

Of Vice and Men: An Ethnographic Content Analysis of the Manosphere

by

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## Abstract

The manosphere is an online network of websites, blogs, forums, and YouTube videos. This informal association of websites are united in their rejection of feminism and often promote misogyny. Locally, each website plays an important role by providing a space for an iteration of masculinity to form. Globally, the manosphere provides an infrastructure for masculinities to organize in a process of construction and sunder.

Using an ethnographic content analysis, I examine the masculinities on seven of the most extreme, vehemently misogynistic websites on the manosphere and, as a foil, one ostensibly progressive website that discusses men and masculinity. Though each website espouses a unique masculinity as ideal—including, for example, a Christian masculinity, a “sovereign” masculinity that sees men going their own way (MGTOW), and men’s rights activists (MRA)—I document how the men on these websites are reacting and acting to maintain and expand their power. I find that the power these men cling to is not just gendered, patriarchal power. Rather, the hegemonic ideal was a white, heterosexual masculinity (WHECM) that included evangelical Christian and colonial-capitalist lines of force that leverage eugenics’ notions of family. WHECMs often expressed their masculinity in sexist and misogynistic ways, their sexuality in homophobic and transphobic ways, and their whiteness in racist and anti-Semitic ways. Further, WHECMs anointed themselves as supreme by thinking that their race, gender, and sexuality reflect the sacrifice and sacredness of Christ, situate themselves as purveyors of Truth, or both.

I develop a conceptual model to explain the emotional backlash that WHECMs release in response to the denigration of their exaltation and the subsequent loss of patriarchal, racial, and heteronormative dividends. WHECMs' backlash begins as paranoia, in which they concoct narratives that they are under attack by an elite who are weaponizing identity politics. Under a perceived attack, men on the manosphere backlash through an emotional border work that segregates WHECMs via emotional exclusion of Others and emotionally incarcerating men within racist, misogynistic, and homophobic walls. The emotional erection and reinforcement of borders makes the Other proximate and causes reactions of discomfort for WHECMs. This discomfort is then read as an attack, which increases their paranoia, making the paranoia–border work–discomfort system recursive.

I explicate five strategic actions WHECMs on the manosphere advocate to reclaim, maintain, and expand their power. WHECMs encourage propagating the white race with pliant white women who hold the white man in esteem. WHECMs encourage a democratic consumption that includes boycotting companies and culture that champion progressive ideals. WHECMs advocate for trolling marginalized people and using racist, anti-Semitic, and misogynist memes. Viewed as under attack in a racial holy war (RAHOWA), WHECMs also promote violence and killing. Finally, WHECMs withdraw. Sometimes this takes the form of distancing and dissociation to assuage their complicity. Other times withdrawal takes the form of abandonment of responsibilities within society.

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If, by some miracle, you have stumbled upon this dissertation, you are likely to have noticed my lone name as the author. The truth, however, is that this dissertation represents the contributions and sacrifices of a great number of people. The contributions from these kind, generous, and brilliant people made this dissertation better. I am grateful and indebted. Any inadequacies and failings within these pages are solely my fault.

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## Table of Contents

<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS .....</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
RESEARCH PROBLEM.....	1
MISOGYNY ONLINE .....	3
MASCULINITIES .....	6
<i>Beyond Categories of Masculinity .....</i>	<i>9</i>
ASSEMBLAGE THEORY.....	11
RESEARCH METHODS .....	15
<i>The manosphere.com .....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Goodmenproject.com.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>MGTOW.com .....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Time frame .....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Methods .....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Ethics .....</i>	<i>22</i>
WEBSITES INVESTIGATED .....	24
<i>A Voice for Men.....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Château Heartiste.....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Dalrock.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Men, Women and Society.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Return of Kings .....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>The Rational Male.....</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>The Good Men Project .....</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Men Going Their Own Way .....</i>	<i>30</i>
CHAPTER SUMMARIES.....	31

<b>CHAPTER 2: ASSEMBLAGE—A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</b> .....	<b>34</b>
DEFINING ASSEMBLAGE.....	34
OF MOLECULES AND MOLES: CONTEXTUAL SNAPSHOTS AND HEURISTICS .....	36
BECOMING MAN: ELEMENTS THAT PERMEATE AND THE POSSIBILITY FOR CHANGE.....	41
PARSING OUT FEELINGS.....	49
SOCIAL TO BIOLOGICAL: A SINUSOIDAL MODEL OF EMOTIONS.....	53
CIRCULATION OF A STICKY INVISIBILITY: FEELINGS AND SOCIALIZATION .....	61
SUMMARY .....	64
<b>CHAPTER 3: ASSEMBLING WHECMS</b> .....	<b>67</b>
AGENCEMENT: AN ENSEMBLE AND THE PROCESS OF ASSEMBLING .....	68
RHIZOME NOT TREE .....	70
SEXISM, MISOGYNY, AND WHECMS' MASCULINITY .....	72
HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA.....	79
WHITENESS, RACISM, AND ANTI-SEMITISM.....	84
WHECM SUPREMACY AS SACREDNESS.....	91
CONCLUSION .....	98
<b>CHAPTER 4: PARANOIA–BORDER WORK–DISCOMFORT</b> .....	<b>100</b>
PARANOIA.....	102
<i>Hypergamy</i> .....	106
<i>Persecution</i> .....	111
<i>Ideology</i> .....	115
CATCHING FEELINGS: EMOTIONS AND BORDER WORK .....	120
<i>Border Work</i> .....	122
DISCOMFORT AND SHAME .....	129
CRUEL OPTIMISM.....	135
<b>CHAPTER 5: MASCULINITY AS A MOVEMENT</b> .....	<b>138</b>

