terrorism Research Ethics: Researcher Safety, Informed Consent, and the Need for Tailored Guidelines. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 33(2), 367-380.

- Copland, S. (2020). Reddit quarantined: can changing platform affordances reduce hateful material online? *Internet Policy Review*, 9(4). <https://doi.org/10.14763/2020.4.1516>
- Cosma, S. and Gurevich, M. (2020). Securing sex: Embattled masculinity and the pressured pursuit of women's bodies in men's online sex advice. *Feminism & Psychology*, 30(1), 42-62.
- Coston, B., & Kimmel, M. (2012). Seeing Privilege Where It Isn't: Marginalised Masculinities and the Intersectionality of Privilege. *Journal of Social Issues*, 68(1), 97-111.
- Council of Europe. (1950). *Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*. <https://rm.coe.int/1680a2353d>
- Craig, R. T., Tracy, K., & Spisak, F. (1986). The discourse of requests: Assessment of a politeness approach. *Human Communication Research*, 12(4), 437-468.
- Croom, A. (2013). How to do things with slurs: studies in the ways of derogatory words. *Language and Communication*, 33(3), 177-204.
- Crown Prosecution Service. (n.d.). *Hate crime*. <https://www.cps.gov.uk/hate-crime>
- Culpeper, J. (2011). *Impoliteness: Using Language to Cause Offence*. Cambridge University Press.
- Culpeper, J., Iganski, P., and Sweiry, A. (2017). Linguistic impoliteness and religiously aggravated hate crime in England and Wales. *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict*, 5(1), 1-29.
- Darics, E., & Koller, V. (2019). Social Actors "to Go": An Analytical Toolkit to Explore Agency in Business Discourse and Communication. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*, 82(2), 214-238.
- Davies, M. (2010). *Corpus of Contemporary American English*. <https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/>
- Davis, E. G. (Director). (2012). *It's a Girl: The Three Deadliest Words in the World*. Shadowline Films.
- Dayter, D., & Rüdiger, S. (2016). Reporting from the field: The narrative reconstruction of experience in pick-up artist online communities. *Open Linguistics*, 2(1), 337-351.

- de Gibert, O., Perez, N., Garcia-Pablos, A., & Cuadros, M. (2018). *Hate Speech Dataset from a White Supremacy Forum*. <https://www.aclweb.org/anthology/W18-5102>
- Dean, B. (2021). *Reddit User and Growth Stats*. <https://backlinko.com/reddit-users>
- De Koster, W., & Houtman, D. (2008). 'STORMFRONT IS LIKE A SECOND HOME TO ME': On virtual community formation by right-wing extremists. *Information, Communication & Society*, 11(8), 1155-1176.
- Den Hollander, R. (2010, October 24). *Why can't the men's movement get its act together? A Voice For Men*. <https://archive.vn/5h4lm>
- Denes, A. (2011). Biology as consent: Problematising the scientific approach to seducing women's bodies. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 34(5), 411-419.
- Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport. (2019). *Online Harms White Paper*. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/793360/Online_Harms_White_Paper.pdf
- Department for Education. (2020). *Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers*. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/908013/Relationships_Education__Relationships_and_Sex_Education__RSE__and_Health_Education.pdf
- Department of Justice. (2020). *Hate crime legislation in Northern Ireland: independent review*. <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/hate-crime-review.pdf>
- Devlin, F. R. (2006). Sexual Utopia in Power. *The Occidental Quarterly*, 6(2), 9-37.
- Dewey, C. (2015, June 10). *These are the 5 subreddits Reddit banned under its game-changing anti-harassment policy — and why it banned them*. Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2015/06/10/these-are-the-5-subreddits-reddit-banned-under-its-game-changing-anti-harassment-policy-and-why-it-banned-them/>
- Dignam, P., & Rohlinger, D. (2019). Misogynist Men Online: How The Red Pill Elected Trump. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 44(3), 589-612.

- Dishy, A. (2018). Swallowing Misandry: A Survey of the Discursive Strategies of r/TheRedPill on Reddit. [MA dissertation, University of Toronto]. <https://hdl.handle.net/1807/97663>
- Doyle, R. (1985). Divorce. In F. Baumli (Ed.), *Men freeing men: exploding the myth of the traditional male* (p. 166). New Atlantis Press.
- Durrant, P., & Doherty, A. (2010). Are high-frequency collocations psychologically real? Investigating the thesis of collocational priming. *Corpus Linguistics and Linguistic Theory*, 6(2), 125-155.
- Eckert, P., & McConnell-Ginet, S. (1992). Think Practically and Look Locally: Language and Gender as Community-Based Practice. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 21(1), 461–490.
- Eddington, S. (2020). Alt-resilience: a semantic network analysis of identity (re)construction in an online men’s rights community. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 48(1), 114-135.
- Egbert, J., & Biber, D. (2019). Incorporating text dispersion into keyword analyses. *Corpora*, 14(1), pp 77-104.
- Eichhorn, K. (2001). Re-in/citing linguistic injuries: speech acts, cyberhate, and the spatial and temporal character of networked environments. *Computers and Composition*, 18(3), 293-30.
- Elam, P. (2015, September 30). *October is the fifth annual Bash a Violent Bitch Month*. A Voice For Men. <https://avoiceformen.com/featured/october-is-the-fifth-annual-bash-a-violent-bitch-month/>
- Ess, C., & the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR). (2002). *Ethical Decision-making and Internet Research: recommendations from the AoIR ethics working committee*. www.aoir.org/reports/ethics.pdf
- Fairclough, I., & Fairclough, N. (2012). *Political Discourse Analysis: A method for advanced students*. Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (1996). A reply to Henry Widdowson's 'Discourse analysis: A critical view'. *Language and Literature*, 5(1), 49-56.
- Fairclough, N. (2008). The language of critical discourse analysis: reply to Michael Billig. *Discourse & Society*, 19(6), 811-819.