COLLECTIVE ACTION.....	138
FERTILITY AND FAMILY VALUES .....	140
ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY.....	143
MEME WARFARE: MORE THAN LULZ .....	147
VIOLENCE AND RAHOWA.....	151
GHOSTING THEIR OWN WAY .....	161
<b>CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>169</b>
VIOLENT CONGREGATIONS .....	169
RESEARCH AIMS AND DESIGN.....	170
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS .....	172
LIMITATIONS.....	174
APPLICATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS .....	178
FURTHER RESEARCH .....	181
<b>WORKS CITED .....</b>	<b>186</b>

## List of Illustrations

Illustration 1: Linear Regression.....	35
Illustration 2: Sine Wave.....	55

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Research Problem

While misogynistic harassment and violence are not new, there are increasing instances of violence and harassment from men whose misogyny had festered and been folded into their notions of masculinity in a loose assortment of online websites known as the “manosphere.” Misogynists have infiltrated online spaces (Drüeke and Zobl 2016) and use venomous backlash (Blais and Dupuis-Déri 2012; Messner 2016) to silence (Lumsden and Morgan 2017) and discredit women and feminists (García-Favaro and Gill 2016; Ging 2017; Jane 2014b; Massanari 2017). Moments before murdering ten people and injuring fifteen more, Alek Minassian posted a message to his Facebook account that referenced the online Incel community, a collection of “involuntary celibate” men. Minassian’s message read: “Private (Recruit) Minassian Infantry 00010, wishing to speak to Sgt 4chan please. C23249161. The Incel Rebellion has already begun! We will overthrow all the Chads and Stacy’s! All hail the Supreme Gentleman Elliot Rodger!” This Facebook post also hails Elliot Rodger, who killed six people and injured fourteen in retribution for perceived sexual and social rejection. In his manifesto, Rodgers explains that the manosphere helped confirm his view that women were evil (Van Valkenburgh 2018), writing that “Women are like a plague that must be quarantined” (Rodger 2014:117).

Women, feminists, and other people who occupy marginalized positions are under attack from particularly misogynistic men. Yet there is little information about or

investigation into these men. The manosphere is a space where a particularly misogynistic masculinity is constructed, where men come to vent about women, feminism, and a society from which they feel under attack, and to discuss strategies to reassert male supremacy that include violence. The purpose of this dissertation is to explore how masculinities manifest within a sample of the most extreme, vehemently misogynistic websites on the manosphere.

My research has produced three main analytic findings:

- 1) The construction of masculinities in the manosphere is an assemblage of maleness and misogyny, whiteness and racism and anti-Semitism, heteronormativity and homophobia, and colonial-capitalism.
- 2) The men on the manosphere have produced an affective orientation of paranoia, border work, and discomfort directed towards an imagined enemy who has weaponized identity politics to oppress straight, white men.
- 3) There are five strategies white, straight men employ to maintain, expand, and exert their power and supremacy. The men on the manosphere advocate for expanding the white race by propagating with submissive white women, forms of economic democracy, trolling and “meme warfare,” a violent racial holy war (RAHOWA), and abandonment.

I approach this research project through an intersectional lens, which is to say that I understand and analyze men on the manosphere by taking into account various aspects of their identities while using social inequality, power, relationality, social context, complexity, and social justice as guideposts (Collins and Bilge 2016) for thinking through these men and their reactions. I attend to the different power structures

interacting that form the complex identities and reactions of the men on the manosphere. While there are many components to the manosphere, there is always a point of departure for an investigation, an access point where the researcher begins their enquiry. My entry into this investigation began with antifeminists online at an intersection of misogyny and masculinity. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the literature on misogyny online and explicate the lack of a research on those perpetrating misogyny. I then explain and critique the dominant configurations in which practices of masculinities get categorized and I suggest Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of assemblage as a framework that recognizes the ebb and flow of the fuzzy borders that delineate masculinities. I then discuss my fieldsites and research methods before concluding this chapter with a synopsis of the chapters that will follow.

### **Misogyny Online**

It is only recently that there has been increased interest in online misogyny as a research subject. Because this phenomenon lay at an intersection of social science, media studies, and gender studies, research that investigates online misogyny often centres on one component of these intersections. Sometimes this centres technology, such as how algorithms and website design (Massanari 2017), codes and digital infrastructure (Easter 2018) foster an environment in which misogyny can flourish, or the technological conditions that facilitate misogynistic acts (Thompson and Wood 2018).

Research of online misogyny most often centres victims of misogyny. This research has revealed how the amplification of marginalized voices has made these individuals more susceptible to malicious attacks (Banet-Weiser and Miltner 2016; Clark

2016; Drüeke and Zobl 2016; Gardiner 2018; Jane 2014b, 2014a) and that misogynistic attacks are silencing and discrediting (Cole 2015; García-Favaro and Gill 2016; Ging 2017; Lumsden and Morgan 2017; Massanari 2017), while forcing additional labour upon the recipients (Vera-Gray 2017). Work that has centred those who are under attack has also revealed important legal-policy implications on classifying misogyny as harassment (Megarry 2014) or hate speech (Richardson-Self 2018) and on misogynistic workplace harassment women workers face and how this online harassment blurs the space of personal and work (Jane 2018).

Despite all of this important work, however, it seems as though we rarely centre the misogynists. Attempts to address online attacks often take a victim-blaming frame. Victims of online attacks are encouraged by media and popular discourse to mitigate provocation by not resisting or challenging abusers (Lumsden and Morgan 2017). And victim blaming occurs in scholarship. Having surveyed academic research, Jane (2014b:539) argues that the perpetrators of social media abuse “are rarely reprimanded for engaging in insensitivity or cruelty, while recipients and outside observers are frequently chastised as hypersensitive or humourless for failing to make the supposedly easy move of reframing a flame as funny, innocuous, or transgressive.” If we are to turn the lens on perpetrators, we need to include research that analyzes misogynists where they attack and where they congregate.

Misogynists tend to surface online in one of three broad categories: they travel to whichever spaces threaten male privilege (Ging 2017) and launch coordinated attacks; they appear abruptly through an extemporaneous backlash; and they congregate on an array of websites—blogs, forums, YouTube videos—dedicated to discussing masculinity,

male interests, and men's issues. While misogynists in all of these three categories are under-investigated, the manosphere, the online spaces in which misogynistic men are gathering, is the most permanent space and provides the most stable view of online misogynists.

In their writing on the manosphere, Schmitz and Kazyak (2016) found two categories of misogynists. "Cyber Lads in Search of Masculinity" policed men's enactment of masculinities, sexually objectified women as commodities, and lamented feminism as a socialist oppression of men and masculinities. "Virtual Victims in Search of Equality" are men's rights activists (MRA) who address men's legitimate suffering but do so by blaming women and feminism. Many MRAs began as offline father's rights movements, though today's MRA activism is beginning to shift its focus to discussions of rape, sexual assault, and rape culture in order to lure youth to the movement (Gotell and Dutton 2016). Others, too, have investigated the manosphere broadly, looking at how misogynists take up and bond around the term misandry (Marwick and Caplan 2018) and how alt-right men employ "social justice warrior" and "SJW" as a pejorative by implying the term as a monstrous feminine. Some initial research has investigated particular websites. Lin (2017) has provided an initial descriptive study of Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW), articulating the claim that these men espouse living according to their own best interests, and opt out of romance, family, and society. Mountford's (2018) topic modelling of Roosh V's website *Return of Kings* was able to replicate previous findings while listing common topics and links between them. After explaining that the Reddit subforum "The Red Pill" expresses hegemonic masculinity along with scientific and neoliberal discourses, Van Valkenburgh (2018) posits that the men on this subforum view

women as commodities to resolve a tension between their desire for connection and the suppression of masculine emotion.

My research centers the misogynistic men who congregate online within the manosphere and the masculinities they perform. While misogyny is a significant component of the identities and practices of these men, so too is their masculinity. In what follows I outline the foundational literatures that articulate archetypical configurations of masculinity and critique the ordinal sequencing that underlies these configurations.

### Masculinities

According to Connell, the myriad ways that masculinities are practiced can be classified into one of four archetypes: hegemonic masculinity, complicit masculinity, marginalized masculinity, and subordinated masculinity. *Hegemonic masculinity* is a constantly changing idealized notion of ways that men should emulate and strive to practice. Hegemonic masculinity is currently a form of persuasive power that reproduces and legitimates the relations that engender men's dominance over women and non-male genders. This idealized, persuasive power circulates not only via all four agents of socialization (*i.e.*, family, schools, peers, and media), but materializes as 'patriarchal dividends' (Connell 1995) and is enforced through criminalization, tax, and welfare (Carrigan, Connell, and Lee. 1985:594).

Demetriou (2001) calls hegemonic masculinity's perpetuation of dominance over women "external hegemony," arguing that hegemonic masculinity also serves to perpetuate some men's dominance over other men, which he calls "internal hegemony."

“Hegemony” here is the strategy through which men achieve a global dominance over women by treating women as the enemy and leading other men into a homogeneous world view. While Connell (1995) introduced complicit, marginalized, and subordinated masculinity to account for the different ways men benefit from gender inequality, these categories are static—one can be complicit or marginalized or subordinated. Demetriou’s incorporation of an internal and external hegemony move beyond the dualism of Connell’s configurations and begins to explain the ebb and flow between these configurations—one might be complicit and marginalized.

*Complicit masculinities* are those masculinities that, though they may have little or no active involvement in the subordination of women, benefit from it. As Connell (1995:79) explains, “Masculinities constructed in ways that realize the patriarchal dividend, without the tensions or risks of being the frontline troops of patriarchy, are complicit in this sense.” These masculinities may not match all dimensions of the ideal, hegemonic masculinity, but do not challenge the ideal because they receive patriarchal dividends. *Marginalized masculinities* are those who cannot be considered hegemonic because of particular characteristics, such as race and class. Connell’s theory of gendered relations included marginalized masculinities to include the consideration of how some masculinities share some aspects of hegemonic masculinity while also being excluded from it. *Subordinated masculinities* are those whose practices are opposite those valued by hegemonic masculinity. Originally using gay men as the exemplar, Connell defines subordinated masculinities as those most culturally, politically, economically, symbolically, legally, and violently oppressed and excluded. I find Connell’s theory useful in two ways. First, it accounts for variation in men’s lives and the masculinities in

society. The theory creates categories for masculinities that are often ignored. It accounts for men who live their lives anathema to the hegemonic ideal, those whose ascribed status prevents them from being idealized, and those who quietly benefit from the oppression of women. Second, the three non-hegemonic configurations allow for movement within the configuration. This is to say that there are numerous masculinities that can be considered marginalized, subordinated, or complicit. Indeed, there is a breadth of scholarship within what Pascoe and Bridges (2016) call “multiplying masculinities” perspective that describe myriad different masculinities, often locating these within one of the three non-hegemonic masculinities.

But the lack of movement between Connell’s categories is somewhat limiting. Where, for example, might an Indigenous gay bear trans man fit within these configurations? Would his race categorize him as marginalized? Would his trans-homosexuality be a configuration of subordinated masculinity? Or would the aspects of his bear masculinity that reproduce norms of hegemonic masculinity (Hennen 2005) classify him as hegemonic? And what of the many contemporary masculinities that appropriate and incorporate cultural and performance elements typically associated with marginalized and subordinated masculinities?