- Fairclough, N. (2010). *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. Longman.
- Fairclough, N., & Wodak, R. (1997). Critical Discourse Analysis. In T. A. van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse as Social Interaction* (pp. 258-284). Sage.
- Fairclough, N., Mulderrig, J., & Wodak, R. (2011). Critical Discourse Analysis. In T. A. van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse Studies. A multidisciplinary Introduction (2nd ed)*, pp. 394-417). Sage.
- Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*. Crown.
- Farrell, W. (1974). *The Liberated Man*. Berkley Books.
- Farrell, W. (1993). *The Myth of Male Power*. Simon & Schuster.
- Farvid, P., & Braun, V. (2014). The "Sassy Women" and the "Performing Man": Heterosexual casual sex advice and the (re)constitution of gendered subjectivities. *Feminist Media Studies, 14*(1), 118-134.
- Fasoli, F., Carnaghi, A., & Paladino, M. (2015). Social acceptability of sexist derogatory and sexist objectifying slurs across contexts. *Language Sciences, 52*(1), 98-107.
- Ferber, A. (2000). Racial Warriors and Weekend Warriors: The Construction of Masculinity in Mythopoetic and White Supremacist Discourse. *Men and Masculinities, 3*(1), 30-56.
- Ferguson, C., & Malouff, J. (2016). Assessing police classifications of sexual assault reports: A meta-analysis of false reporting rates. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 45*(5), 1185-1193.
- Fetterolf, J., & Rudman, L. (2017). Exposure to Sexual Economics Theory Promotes a Hostile View of Heterosexual Relationships. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 41*(1), 77-88.
- Flynn, M., & Stana, A. (2012). Social Support in a Men's Online Eating Disorder Forum. *International Journal of Men's Health, 11*(2), 150-169.
- Forrest, A. (2018, August 9). *Man who called for Muslims to be gassed and sterilised is jailed for hate speech*. The Independent. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/jonathan-jennings-islamophobia-hate-speech-jail-jeremy-corbyn-a8484956.html>
- Fowler, R. (1991). *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press*. Psychology Press.
- Fowler, R., Hodge, B., Kress, G., & Trew, T. (1979). *Language and Control*. Routledge.
- Fox, J., Cruz, C., & Young-Lee, J. (2015). Perpetuating online sexism offline: Anonymity, interactivity, and the effects of sexist hashtags on social media. *Computers in Human Behaviour, 52*(1), 436-444.

- franzke, a. s., Bechmann, A., Zimmer, M., Ess, C., & the Association of Internet Researchers. (2020). *Internet Research: Ethical Guidelines 3.0*. <https://aoir.org/reports/ethics3.pdf>
- Fried, A., Lauro, G., & Barker, G. (2020). *Masculinities and Preventing Violent Extremism: Making the Connections*. Promundo. <https://promundoglobal.org/resources/masculinities-and-preventing-violent-extremism-making-the-connections/>
- Friedan, B. (1963). *The Feminine Mystique*. W. W. Norton.
- Futrelle, D. (2018, February 26). *Paul Elam: The SPLC is calling A Voice for Men a hate group — so you should send me money*. We Hunted The Mammoth. <https://wehuntedthemammoth.com/2018/02/26/paul-elam-the-splc-is-calling-a-voice-for-men-a-hate-group-so-you-should-send-me-money/>
- Futrelle, D. (2020, October 20). *MGTOWs debate the best way to “Red Pill” 14-year-old boys*. We Hunted The Mammoth. <https://wehuntedthemammoth.com/2020/10/20/mgtows-debate-the-best-way-to-red-pill-14-year-old-boys/#more-105408>
- Gablasova, D., Brezina, V., & McEnery, T. (2017). Collocations in Corpus-Based Language Learning Research: Identifying, Comparing, and Interpreting the Evidence. *Language Learning, 67*(1), 155-179.
- Gabrielatos, C., & Baker, P. (2008). Fleeing, sneaking, flooding: A corpus analysis of discursive constructions of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK press, 1996-2005. *Journal of English Linguistics, 36*(1), 5-38.
- Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, P. (2013). Introduction: Face, identity, and im/politeness. Looking backward, moving forward: From Goffman to practice theory. *Journal of Politeness Research, 9*(1), 1-33.
- Garcia-Favaro, L., & Gill, R. (2016). "Emasculation nation has arrived": sexism rearticulated in online responses to Lose the Lads' Mags campaign. *Feminist Media Studies, 16*(3), 379-397.
- Gardner, J. (2021, July 15). *Five people arrested so far in connection with online abuse of England players*. The Independent.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/football/england-bukayo-saka-jadon-sancho-marcus-rashford-greater-manchester-police-b1884846.html>

- Gaudette, T., Scrivens, R., & Venkatesh, V. (2020). The Role of the Internet in Facilitating Violent Extremism: Insights from Former Right-Wing Extremists. *Terrorism and Political Violence*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2020.1784147>
- Gee, J.P. (2015). Discourse, Small d, Big D. In K. Tracy, T. Sandel and C. Ilie (Eds.), *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118611463.wbielsi016>
- Gender and Policy Insights. (2018). *Can Education Stop Abuse? Comprehensive Sexuality Education Against Gender-Based Violence*. https://gen-pol.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/GenPol-policy-paper_Can-Education-Stop-Abuse.pdf
- Ging, D. (2017). Alphas, betas, and incels: Theorizing the masculinities of the manosphere. *Men and Masculinities*, 22(4), 638-657.
- Ging, D. (2019). Bros v. Hos: Postfeminism, Anti-feminism and the Toxic Turn in Digital Gender Politics. In D. Ging and E. Siapera (Eds.), *Gender hate online: understanding the new anti-feminism* (pp. 45-67). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ging, D., Lynn, T., & Rosati, P. (2019). Neologising misogyny: Urban Dictionary's folksonomies of sexual abuse. *New Media & Society*, 22(5), 838-856.
- Glick, P., & Fiske, S. (1996). The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory: Differentiating Hostile and Benevolent Sexism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70(3), 491-512.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Doubleday.
- Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction ritual: essays on face-to-face interaction*. Doubleday.
- Goldberg, H. (1976). *The hazards of being male: surviving the myth of masculine privilege*. Nash Publishing.
- Gotell, L., & Dutton, E. (2016). Sexual Violence in the 'manosphere': Antifeminist Men's Rights Discourses on Rape. *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, 5(2), 65-80.
- Gough, B. (2016). Men's Depression Talk Online: a Qualitative Analysis of Accountability and Authenticity in Help Seeking and Support Formulations. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 17(1), 156-164.

- Hall, J., & Canterbury, M. (2011). Sexism and Assertive Courtship Strategies. *Sex Roles*, 65(11), 840-853.
- Halleck, L. (2018, September 4). *Jews are not entirely to blame for the ills of modern Western society*. Return of Kings. <https://www.returnofkings.com/191425/jews-are-not-entirely-to-blame-for-the-ills-of-modern-western-society>
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). *Language as social semiotic*. Edward Arnold.
- Halliday, M. A. K., and Matthiessen, M. (2013). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (3rd ed). Routledge.
- Hammersley, M. (1997). On the foundations of critical discourse analysis. *Language and Communication*, 17(1), 237-248.
- Hanna, E., & Gough, B. (2018). "Searching for Help Online: an Analysis of Peer-to-Peer Posts on a Male-Only Infertility Forum." *Journal of Health Psychology*, 23(7), 917-928.
- Hansard. (2015). *Devolution and Growth across Britain. Volume 596: debated on Wednesday 3 June 2015*. UK Parliament. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2015-06-03/debates/15060324000002/DevolutionAndGrowthAcrossBritain>
- Hardaker, C., & McGlashan, M. (2016). "Real men don't hate women": Twitter rape threats and group identity. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 91(1), 80-93.
- Hardt-Mautner, G. (1995). *Only connect: critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics*. UCREL Technical Paper 6. <http://ucrel.lancaster.ac.uk/papers/techpaper/vol6.pdf>
- Hart, C. (2018). Event-frames affect blame assignment and perception of aggression: An experimental case study in CDA. *Applied Linguistics*, 39(3), 400-421.
- Haslam, N. (2006). Dehumanization: an integrative review. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 10(3), 252-264.
- Hendriks, E. (2012). "Ascetic Hedonism: Self and Sexual Conquest in the Seduction Community." *Cultural Analysis*, 11(1), 1-14.
- Heritage, F., & Koller, V. (2020). Incels, in-groups, and ideologies: The representation of gendered social actors in a sexuality-based online community. *Journal of Language and Sexuality*, 9(2), 153-180.