Bridges and Pascoe (2014) have termed the masculinities which include appropriated characteristics from marginalized and subordinated masculinities *hybrid masculinities*<sup>1</sup>. Bridges and Pascoe (2014:246) also explain that much of the work on hybrid masculinities concerns the way white heterosexual “men are increasingly

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<sup>1</sup> I am including in my broad description of hybrid masculinities *pastiche masculinity* (Atkinson 2011), which includes not only the emergence of myriad ideals and performances of manliness but also the refusal by some to embrace new and emerging masculinities and, instead, hold firm to conventional, aggressive, masculine performances.

incorporating elements of various ‘Others’ into their identity projects.” Importantly, hybrid masculinities bring together practices from diverse masculinities in order to continue the hegemonic project (Demetriou 2001). By weaving together various elements of many masculinities, hybrid masculinities create a dominant ideal of masculinity that reproduces patriarchy while concealing the power and dominance associated with the ideal. Hybrid masculinities cloak the hegemonic process in three significant ways.

Hybrid masculinities reproduce and obscure inequalities by (1) distancing men with considerable privilege from hegemonic masculinity, (2) propagating a rhetoric that white, heterosexual, able-bodied men (WHECMs) are not as valuable as the men who practice marginalized and subordinated masculinities, (3) fortify cultural, social, and symbolic boundaries (*i.e.*, amongst racial, gendered, sexual, able-bodied, etc. intersections). To paraphrase this using a sociological language, the men who enact hybrid masculinities obscure achieved inequality by laying claim to an ascribed WHECM oppression. By laying claim to an oppression that is a status ascribed to the white, heterosexual, able-bodied man, those performing hybrid masculinity ignore the borders at these bodily intersections to appropriate an “Other’s” performance. At the same time, the men who perform hybrid masculinities use emotions to fortify their own borders to protect aspects of their identity.

### Beyond Categories of Masculinity

While both Connell and Demetrio articulate intersections other than gender, there is, whether implicitly or explicitly, an elevation of gender that begins as a ranking of Connell’s four configurations of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is greater than

complicit masculinity, which is greater than marginalized masculinity, which is greater than subordinated masculinity. While I have no doubt that hegemonic masculinity, a perhaps unattainable ideal, occupies an ultimate position of power and privilege, I am not convinced that the other categories can be completely cleaved from each other, let alone sorted and ranked. Nor am I convinced that, if they could be cleaved and ranked, the order would hold constant in all contexts and times. There are three important implications to the contention I am raising.

First, to suggest that marginalized masculinities, a category in which racialized masculinities are classified, maintain a fixed ordinal advantage over subordinated masculinities, those Connell most associated with gay men, ignores the fluidness of power, discounts the dynamics of privilege, and trivializes the oppression of marginalized masculinities. Second, the cleaving of these categories ignores and does an injustice to those whose identities cannot be deconstructed. What of, for example, the aforementioned Indigenous gay bear trans man? If we are to theorize hybrid and hegemonic masculinities as fluid, then our concepts must also be fluid and empathetic to the practice of people's lived reality. The borders that define all categories—whether hegemonic, racialized, heterosexual, complicit, etc.—fluctuate erratically. Finally, even marginalized and subordinated masculinities can be complicit in the hegemonic project. If we are to learn from feminism, we must remember the ways in which we are complicit in and oppressed by patriarchy. Demetriou aims toward this in his efforts to go beyond Connell's dualism. In explicating a hybrid block that consists of both internal and external hegemony, Demetrio begins to explain how masculinity comes together, breaks apart, and strains to hold together. But there is a need to go further. I contend that

Deleuze and Guattari's concept of an assemblage provides a theoretical framework that better allows researchers to consider the continual process of constructing masculinities and the ways that masculinities are immanent within all categories.

### Assemblage Theory

Scholars often attempt to confine men and masculinities into containers, such as hegemonic, complicit, subordinated, marginalized, and hybrid. In an attempt to isolate, we paint borders around some forms of masculinity and hold these as ontologically constant to the description the label attaches. But these categories and the identities of men are not static. Rather, they fluctuate in a process of continual construction. I employ assemblage theory as a framework that recognizes the ebb and flow of the fuzzy borders that delineate masculinities.

Assemblage theory has explanatory purchase in describing the ways that categorizing traits, such as hegemonic masculinity, marginalized masculinity, hybrid masculinity, and aspects of identity, such as gender, race, and sexuality break apart and come together to form subjectivity. This way of understanding identity construction as a process for which I am advocating has similarities with intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989, 1991) in that both seek to counter static conceptions and reifications of identity and that both are concerned with myriad elements that help form a person's identity.

Where the assemblage theory that I employ differs fundamentally from Crenshaw's original intersectional theory is in how it is aimed at "studying up" (Messner 1996) by investigating those who occupy privileged intersections. Intersectionality foregrounds political, legal, and structural inequality (Sumi, Crenshaw, and McCall

2013). Moreover, it does so from a vantage point that gives voice to the marginalized. So that, in using Crenshaw's (1989) model of the intersection, it is forms of discrimination and inequality that flows through the intersection rather than identity (Bogic 2017). My research investigates the men and masculinities that gather in online spaces in a backlash against women and feminism. The men I investigate, even when oppressed by various identity axes (including their own masculinity), are also always benefiting from a position of power. So, while I am interested inequality and forms of oppression, I am interested in how it is constructed in the identities of those who benefit from it. I am interested in how oppressive components of men's identities are contingent and complicit with dominant formations (Puar 2007) and how this signals a shift from a disciplinary apparatus to a control apparatus in which most everyone is complicit to varying, qualitative degrees.

I contend that attending to a non-representational, affective, ontology of becoming allows me to fight the taxonomy that attempts to secure masculinities as permanent. As opposed to viewing masculinities as occupying one configuration of practice, assemblage theory allows me to consider the infinite history of and ever-changing ways that determinate and indeterminate components relate, blend, fracture, and spill over. By attending to identity as an assemblage—a complex process rather than product—I am able to see how masculinity changes, shapes and is shaped, and dissolves at one point only to sprout at another.

But assemblage theory attends not only to movement and becoming. It also accounts for the ways that we try to hold objects stable as being. As much as the formation of a masculinity may be a continual process, men view their identities as

constant and this has material and semiotic consequences. As I will explain, assemblage theory includes a framework that accounts for sedimentation along those things we claim as constant and rigid. Concurrently, it accounts for the slipperiness of capricious borders. This theoretical framework, then, enables me to attend to the swirling together of the representational with the non-representational, to unify stationary and dynamic into shimmers and vibrations of identity. Assemblage theory allows me to see how masculinity is formed in a continuous stream of renovation, sunder, and assembly that may or may not include other—and Othered—attributes, thereby allowing the complicity and possibilities within dominant formations to be featured.

The way in which the varied elements are assembled—and in a continuous process of being (re)assembled—is critical to understanding an assemblage. Components are always forming and breaking apart, assembling in myriad ways. At any point, were we to freeze the assemblage, we might extrapolate the frozen iteration as the way the assemblage always has been and always will be. But the assemblage is not static. Assemblage theory helps explain the instability of hegemonic, complicit, marginalized, and subordinated masculinities.

Assemblage theory, for example, helps explain hegemonic masculinity as a moving target. The hegemonic ideal of masculinity is an ever-shifting, fuzzy goal. The fuzziness of the ideal does not just mean that it is not possible to accurately articulate the ideal. Importantly, it also means that can one cannot realize the archetype. Because the definition of “a real man” is constantly changing, men (or those wishing to place themselves as “man”) find incoherence in the term, which leads to unrest in distinguishing it, and makes it impossible to “be a real man.” It is my contention that this

complaint of hegemonic masculinity can be resolved with a focus on relations and relations of patterns rather than on the content (Puar 2012) that an assemblage theory framework provides. Adopting assemblage theory as a framework is a commitment to attend to the process rather than the product, to focus on how things connect, and to embrace the propensity for transformation, becoming, and movement. This is a turn away from seeing things as a static essence and instead attending to how things are unfolding, including bodies' power to affect and be affected (Lorraine 2005).

Assemblages are fluid and in a continuous state of construction and sunder, which means they are always between iterations. The assemblage is always becoming something else and allowing for the passage into another assemblage. Fluidness is foundational to the assemblage and, so, investigation of assemblages should attend to this movement. Affect and emotions provide an impulse for movement and offer a way to read movement and becoming. It is for this reason that my study of masculinities, framed through assemblage theory, includes attention to affect and emotions.

I use affect and emotions to distinguish between feelings that are emerging and those that have emerged. I use affect to explore the chords between the indeterminate and the conscious, the corporeal and the discursive, before these feelings have crystalized into a conscious and discursive emotion. There are competing views of affect and emotions that locates these feelings in different social facets, such as the psychobiological, the relational, collective, and expressive. I view affect and emotion as an assemblage of these views. I understand feelings as an energy or a wave that runs through individuals' bodies, collective bodies, the phenomenological, in interactions and throughout social structures. I also understand affect and emotions as forming the distinctions between each of the

social facets and as the yoke between the individual and the social, the nexus between social bodies and the corporeal. Finally, I view affect and emotions as a power that differs and delineates between bodies, between an “us” and a “them,” distinguishing where each begins to take form. For this dissertation, in order to attend to affect and emotions, and the ways masculinities are being constructed, a qualitative, interpretivist approach was necessary.

## Research Methods

For this research project I performed a qualitative content analysis of articles and comments on eight websites. Six of these websites were selected from 118 websites that are collected by the content aggregator website manosphere.com. The seventh website, MGTOW.com, was selected because it offered insight into anti-feminist men who backlash by withdrawing rather than attacking. The final website, goodmenproject.com, was selected as a foil to the other seven sites because the “enlightened masculinity” it espoused was anchored in, ostensibly, progressive politics.

Applied to digital fieldsites, content analysis is the process of finding, harvesting, and analyzing (Poynter 2010) the artefacts and traces people leave behind from their use of the Internet (Hine 2008:314). On the manosphere, content creators post videos and articles. Content often has a comment section where the audience can respond to the authors and enter into discussions with other audience members. The manosphere also includes forums in which members can submit links and images and discuss topics amongst themselves. Researchers conducting a content analysis collect digital copies of the all of this, from the creative content (e.g. videos and articles) to forum content (e.g.

links and images), to digital texts of the discussion that occurs in comment sections and on forums.

Qualitative content analysis is used to interpret and document meaning (Altheide and Schneider 2013) from the artefacts that people leave behind as they engage in their everyday activities. Qualitative content analysis' interpretive nature was helpful for my research project as it allowed me to unravel the meaning of interactions, actions, symbols, and objects (text and images) of the men and masculinities enmeshed in the manosphere. Because this research process involved collecting artefacts from peoples' everyday activities on the manosphere, I was able to analyze how they expressed their understanding of their experiences and how meaning was negotiated.

Each fieldsite, manosphere.com, MGTOW.com, and goodmenproject.com, offered unique challenges in research design. In what follows, I explain considerations unique to each fieldsite and I describe the methods I used to select objects of study within each fieldsite.

### The manosphere.com

The manosphere.com is a content aggregator. It is set up to publish articles from myriad websites. Blog "owners" can submit to have their blog added to the website. Upon doing so, anything published on the blog's website will also be published on manosphere.com. As such there is a vast amount of content on manosphere.com (as of September 11, 2017, there were 128 blogs set up to publish to the host website and a total of 12,104 articles published). In addition to logistical problems of trying to analyze over 12,000 articles, not all of these articles may be pertinent for an intent to study

antifeminist masculinities. As such, I developed a two-stage research process. The first stage is aimed at focusing the research by isolating the blogs with the posts that will contain the most content pertinent to this research project. The second stage of the research will then focus on the articles posted to these identified blogsites. In what follows, I explain the methods employed in each of these stages.