- Herring, S. (1999). The Rhetorical Dynamics of Gender Harassment On-Line. *The Information Society*, 15(3), 151-167.
- Hodge, R., & Kress, G. (1993). *Language as ideology* (2nd ed.) Routledge.
- Hoffman, B., Ware, J., & Shapiro, E. (2020). Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 43(7), 565-587.
- Holmes, J. (1988). Paying Compliments: a Sex-Preferential Politeness Strategy. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 12(1), 445-465.
- Holmes, J., & Stubbe, M. (2003). *Power and Politeness in the Workplace*. Routledge.
- Hope Not Hate. (2019). *State of Hate 2019: People vs The Elite?*
<https://hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/state-of-hate-2019-final-1.pdf>
- Hope Not Hate. (2020). *Young People in the Time of COVID-19: A fear and hope study of 16-24 year olds*. <https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/youth-fear-and-hope-2020-07-v2final.pdf>
- Hope Not Hate. (2021). *Free Speech For All: Why Legal But Harmful Content Should Continue To Be Included In The Online Safety Bill*. <https://hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Free-Speech-For-All-2021-08-FINAL.pdf>
- Horkheimer, M. (1982). *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*. Continuum Publishing.
- House of Commons Home Affairs Committee. (2017). *Hate crime: abuse, hate and extremism online (Fourteenth Report of Session 2016–17)*.
<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmhaff/609/609.pdf>
- Hughes, J. (2018). Progressing Positive Discourse Analysis and/in Critical Discourse Studies: reconstructing resistance through progressive discourse analysis. *Review of Communication*, 18(3), 193-211.
- Humphreys, A. (2019, September 27). 'It was time that I stood up to the Chads and Stacys': What the van-attack accused told Toronto police. National Post.
<https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/toronto-van-attack-police-interview>
- Hunston, S. (2002). *Corpora in Applied Linguistics*. Cambridge University Press.

- Iganski, P. (2020). Civil courage as a communicative act: Countering the harms of hate violence. *Pragmatics and Society*, 11(2), 316–335.
- Ironwood, I. (2013). *The Manosphere: A New Hope for Masculinity*. Red Pill Press.
- Jane, E. (2014a). ‘You’re a Ugly Whorish Slut’: Understanding E-Bile. *Feminist Media Studies*, 14(4), 531-546.
- Jane, E. (2014b). ‘Back to the kitchen, cunt’: Speaking the unspeakable about online misogyny. *Continuum*, 28(4), 558–570.
- Jane, E. (2018). Systemic misogyny exposed: Translating Rapeglisch from the manosphere with a random rape threat generator. *International Journal of Culture Studies*, 21(6), 661-680.
- Jasser, G., McSwiney, J., Pertwee, E., & Zannettou, S. (2021). ‘Welcome to #GabFam’: Far-right virtual community on Gab. *New Media & Society*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448211024546>
- Jaye, C. (Director.) (2016). *The Red Pill* [Documentary]. Jaye Bird Productions.
- Jeffries, R. (1992). *How to Get the Women You Desire into Bed*. Smart Corporation.
- Joint Committee on the Draft Online Safety Bill. (2021). *Draft Online Safety Bill: Report of Session 2021-22*.
<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt5802/jtselect/jtonlinesafety/129/129.pdf>
- Jones, E., & Pittman, T. (1982). Towards a general theory of strategic self-presentation. In J. Suls (Ed.), *Psychological perspectives on the self* (pp. 231-262). Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Jones, C., Trott, V., & Wright, S. (2019). Sluts and soyboys: MGTOW and the production of misogynistic online harassment. *New Media & Society*, 22(10), 1903–1921.
- Jordan, A. (2016). Conceptualising Backlash: UK Men's Rights Groups, Antifeminism, and Postfeminism. *Canadian Journal of Women & The Law*, 28(1), 18-44.
- Judson, E. (2021, June 9). *The Online Safety Bill: will it protect women online?* Heinrich Böll Foundation. <https://eu.boell.org/en/2021/06/09/online-safety-bill-will-it-protect-women-online>
- Jurgenson, N. (2012). When Atoms Meet Bits: Social Media, the Mobile Web and Augmented Revolution. *Future Internet*, 4(1), 83-91.

- Keller, J., Mendes, K., & Ringrose, J. (2018). Speaking 'unspeakable things': documenting digital feminist responses to rape culture. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 27(1), 22-36.
- Kelly, A. (2017). The alt-right: reactionary rehabilitation for white masculinity. *Soundings*, 66(1), 68-78.
- Kelsey, D., & Bennett, L. (2014). Discipline and resistance on social media: Discourse, power and context in the Paul Chambers 'Twitter Joke Trial'. *Discourse, Context & Media*, 3(1), 37-45.
- Kendall, L. (2011). "White and Nerdy": Computers, Race, and the Nerd Stereotype. *Journal of Popular Culture*, 44(3), 505-524.
- Kerns, G. J. (2018). *intersect: Intersection of Subsets*.
<https://rdocumentation.org/packages/prob/versions/1.0-1/topics/intersect>
- KhosraviNik, M. (2017). Right Wing Populism in the West. *Insight Turkey*, 19(3), 53–68.
- KhosraviNik, M., & Esposito, E. (2018). Online hate, digital discourse and critique: Exploring digitally-mediated discursive practices of gender-based hostility. *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics*, 14(1), 45-68.
- Kilgarriff, A., Baisa, V., Bušta, J., Jakubiček, M., Kovář, V., Michelfeit, J., Rychlý, P., & Suchomel, Y. (2014). The Sketch Engine: Ten years on. *Lexicography*, 1(1), 7-36.
- Kimmel, M. (1987). Men's Responses to Feminism at the Turn of the Century. *Gender and Society*, 1(3), 261-283.
- Kimmel, M. (2013). *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era*. Type Media Center.
- Koller, V. (2004). *Metaphor and Gender in Business Media Discourse: A Critical Cognitive Study*. Palgrave.
- Koller, V. (2008). *Lesbian discourses: Images of a community*. Routledge.
- Koller, V. (2012). How to analyse collective identity in discourse: textual and contextual parameters. *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis Across Disciplines*, 5(2), 19-38.
- Koller, V. (2014a). Applying social cognition research to critical discourse studies: The case of collective identities. In: C. Hart and P. Cap (Eds.), *Contemporary Critical Discourse Studies* (pp. 147-165). Bloomsbury.