In order to isolate the blogs being aggregated on the manosphere.com that are the most pertinent to this research project, I began by performing a modest analysis of every article published on the aggregator website during a four-week span. On August 3, 2017, I began looking at articles and worked back to articles published on July 27, 2017. Concurrent with looking at articles in the past (between August 2 and July 27, inclusively), I researched newly published articles until the end of August. This gave me a dataset of 545 articles spanning over a month. As I went through the published articles, I simultaneously collected information pertaining to the articles and performed two levels of coding and analysis.

With each article I collected the date the article was published on manosphere.com (sometimes this would post to the aggregator a day after it published on the original blog), the author's name or pseudonym, the title of the blog (or key words from the title) to ensure identifying the exact article that was being coded, a general coding of whether the article was relevant to my research, slightly relevant to my research, or not relevant to my research, and my comment or coding of the article. The criteria of relevance to my research was determined to have been met if, in my initial reading of the article, I identified overt and intense expressions of antifeminist or anti-woman feelings. The relevant, slightly relevant, or not relevant measure was a measure of

the severity of misogyny. For this research project, I was interested in the most severe—or extreme—anti-feminist websites, because extreme cases can reveal more information about the deeper causes of an issue (Flyvbjerg 2006:229). This last category was used for a few practicalities.

My comments and coding capturing served to code categories that did not directly fall under the purview of my dissertation research. For example, there were several blogs that focused on pick-up artistry (PUA) and others that concentrated their efforts on body building and sculpting. For these blogs and other articles that focused on specific characteristics of what the authors valued as an important aspect of masculinity, but were not intended as promoting an antifeminist masculinity (they may be practicing a complicit masculinity, but not loudly promoting hegemonic masculinity), coding allowed me to capture the array of masculinities being espoused on manosphere.com. This affords me the opportunity to map manosphere.com and broadly understand the competing visions of masculinities. This also raises awareness of potential research distinctions for future research. For example, there are blogs that discuss Christianity, masculinity, and men's superordination over women. The space to capture comments and coding also allowed me to write a brief synopsis of the article, key words, or to quote passages that summed up the spirit of the article or espoused misogynistic hegemonic masculinity. This element of coding also allowed me to include a qualitative element about the article that proved useful during the analysis of the sample data.

I began capturing the all categories of the data with pen and paper. Realizing that developing an electronic capture and storage system would make for an easier task of analyzing the data, I moved all of the hand-written data captured into an Excel

spreadsheet on August 12, 2017 and continued to code and capture in this spreadsheet. Using Excel allowed me to use the filter functionality to isolate all of the blog postings I coded as those most relevant to my research project. I was then able to use formulae functions (e.g. COUNTIF) to identify (1) which websites had published the most articles classified as extremely misogynistic (*i.e.*, coded as most relevant) and (2) those who predominately published extremely misogynistic articles. The qualitative comments and coding also allowed me to identify blogs that were particularly pertinent though they may not be publishing as much by the synopsis of their articles, and by the mentions they were getting in other articles. The analysis of the sample dataset led me to identify six blogs on which to perform a qualitative content analysis. These websites are *A Voice for Men*, *Château Heartiste*, *Dalrock*, *Men*, *Women and Society*, *Return of Kings*, and *The Rational Male*.

#### [Goodmenproject.com](http://Goodmenproject.com)

The *Good Men Project* publishes a massive number of articles under seventeen broad categories. To trim the number of articles to a manageable amount while still offering a level of validity, I scraped all of the articles published between July 27, 2017 and August 31, 2017 under the categories “Ethics,” “Raising Boys,” and “Gender & Sexuality.” These categories were selected because an initial survey of all categories led me to conclude that the content under these categories would proximate several key conversations that were taking place on the sites I had selected from manosphere.com. I stopped at just these three categories because they provided a total of 117 articles to analyze, which was sufficient to realize saturation.

## MGTOW.com

*MGTOW.com* is predominantly a forum. While the website includes links to books, videos, and articles, the main traffic on the website flows to its forums. The forums are grouped into eighteen sub-forums, and (as of July 22, 2019) there have been a total of 762,830 replies amongst all sub-forums. To scale research on this site to a manageable size I selected four of the sub-forums based on a pre-field survey. “Blue Pill Hell” is a forum that discusses mainstream and societal ideologies that are anathema to MGTOW. “Philosophy” is described as a forum to share meaningful thoughts; the threads discuss definitions, prescriptions, and the philosophy of the MGTOW path. The “Political Corner” provides an opportunity to discover viral topics. “Relations~~~s” offers insight into MGTOWs’ views on relationships, marriage, and the family.

Because all communication is grouped within sub-forums and threads are bumped within each sub-forum based on the most recent activity, it is impossible to sort threads by date. Instead of scraping forum posts from the same timeline as the other two fieldsites, I scraped threads from the front page of the sub-forum until saturation was reached.

## Time frame

Examining the same timeframe as my modest analysis afforded five benefits. First, this increased my immersion within the manosphere as a fieldsite. Second, preliminary insights from the modest analysis informed my abductive approach to theory and code building. Third, my initial analysis in the field served as a content warning and

somewhat readied me for what I was about to read. Fourth, my modest analysis occurred when notable events took place (e.g. Charlottesville, the Google Manifesto) that I knew had blog posts and discussions about them. Finally, bracketing off a timeframe serves to bracket the amount of articles I would analyze (*A Voice for Men*, n= 18; *Château Heartiste*, n= 41; *Dalrock*, n= 13; *Men, Women and Society*, n= 26; *Return of Kings*, n=90; and *The Rational Male*. n=5). There is a continual amount of current events that trigger backlash on these websites, each interesting and worthy of investigation. By selecting a timeframe, I was able to avoid falling down the proverbial rabbit hole, and ensured I would leave the field.

## Methods

Having reduced the eight sites to a manageable object of study, I used Ncapture to scrape all articles and their comments section from *A Voice for Men*, *Château Heartiste*, *Dalrock*, *Men, Women and Society*, *Return of Kings*, *The Rational Male*, and *The Good Men Project*. I also used Ncapture to scrape the forum posts selected from MGTOW.com. I imported each scraped article and forum post into Nvivo, saving them in a folder dedicated to the blog or forum category from which it came. Each dedicated blog and forum folder was nested under a fieldsite folder (e.g. Manosphere, MGTOW, or Good Men). This allows me to analyze my data at the blog level, forum level, field, and across all three fields. After scraping, storing, and organizing the data, I inductively analyzed each article, discussion comment, and forum post, generating a total of 139 themes. Isolating the most common themes I was able to read and analyze all texts coded to the theme. I was also able to consider how other themes intersected within these texts.

## Ethics

Because information on the sites I investigated is available to be read without passing through any gatekeeping, this information is considered public and available to researchers (Mosca 2014; Poynter 2010). This stands in contrast to other websites, such as Facebook, where the accessibility of user generated content is only accessible to those who have been validated by the user as belonging to their network. Because of these gatekeeping practices, these forms of social media platforms have been considered “walled gardens,” whereas the manosphere, MGTOW, and The Goodmen Project takes the form of public squares<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> According to Article 2.2 of the REB Panel on research ethics this information is considered public and available to researcher. For reference, Article 2.2 states: “REB review is also not required where research uses exclusively publicly available information that may contain identifiable information, and for which there is no reasonable expectation of privacy. For example, identifiable information may be disseminated in the public domain through print or electronic publications; film, audio or digital recordings; press accounts; official publications of private or public institutions; artistic installations, exhibitions or literary events freely open to the public; or publications accessible in public libraries. Research that is non-intrusive, and does not involve direct interaction between the researcher and individuals through the Internet, also does not require REB review. Cyber-material such as documents, records, performances, online archival materials or published third party interviews to which the public is given uncontrolled access on the Internet for which there is no expectation of privacy is considered to be publicly available information.

Exemption from REB review is based on the information being accessible in the public domain, and that the individuals to whom the information refers have no reasonable expectation

Despite the public nature of the content I investigated, I considered additional factors, such as anonymity, confidentiality, and risk, because the discussion of private and public is not a clear cut issue (Beneito-Montagut 2011). The websites I investigated offered the selection of pseudonyms and avatars so that visitors can remain anonymous, independent of the researcher. The blogs and articles I read were almost always written with pseudonyms, although some of the website hosts and some of the bloggers have are known. In the cases where website hosts (e.g. Roosh V) and bloggers (e.g. André du Pôle) may not be using a pseudonym, I considered that identifiable information had been posted publicly intentionally by the producer of the content. Since these would be posted to a public website (unsolicited by the researcher) there would be no reasonable expectation of privacy for in these cases. Further, in these cases I considered risk to the content producer and concluded that my investigation did not involve physical, social, or economic risks that exceed the risks these authors encountered in their daily life.

One final ethical aspect to consider was my own safety. There were two manners of the research field bleeding into the personal that I was concerned about. The first pertains to the manosphere's response to my research, or more particularly potential findings. In other differences between people in Internet spaces (e.g., Gamergate, Matt Bruenig firing) some people have had their personal information shared to an angered community. In considering these breeches in privacy and the rise of white nationalist

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of privacy. Information contained in publicly accessible material may, however, be subject to copyright and/or intellectual property rights protections or dissemination restrictions imposed by the legal entity controlling the information." (accessed here:

[http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/chapter2-chapitre2/ch2\\_en](http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/chapter2-chapitre2/ch2_en))

uprising in the United States after the Trump election, I thought it paramount to protect my identity during while I visited the websites by using a Virtual Private Network (VPN). I used funds from the fellowship I was awarded from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council to purchase a robust VPN that could, if necessary, be used in conjunction with an “onion router,” an overlay network consisting of more than seven thousand relays, for additional security. A second manner in which the research field bled into the personal was through analytic driven marketing. For example, after doing some pre-field work, Facebook kept suggesting that I should send Howard Dare, the YouTube video blogger of “Men Going Their Own Way” (MGTOW), a friend request. The VPN that I used was able to prevent further adverts targeted towards antifeminist and white nationalist men.

### Websites Investigated

Before proceeding with my findings and analysis, I want to provide some context about each of the eight websites from which data was scraped. The substantive chapters of this dissertation are grouped according to my findings and the subsequent discussion from those. To illustrate my analysis and findings, I provide direct quotes taken from my data. These quotes are selected because they are exemplars of the sentiments expressed on all of the websites, but they are not presented to highlight the websites they were taken from. Similarly, the substantive chapters are not an exploration of each website, but rather of the myriad masculinities who congregate on the manosphere. For this reason, I want to provide a brief description of the websites from which the data was excavated.

## A Voice for Men

*A Voice for Men* (AVFM) is a men's rights activist (MRA) website hosted by Paul Elam. The website's espoused mission, which is "to provide education and encouragement to men and boys; to lift them above the din of misandry, to reject the unhealthy demands of gynocentrism in all its forms, and to promote their mental, physical and financial well-being without compromise or apology" suggests that it would qualify as "Virtual Victims in Search of Equality" (Schmitz and Kazyak 2016). AVFM, however, takes their activism to an extreme and has drawn the attention of the Southern Poverty Law Center, who label the site a hate group and claim that the website is one of the two most established proponents of male supremacy.