- Koller, V. (2014b). Cognitive linguistics and ideology. In: J. Littlemore & J. R. Taylor (Eds.), *The Bloomsbury Companion to Cognitive Linguistics* (pp. 234-252). Bloomsbury.
- Koller, V. (2018). Critical discourse studies of language and sexuality. In K. Hall & R. Barrett (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Language and Sexuality*. Oxford University Press. <https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190212926.01.0001/oxfordhb-9780190212926-e-5>
- Krendel, A. (2020). The men and women, guys and girls of the ‘manosphere’: A corpus-assisted discourse approach. *Discourse & Society*, 31(6), 607-630.
- Kress, G. (1990). Critical Discourse Analysis. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 11(1), 84-99.
- Kupers, T. (2005). Toxic masculinity as a barrier to mental health treatment in prison. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 61(6), 713-724.
- Lakoff, R. (1973). The logic of politeness; or, minding your p’s and q’s’. *Proceedings from the Annual Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*, 9(1), 292-305.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, É. (1991). *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge University Press.
- LaViolette, J., & Hogan, B. (2019). Using Platform Signals for Distinguishing Discourses: The Case of Men’s Rights and Men’s Liberation on Reddit. *Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media*, 13(1), 323-334. Munich, Germany. <https://www.aaai.org/ojs/index.php/ICWSM/article/view/3357>
- Law Commission. (2021). *Hate crime: final report summary*. https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lawcom-prod-storage-11jxou24uy7q/uploads/2021/12/6.7808_LC_Hate_Crime_Summary_Dec21_WEB.pdf
- Lawson, R. (forthcoming). *The Linguistic Construction of Contemporary Masculinities: Cultures, contexts, constraints*. Oxford University Press.
- Lawson, R., & McGlashan, M. (2017, November 30). “You need to become prime dick”: A corpus-based analysis of self-help discourses and gender constructions in online seduction communities [Paper presentation]. 116th annual American Anthropological Association meeting, Washington D.C.
- Lazar, M. (2005). *Feminist critical discourse analysis: gender, ideology and power in discourse*. Palgrave Macmillan.

- Lazar, M. (2007). Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Articulating a Feminist Discourse Praxis. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 4(2), 141-164.
- Lee, J. (2021, August 5). *Euro 2020 racist abuse – 11 people arrested*. BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-58094408>
- Leech, G. N. (1983). *Principles of Pragmatics*. Longman.
- Leidig, E. (2021, August 31). *Why Terrorism Studies Miss the Mark When It Comes To Incels*. International Centre for Counter-Terrorism. <https://icct.nl/publication/why-terrorism-studies-miss-the-mark-when-it-comes-to-incels/>
- Lewis, H. (2019, August 7). *To Learn About the Far-Right, Start with the ‘Manosphere’*. The Atlantic. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/08/anti-feminism-gateway-far-right/595642/>
- Lewis, R., & Marwick, A. (2017, December 15-16). *“Taking the Red Pill: Ideological Motivations for Spreading Online Disinformation.”* [Paper presentation]. Understanding and Addressing the Disinformation Ecosystem 2017, University of Pennsylvania Annenberg School for Communication, Philadelphia, PA, Lewis. http://www.tiara.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/lewis_marwick_redpill_ideological_motivations.pdf
- Lillian, D. (2007). A thorn by any other name: sexist discourse as hate speech. *Discourse & Society*, 18(6), 719-740.
- Lilly, M. (2016). *‘The World Is Not A Safe Place For Men’: The Representational Politics of the Manosphere* [MA dissertation, University of Ottawa.] https://ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/35055/1/Lilly_Mary_2016_thesis.pdf
- Lin, J. (2017). Antifeminism Online: MGTOW (Men Going Their Own Way). In U. Frömming, S. Köhn, S. Fox & M. Terry (Eds.), *Digital Environments. Ethnographic Perspectives across Global Online and Offline Spaces* (pp. 77-96). Columbia University Press.
- Locher, M. (2006). *Advice Online: Advice-giving in an American Internet Health Column*. John Benjamins.
- Locher, M., & Watts, R. (2005). Politeness Theory and Relational Work. *Journal of Politeness Research*, 1(1), 9-33.
- Long Chu, A. (2019, February 7). *What We Can Learn About Gender From The Matrix*. Vulture. <https://www.vulture.com/2019/02/what-the-matrix-can-teach-us-about-gender.html>

- Lonsway, K. A., & Fitzgerald, L. F. (1995). Attitudinal antecedents of rape myth acceptance: A theoretical and empirical reexamination. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 68(1), 704–711.
- Lorenzo-Dus, N., & Macdonald, S. (2018). Othering the West in the online Jihadist propaganda magazines Inspire and Dabiq. *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict*, 6(1), 79–106.
- Loseke, D., & Kurz, D. (2005). Men's violence toward women is the serious social problem. In D. R. Loseke, R. J. Gelles, & M. M. Cavanaugh (Eds.), *Current controversies on family violence* (pp. 79-96). Sage.
- Lott-Lavigna, R. (2016, December 7). *I Spent a Week Hanging Out on a Men's Rights Activist Forum*. Vice. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/9bkjtz/what-i-learned-spending-a>
- Lumsden, K. (2019). “‘I want to kill you in front of your children’ is not a threat. It’s an expression of a desire, not of an intent”: Discourses of trolling and gendered violence on r/MensRights. In K. Lumsden and E. Harmer (Eds.), *Online Othering: Exploring violence and discrimination on the Web* (pp. 91-115). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lyons, M. (2017). *CTRL-ALT-DELETE: The origins and ideologies of the alternative right*. https://politicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/Lyons_CtrlAltDelete_PRINT.pdf
- Macgilchrist, F. (2007). Positive Discourse Analysis: Contesting Dominant Discourses By Reframing The Issues. *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis Across Disciplines*, 1(1), 74-94.
- Mackenzie, J. (2017). Identifying informational norms in Mumsnet Talk: A reflexive-linguistic approach to internet research ethics. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 8(2-3), 293-314.
- Mafeza, F. (2016). Preventing genocide by fighting against hate speech. *International Journal of Advanced Research*, 4(3), 117–132.
- Malicious Communications Act 1998. (1998). UK Government. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/27/section/1>
- Mamié, R., Ribeiro, M., and West, R. (2021). Are Anti-Feminist Communities Gateways to the Far Right? Evidence from Reddit and YouTube. <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2102.12837.pdf>
- Manne, K. (2018). *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny*. Oxford University Press.

- Manne, K. (2020). *Entitled: How Male Privilege Hurts Women*. Penguin Random House.
- Mantilla, K. (2013). Gendertrolling: Misogyny Adapts to New Media. *Feminist Studies*, 39(2), 563-570.
- Marche, S. (2016). *Swallowing the Red Pill: a journey to the heart of modern misogyny*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/apr/14/the-red-pill-reddit-modern-misogyny-manosphere-men>
- Marchi, A., & Taylor, C. (2009). If on a Winter's Night Two Researchers... A Challenge to Assumptions of Soundness of Interpretation. *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines*, 3(1), 1-20.
- Marcus, E., & Bromwich, J. E. (2020, July 7). *A Short History of 'Simp'*. New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/07/style/simp-history-slang.html>
- Markham, A. (2012). Fabrication as ethical practice: Qualitative inquiry in ambiguous internet contexts. *Information, Communication, and Society*, 5(3), 334-353.
- Martellozzo, E., Monaghan, A., Adler, J. R., Davidson, J., Leyva, R. and Horvath, M. A. H. (2016). *"...I wasn't sure it was normal to watch it...": a qualitative and quantitative examination of the impact of online pornography on the values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of children and young people*. The NSPCC, Children's Commissioner and Middlesex University. https://www.mdx.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0021/223266/MDX-NSPCC-OCC-pornography-report.pdf
- Marwick, A., Blackwell, L., & Lo, K. (2016). *Best Practices for Conducting Risky Research and Protecting Yourself from Online Harassment (Data & Society Guide)*. Data & Society Research Institute.
- Marwick, A. E., & Caplan, R. (2018). Drinking male tears: Language, the manosphere, and networked harassment. *Feminist Media Studies*, 18(4), 543-559.
- Martin, E. (2011, July 20). *IAMA reddit General Manager*. AMA. Reddit. https://www.reddit.com/r/IAMA/comments/iuz8a/iama_reddit_general_manager_ama/c26ukq8/
- Martin, J. (2004). Positive discourse analysis: solidarity and change. *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*, 49(1), 179-200.

- Martin, J. R. (2008). Incongruent and proud: de-vilifying 'nominalization'. *Discourse & Society*, 19(6), 801-810.
- Martin, J. R., & White, P. (2005). *The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Massanari, A. (2015). *Participatory Culture, Community, and Play: learning from Reddit*. Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Massanari, A. (2017). #Gamergate and The Fapping: how Reddit's algorithm, governance and culture support toxic technocultures. *New Media & Society*, 19(3), 329-346.
- Massanari, A. (2018). Rethinking Research Ethics, Power, and the Risk of Visibility in the Era of the "Alt-Right" Gaze. *Social Media + Society*, 4(2), 1-9.
- Massanari, A., & Chess, S. (2018). Attack of the 50-foot social justice warrior: the discursive representation of SJW memes as the monstrous feminine. *Feminist Media Studies*, 18(4), 525-542.
- Matsuda, M. J., Lawrence, C. R., Delgado, R., & Crenshaw, K. W. (1993). *Words that wound: Critical race theory, assaultive speech, and the First Amendment*. Westview Press.
- McDonald, A., & Cranor, L. (2009). The cost of reading privacy policies. *I/S: A Journal of Law and Policy for the Information Society*, 4(3), 543-568.
- McKinnon-Crowley. (2020). Fighting Gendered Battles: On Being a Woman in a Contemporary Gaming Community. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 49(1), 118-142.
- McLean, S., & Vermeulen, L. (2019). From Getting Ahead to Getting Back on One's Feet: Performing Masculinity as a Self-Help Reader. *Men and Masculinities*, 22(4), 716-737.
- McRobbie, A. (2008). *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*. Sage.
- Meddaugh, P., & Kay, J. (2009). Hate Speech or "Reasonable Racism"? The Other in Stormfront. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 24(4), 251-268.
- Megarry, J. (2014). Online incivility or sexual harassment? Conceptualising women's experiences in the digital age. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 47(1), 46-55.
- Messner, M. (1997). *Politics of Masculinities: Men in Movements*. AltaMira Press.
- Messner, M. (1998). The Limits of "The Male Sex Role": An Analysis of the Men's Liberation and Men's Rights Movements' Discourse. *Gender & Society*, 12(3), 255-276.

- Mill, J. S. (1859). *On Liberty*. John W. Parker and Son.
- Mills, S. (2008). *Language and Sexism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Mills, S., & Mullany, L. (2011). *Language, gender and feminism: theory, methodology and practice*. Routledge.
- Minister of State for Digital and Culture. (2021). *Draft Online Safety Bill*. UK Government. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/985033/Draft_Online_Safety_Bill_Bookmarked.pdf
- Moghe, S., & Murphy, P. (2020, July 22). *Friend of slain California attorney says suspect in attack on judge's family had a grudge against him*. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/07/22/us/hollander-angelucci-judge-salas-shooting/index.html>
- Moon, R. (2014). From gorgeous to grumpy: Adjectives, age and gender. *Gender and Sexuality*, 8(1), 5-41.
- Morris, S. (2012, Mar 27). *Student jailed for racist Fabrice Muamba tweets*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2012/mar/27/student-jailed-fabrice-muamba-tweets>
- Mountford, J. (2018). Topic Modeling the Red Pill. *Social Sciences*, 7(3), 1-16.
- Mullany, L. (2020). *Professional Communication: Consultancy, advocacy, activism*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Murrow, G., & Murrow, R. (2015). A hypothetical neurological association between dehumanization and human rights abuses. *Journal of Law and the Biosciences*, 2(2), 336-364.
- Musolff, A. (2004). *Metaphor and Political Discourse*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Myers, Q. (2021a, April). *The teens who seek help on the most toxic subreddits*. MEL Magazine. <https://melmagazine.com/en-us/story/red-pill-reddit-asktrp>
- Myers, Q. (2021b, September). *A red-pill army's insidious battle to take over Reddit's largest dating forum*. MEL Magazine. <https://melmagazine.com/en-us/story/rdating-subreddit-manosphere-takeover-attempt>

- Nartey, M., & Mwinlaaru, I. (2019). Towards a decade of synergising corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis: a meta-analysis. *Corpora*, 14(2), 203-235.
- Nartey, M., & Ernanda. (2020). Formulating emancipatory discourses and reconstructing resistance: a positive discourse analysis of Sukarno's speech at the first Afro-Asian conference. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 17(1), 22-38.
- Nicholas, L., & Agius, C. (2018). #Notallmen, #meninism, Manospheres and Unsafe Spaces: Overt and Subtle Masculinism in Anti-"PC" Discourse. In L. Nicholas and C. Agius (Eds.), *The Persistence of Global Masculinism* (pp. 31-59). Palgrave MacMillan.
- Nielsen, L. (2004). *License to Harass: Law, Hierarchy, and Offensive Public Speech*. Princeton University Press.
- Nissenbaum, H. (2010). *Privacy in context: Technology, policy, and the integrity of social life*. Stanford University Press.
- O'Brien, R., Hunt, K., & Hart, G. (2005). 'It's Caveman Stuff, but That is to a Certain Extent How Guys Still Operate': Men's Accounts of Masculinity and Help-Seeking. *Social Science and Medicine*, 61(3), 503-516.
- O'Neill, R. (2016). Homosociality and Heterosex: Patterns of Intimacy and Relationality among Men in the London 'Seduction Community'. In A. Cornwall, F. G. Karioris & N. Lindisfarne (Eds.), *Masculinities Under Neoliberalism*. (pp.261-276). Zed Books.
- O'Neill, R. (2018). *Seduction: Men, Masculinity and Mediated Intimacy*. Polity.
- Ochs, E. (1992). Indexing gender. In A. Durani and C. Goodwin (Eds.), *Rethinking context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon* (pp. 335-358). Cambridge University Press.
- Over, H. (2021). Falsifying the Dehumanization Hypothesis. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 16(1), 33–38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691620969657>
- Özarslan, Z. (2014). Introducing Two New Terms into the Literature of Hate Speech: "Hate Discourse" and "Hate Speech Act" Application of "speech act theory" into hate speech studies in the era of Web 2.0. *Communication & Mass Media*, 20(1), 53-75.
- Papacharissi, Z. (2014). *Affective Publics: Sentiment, Technology and Politics*. Oxford University Press.
- Papenfuss, M. (2021, January 10). *In Major Blow, Amazon's Web-Hosting Service Boots Right-Wing Parler Off The Internet*. Huffington Post.

https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/trump-capitol-parler-apple-google-incitement-to-violence_n_5ffa5757c5b6c77d85e766f4

Partington, A. (2003). *The Linguistics of Political Argument: The Spin-doctor and the Wolf-pack at the White House*. Routledge.

Pearce, M. (2008). Investigating the collocational behaviour of MAN and WOMAN in the BNC using SketchEngine. *Corpora*, 3(1), 1-29.

Perry, B., & Olsson, P. (2009). Cyberhate: the globalization of hate. *Information & Communications Technology Law*, 18(2), 185-199.

Potts, A., & Baker, P. (2012). Does semantic tagging identify cultural change in British and American English? *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 17(3), 295-332.

Powell, A., & Henry, N. (2017). *Sexual Violence in a Digital Age*. Palgrave Macmillan.

PRAW. (2020). *PRAW: The Python Reddit API Wrapper*. <https://praw.readthedocs.io/en/latest/>

Public Order Act 1986. (1986). UK Government.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1986/64/part/III>

Public Prosecution Service Northern Ireland. (n.d.) *Hate Crime*.

<https://www.ppsni.gov.uk/hate-crime>

R Core Team. (2020). *R: A language and environment for statistical computing*. R Foundation for Statistical Computing. <https://www.R-project.org>

R v. Minassian 2021. (2021). *ONSC 1258*.

<https://www.ontariocourts.ca/decisions/2021ONSC1258.pdf>

R v. Nimmo & Sorley 2014. (2014). *Sentencing Comments*. <https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/JCO/Documents/Judgments/r-v-nimmo-and-sorley.pdf>

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network. (n.d.) *The Criminal Justice System: Statistics*.

<https://www.rainn.org/statistics/criminal-justice-system>

Rayson, P. (2008). *Log-likelihood calculator*. UCREL web server.

<http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/llwizard.html>

Reddit. (2016). *Reddit API terms of use*.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSezNdDNK1-P8mspSbmtC2r86Ee9ZRbC66u929cG2GX0T9UMyw/viewform>

- Reddit. (2020). *Promoting Hate Based on Identity and Vulnerability*.
<https://www.reddithelp.com/en/categories/rules-reporting/account-and-community-restrictions/promoting-hate-based-identity-or>
- Reddit. (2021a). *Reddit user agreement*. <https://www.redditinc.com/policies/user-agreement>
- Reddit. (2021b). *Reddit Privacy Policy*. <https://www.redditinc.com/policies/privacy-policy>
- Regehr, K. (2020). In(cel)doctrination: How technologically facilitated misogyny moves violence off screens and on to streets. *New Media & Society*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820959019>
- Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2001). *Discourse and Discrimination: Rhetorics of Racism and Antisemitism*. Routledge.
- Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2015). The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA). In R. Wodak and M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*. (pp. 24-58). Sage.
- Ribeiro, M., Blackburn, J., Bradlyn, B., De Cristofaro, E., Stringhini, G., Long, S., Greenberg, S., & Zannettou, S. (2020). *From Pick-Up Artists to Incels: A Data-Driven Sketch of the Manosphere*. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338737324> From Pick-Up Artists to Incels A Data-Driven Sketch of the Manosphere
- Riberio, M., Jhaver, S., Zannettou, S., Blackburn, J., Stringhini, G., de Cristofaro, E., & West, R. (2021). *Do Platform Migrations Compromise Content Moderation? Evidence from r/The_Donald and r/Incels*. <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2010.10397.pdf>
- Richardson-Self, L. (2018). Woman-Hating: On Misogyny, Sexism, and Hate Speech. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 33(2), 256-272.
- Rodger, E. (2014). *My Twisted World: The story of Elliot Rodger*.
<https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/1173619/rodger-manifesto.pdf>
- Rogers, R. (2020). Deplatforming: Following extreme Internet celebrities to Telegram and alternative social media. *European Journal of Communication*, 35(3), 213-229.
- Romaine, S. (2000). *Language in Society: An introduction to sociolinguistics* (2nd ed). Oxford University Press.
- Roth, J. D., Nelson, T., Greener, A., Wilson, D., McCabe, C., Hirschorn, M., Olde, J., & Murch, S. (Executive Producers). (2007-2008). *The Pickup Artist* [TV series]. 3Ball Productions.

- Rüdiger, S., & Dayter, D. (2017). The ethics of researching unlikable subjects. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 8(2-3), 251-269.
- Rüdiger, S., & Dayter, D. (2020). Manbragging Online: Self-Praise on Pick-Up Artists' Forums. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 161(1), 16-27.
- Rudman, L., & Mescher, K. (2012). Of Animals and Objects: Men's Implicit Dehumanisation of Women and Likelihood of Sexual Aggression. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 38(6), 734-746.
- Rumney, P. (2006). False Allegations of Rape. *The Cambridge Law Journal*, 65(1), 128–158.
- Ruzaitė, J. (2018). In search of hate speech in Lithuanian public discourse: A corpus-assisted analysis of online comments. *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics*, 14(1), 93-116.
- Save Online Speech Coalition. (n.d.). *Save Online Speech*. <https://saveonlinespeech.org/>
- Schmitz, R., & Kazyak, E. (2016). Masculinities in Cyberspace: An Analysis of Portrayals of Manhood in Men's Rights Activist Websites. *Social Sciences*, 5(2), 1-16.
- Scollon, R., & Scollon, S. W. (1995). *Intercultural Communication: A Discourse Approach*. Basil Blackwell.
- Scott, M. (1996). *WordSmith Tools Help*. Oxford University Press.
- Scott, M. (1997). PC analysis of key words - and key key words. *System*, 25(2), 233-245.
- Scott, M. (2016, 2019). *WordSmith Tools 7* [software]. <https://www.lexically.net/wordsmith/>
- Searle, J. (1969). *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Searle, J. (1976). A Classification of Illocutionary Acts. *Language in Society*, 5(1), 1-23.
- Shah, A. M. (2010). *The Structure of Indian Society: Then and Now*. Routledge.
- Sharma, S., Agrawal, S., & Shrivastava, M. (2016). *Degree-based classification of Harmful Speech using Twitter Data*. <https://arxiv.org/pdf/1806.04197.pdf>
- Sharpe, D. (2017, September 18). *7 ways women are just like abandoned dogs*. Return of Kings. <https://www.returnofkings.com/130126/7-ways-women-are-just-like-abandoned-dogs>
- Sherwin, A. (2016, February 2). *Roosh V: Protesters call for 'pro-rape pick-up artist' to be banned from UK*. The Independent.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/roosh-v-protesters-call-pro-rape-pick-artist-be-banned-uk-a6849351.html>

- Siapera, E. (2019). Online Misogyny as Witch Hunt: Primitive Accumulation in the Age of Techno-capitalism. In D. Ging and E. Siapera (Eds.), *Gender hate online: understanding the new anti-feminism* (pp. 21-43). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sigley, R., & Holmes, J. (2002). Looking at girls in corpora of English. *Journal of English Linguistics*, 30(2), 138-157.
- Slobe, T. (2018). Style, stance, and social meaning in mock white girl. *Language in Society*, 47(1), 541-567.
- Smith, H. (2013). *Men on Strike: Why Men Are Boycotting Marriage, Fatherhood, and the American Dream-And Why It Matters*. Encounter Books.
- Sobieraj, S. (2018). Bitch, slut, skank, cunt: patterned resistance to women's visibility in digital publics. *Information, Communication & Society*, 21(11), 1700-1714.
- Sorial, S. (2015). Hate Speech and Distorted Communication: Rethinking the Limits of Incitement. *Law and Philosophy*, 34(3), 299-324.
- Southern, R., & Harmer, E. (2019). Othering Political Women: Online Misogyny, Racism and Ableism Towards Women in Public Life. In K. Lumsden and E. Harmer (Eds.), *Online othering: exploring digital violence and discrimination on the web* (pp. 187-210). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Southern Poverty Law Center. (n.d.) *Male Supremacy*. <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/male-supremacy>
- Southern Poverty Law Center. (n.d.) *Alt-Right*. <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/alt-right>
- Spencer-Oatey, H. (2007). *Theories of identity and the analysis of face*. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 39(4), 639-656.
- Spencer-Oatey, H. (2008). *Culturally Speaking: Managing Rapport through Talk across Cultures* (2nd ed). Continuum.
- Starmer, K. (2012). *Twitter ruling: full statement from Director of Public Prosecutions*. The Telegraph Online. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/twitter/9555074/Twitter-ruling-full-statement-from-Director-of-Public-Prosecutions.html>

- Statt, N. (2018, April 11). *Reddit CEO says racism is permitted on the platform, and users are up in arms*. The Verge. <https://www.theverge.com/2018/4/11/17226416/reddit-ceo-steve-huffman-racism-racist-slurs-are-okay>
- Stewart, C. (1981). A retrospective survey of alleged sexual assault cases. *Police Surgeon*, 28(1), 32-35.
- Strauss, N. (2005). *The Game: Penetrating the Secret Society of Pickup Artists*. ReganBooks.
- Strauss, N. (2015). *The Truth: An Uncomfortable Book About Relationships*. Dey Street Books.
- Stuart, H., & Phillips, T. (2018). *An Age of Incivility: Understanding the new politics*. Policy Exchange. <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/An-Age-of-Incivility-Hannah-Stuart-and-Trevor-Phillips-Policy-Exchange-November-2018.pdf>
- Stubbs, M. (1983). *Discourse analysis: The sociolinguistic analysis of natural language*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Stubbs, M. (1996). *Text and Corpus Analysis*. Blackwell.
- Stubbs, M. (1997). Whorf's children: critical comments on critical discourse analysis. In A. Ryan and A. Ray (Eds.), *Evolving Models of Language*, (pp. 110–16). BAAL in association with Multilingual Matters.
- Stubbs, M. (2001). *Words and phrases: Corpus studies of lexical semantics*. Blackwell.
- Subreddit Stats. (n.d.). *r/seduction stats*. <https://subredditstats.com/r/seduction>
- Swann, J. (2002). Yes, but is it gender? In L. Litosseliti and J. Sunderland (Eds.), *Gender Identity and Discourse Analysis*. (pp. 43–67). John Benjamins,
- Tannen, D. (1990). *You Just Don't Understand: Men and Women in Conversation*. Morrow.
- Taylor, C. (2013). Searching for similarity using corpus-assisted discourse studies. *Corpora*, 8(1), 81-113.
- Tech Against Terrorism (2020, October). *Incels, online misogyny and gender-based terrorism*. [audio podcast] <https://www.techagainstterrorism.fm/incels-online-misogyny-and-gender-based-terrorism/>
- The Guardian. (2020, May 18). *Why is Elon Musk telling us to 'take the red pill'?* <https://www.theguardian.com/world/shortcuts/2020/may/18/why-is-elon-musk-telling-us-to-take-the-red-pill>

- The Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill. (2021). Scottish Parliament.
<https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/legislation/bills/current-bills/hate-crime-and-public-order-scotland-bill/introduced/bill-as-introduced-hate-crime-and-public-order-bill.pdf>
- The Pew Research Center. (2021). *The State of Online Harassment*.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/01/13/the-state-of-online-harassment/>
- The Red Pill. (n.d.). *The Red Pill*. Reddit. <https://www.reddit.com/r/TheRedPill/>
- Tirrell, L. (2019). Toxic misogyny and the limits of counterspeech. *Fordham Law Review*, 87(6), 2433-2452.
- Thompson, L. (2018). "I can be your Tinder nightmare": harassment and online misogyny in the sexual marketplace. *Feminism & Psychology*, 28(1), 69-89.
- Tomkinson, S., Harper, T., & Attwell, K. (2020). Confronting Incel: exploring possible policy responses to misogynistic violent extremism. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 55(2), 152-169.
- Topinka, R. (2017). Politically incorrect participatory media: Racist nationalism on /r/ImGoingToHellForThis. *New Media & Society*, 20(5), 2050-2069.
- Topping, A. (2021, August 13). *Plymouth shootings may be a sign 'incel' culture is spreading*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/aug/13/plymouth-shootings-may-be-a-sign-the-incel-culture-is-spreading>
- Trosborg, A. (1995). *Interlanguage Pragmatics. Requests, Complaints and Apologies*. Mouton de Gruyter.
- Trott, V. (2020). 'Gillette: The best a beta can get': Networking hegemonic masculinity in the digital sphere. *New Media & Society*. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lancs.ac.uk/10.1177/1461444820978293>
- UNESCO. (2015). *Countering Hate Speech Online*.
https://unesdoc.unesco.org/in/documentViewer.xhtml?v=2.1.196&id=p::usmarcdef_000233231&file=/in/rest/annotationSVC/DownloadWatermarkedAttachment/attach_import_ec25fcc4-72f7-46c4-a8f4-5ad6a018f697%3F%3D233231eng.pdf&locale=en&multi=true&ark=/ark:/48223/pf0000233231/PDF/233231eng.pdf#%5B%7B%22num%22%3A295%2C%22gen%22%3A0%7D%2C%7B%22name%22%3A%22XYZ%22%7D%2C%52C709%2C0%5D

- United Nations. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.
<https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/udhr.pdf>
- United Nations. (1966). *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*.
<https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/unts/volume%20999/volume-999-i-14668-english.pdf>
- United Nations. (1969). *International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3940.html>
- United Nations. (2012). *Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*.
https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Opinion/SeminarRabat/Rabat_draft_outcome.pdf
- United Nations. (2013). *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination: General recommendation no. 35. Combating racist hate speech*.
<http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPPrICAqhKb7yhssyNNtgI51ma08CMa6o7Bglz8iG4SuOjovEP%2Bcqr8joDoVEbW%2BQ1MoWdOTNEV99v6FZp9aSSA1nZya6gtpTo2JUBMI0%2BoOmjAwk%2B2xJW%2BC8e>
- Urbaniak, G. C., & Kilmann P. R. (2003). Physical Attractiveness and the “Nice Guy Paradox”: Do Nice Guys Really Finish Last? *Sex Roles*, 49(9), 413-426.
- Valizadeh, R. (2007). *The Pickup Bible That Helps You Get More Lays*. Roosh V.
- Valizadeh, R. (2011). *Bang Iceland: How to Sleep with Icelandic Women in Iceland*. Roosh V.
- van Dijk, T. A. (1992). Discourse and the Denial of Racism. *Discourse & Society*, 3(1), 87-118.
- van Dijk, T. A. (1998). *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. Sage.
- van Dijk, T. A. (2008). Critical discourse analysis and nominalization: problem or pseudo-problem? *Discourse & Society*, 19(6), 821-828.
- van Dijk, T. A. (2009a). Critical discourse studies: a sociocognitive approach. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis*. (pp. 62-85). Sage.
- van Dijk, T. A. (2009b). *Society and Discourse: How Social Contexts Influence Text And Talk*. Cambridge University Press.

- van Dijk, T. A. (2013). *CDA is NOT a method of critical discourse analysis*. EDISO Debate – Asociacion de Estudios Sobre Discurso y Sociedad. www.edisoportal.org/debate/115-cda-not-method-critical-discourse-analysis
- van Dijk, T. A. (2014). Discourse-Cognition-Society: Current State and Prospects of the Socio-Cognitive Approach to Discourse. In P. Cap and C. Hart (Eds.), *Contemporary Critical Discourse Studies* (pp. 121-146). Bloomsbury.
- van Leeuwen, T. (1996). The representation of social actors. In: C. R. Caldas-Coulthard & M. Coulthard (Eds.), *Text and Practices: readings in critical discourse analysis* (pp. 32-70). Routledge.
- van Leeuwen, T. (2008). *Discourse and Practice: New tools for Critical Analysis*. Oxford University Press.
- Van Valkenburgh, S. (2018). Digesting the Red Pill: Masculinity and Neoliberalism in the Manosphere. *Men and Masculinities*, 24(1), 84-103.
- Van Valkenburgh, S. (2019). "She Thinks of Him as a Machine": On the Entanglements of Neoliberal Ideology and Misogynist Cybercrime. *Social Media + Society*. doi:[10.1177/2056305119872953](https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305119872953)
- Verschueren, J. (2001). Predicaments of criticism. *Critique of Anthropology*, 21(1), 59-81.
- Vito, C., Admire, A., & Hughes, E. (2018). Masculinity, aggrieved entitlement, and violence: considering the Isla Vista mass shooting. *NORMA: Nordic Journal for Masculinity Studies*, 13(2), 86-102.
- von Markovik, E. (2007). *The Mystery Method: How to Get Beautiful Women Into Bed*. St Martin's Press.
- Wachowski, L., & Wachowski, L. (1999). *The Matrix* [Film]. Warner Bros. Pictures.
- Waldron, J. (2012). *The Harm in Hate Speech*. Harvard University Press.
- WebCorp Mini-Web Corpus. (2010). *WebCorp Linguist's Search Engine*. <http://wse1.webcorp.org.uk/home/syn.html>
- Weber, E. (1977). *How To Pick Up Girls!* Symphony Press.
- Wenger, É. (1998). *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge University Press.

- West, C., & Zimmerman, D. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & Society*, 1(2), 125-151.
- White, A. (2020, August 20). *The Matrix was a metaphor for transgender identity, director Lilly Wachowski confirms*. The Independent. <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/news/matrix-trans-metaphor-lana-lilly-wachowski-red-pill-switch-sequels-a9654956.html>
- Whitley, R., & Zhou, J. (2020). Clueless: An ethnographic study of young men who participate in the seduction community with a focus on their psychosocial well-being and mental health. *PLOS ONE*, 15(2). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0229719>
- Widdowson, H. G. (1995). Discourse analysis: a critical view. *Language & Literature*, 4(3), 157-172.
- Widdowson, H. G. (1998). The theory and practice of Critical Discourse Analysis. *Applied Linguistics*, 19(1), 136-151.
- Williams, M. (2021). *The Science of Hate*. Faber & Faber.
- Wodak, R. & Meyer, M. (2015). Critical discourse studies: history, agenda, theory and methodology. In R. Wodak, & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse studies* (pp. 1-22). Sage.
- World Health Organisation. (2012). *Understanding and addressing violence against women*. https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77421/WHO_RHR_12.38_eng.pdf
- Wojcieszak, M. (2010). "Don't Talk to Me"- Effects of Ideologically Homogeneous Online Groups and Politically Dissimilar Offline Ties on Extremism. *New Media & Society*, 12(1), 637-65.
- Woollacott, E. (2014, September 8). *Reddit Gives Mixed Messages After Pulling Leaked Celebrity Photos*. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/emmawoollacott/2014/09/08/reddit-gives-mixed-messages-after-pulling-leaked-celebrity-photos/#2f16965980a5>
- Wright, D. (2020). The discursive construction of resistance to sex in an online community. *Discourse, Context & Media*, 36(1), 1-9.
- Wright, S., Trott, V., & Jones, C. (2020). 'The pussy ain't worth it, bro': assessing the structure and discourse of MGTOW. *Information, Communication & Society*, 23(6), 908-925.

Zadrozny, B., & Bacarisse, B. (2017, May 22). *New Hampshire State Rep Who Created Reddit's 'Red Pill' Resigns*. The Daily Beast. <https://www.thedailybeast.com/new-hampshire-state-rep-who-created-reddits-red-pill-resigns>

Zempi, I., & Smith, J. (2021). *Misogyny as Hate Crime*. Routledge.

Zuckerberg, D. (2018). *Not All Dead White Men: Classics and Misogyny in the Digital Age*. Harvard University Press.