## Château Heartiste

By its own description, *Château Heartiste* is an "MRA and PUA blog, which mixes evolutionary psychology, anti-feminism and white advocacy." While Heartiste certainly proclaims to be a pick-up artist, he no longer writes about techniques or exploits. Instead, his website can only be described as actively dedicated to promoting the advancement of white, heterosexual men and the allocation of power and privileges accordingly. The purpose of the website, much like a castle from which it takes its name, is to be a defensible stronghold and a base from which to attack. The website defends misogyny, racism, homophobia, and anti-Semitism and aims to send its visitors out ready to spew these hates.

## Dalrock

Dalrock, the moniker of the person who runs the website by the same name, professes to be “a happily married man living with [his] sexy wife and [their] two wonderful kids in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. [He is] very interested in how the post feminist [sic] world impacts [himself] and [his] family, and [is] using this blog to explore these kinds of issues.” As such, this blog promotes a Standard North-American Family (SNAF) as elucidated by Dorothy Smith (1993). Critical for the SNAF ideology within Dalrock’s view is hegemonic masculinity that positions fathers at the head of the household, as a Christianity-justified male authority, and women within a reproductive sphere. This is supported by a naturalistic view of sex and gender roles.

## Men, Women and Society

*Men, Women and Society*, is the property of Aaron “Sleezy” Elias. It is primarily espoused to be a website dedicated to the art of picking up and sleeping with women. Elias markets his content on the sites “About” page as such:

You have come to the right place if you are looking for no-nonsense advice for your love life! Through writing about his sexual adventures candidly on forums and blogs, Aaron Sleazy gained notoriety but also a dedicated group of followers who were eager to learn from him. After numerous requests, he began sharing his insights in interviews and his books. His position is that seduction is mutual, direct, sexual — and not in the least manipulative. The latter led him to become a fierce critic of the commercial seduction industry.

Aaron Sleazy has personally helped hundreds of men to improve their love life, in and outside of relationships. If you don't have much luck with women, you have come to the right place. But even if you are already successful, you will learn how to get similar results in much less time and with much less effort. Getting laid doesn't have to be difficult, but don't just take his word for it. Feedback from readers and testimonials from clients say the same.

Though he espouses to write about pick-up artistry (PUA), and he does indeed write a few articles on or tangential to this topic, the majority of articles I analyzed discuss hypotheses on social and relational elements and their consequences on a patriarchal society. As I investigated *Men, Women and Society*, it was important to recall Elias' PUA roots because his blogs are shaped through patriarchal frames and an understanding of the world that has been filtered accordingly.

### Return of Kings

*Return of Kings* (ROK) is hosted by Roosh V (née Daryush Valizadeh). Roosh, who also publishes a personal blog, publishes a few articles to this website. His principle role on ROK is as curator and editor. There is an open call for article submissions, which are then adjudicated by Roosh. If he deems the submission worthy, he will work with the author—offering editorial comments—until he deems the writing fit to be posted to the website. There are regular and semi-regular contributors, just as there are one-time contributors.

As an offshoot of Roosh's earlier projects, which promoted aggressive PUA techniques, there are strong elements of "game," a naturalized hypergamy, and biological determinism. This website champions misogyny and homophobia, with warnings posted attempting to dissuade women and homosexuals from contributing to the comments section. Efforts on ROK are directed at ushering in a return to traditional, Western masculinity, though it aims to do so while promoting what Roosh calls "neomascularity." It is this neomascularity, which traces back to his personal blogging, that informs Roosh's publication gatekeeping. As explained on both ROK's and Roosh V's "About" pages, there are seven principals to the concept:

1. Men and women are genetically different, both physically and mentally. Sex roles evolved in all mammals. Humans are not exempt.
2. Men will opt out of monogamy and reproduction if there are no incentives to engage in them.
3. Past traditions and rituals that evolved alongside humanity served a net benefit to the family unit.
4. Testosterone is the biological cause for masculinity. Environmental changes that reduce the hormone's concentration in men will cause them to be weaker and more feminine.
5. A woman's value significantly depends on her fertility and beauty. A man's value significantly depends on his resources, intellect, and character.

6. Elimination of traditional sex roles and the promotion of unlimited mating choice in women unleashes their promiscuity and other negative behaviors that block family formation.

7. Socialism, feminism, cultural Marxism, and social justice warriorism aim to destroy the family unit, decrease the fertility rate, and impoverish the state through large welfare entitlements.

These are themes and tenets we see throughout the manosphere. As a selective publishing venue, this website is a smaller scale aggregator of manosphere content. ROK is very much a fractal of manosphere.com, both of which are fractals of the manosphere.

### The Rational Male

Roman Tomassi, who is also the lone author to post articles, hosts *The Rational Male*. During the timeline of my research, Tomassi was writing his new book, so he only posted five articles to his blog. While this creates a small sample of articles, it also means that the topics and concepts were important enough to Tomassi so as to warrant a post during a time of minimized blog production. It is also important to note that Tomassi appears to be quite connected within the manosphere. Many website hosts who aggregate on manosphere.com have promoted the release of his upcoming book. Tomassi's content production shapes and reflects the dichotomized thinking that generates a disdain for a feminized, liberal culture and ideology.

### The Good Men Project

The *Good Men Project* espouses to offer a cultural conversation about enlightened masculinity and what it means to be a “good man.” The website is an extensive site that publishes articles from its membership. The site is run and managed by the for-profit Good Men Media, Inc. The website claims that their “content reflects the multidimensionality of men... without moralizing and without caricaturizing our audience; we let guys be guys, but we do it while challenging confining cultural notions of what a “real man” must be.” But the website often conveys an underlying a corporatized push for profit, which makes one question their claim to be free from moralizing.

### Men Going Their Own Way

The MGTOW website promotes a sovereign masculinity in which men live according to their own best interests, opting out of “traditional” roles in romance, family, and society. While those who come to these forums espouse to be “going their own way,” there is also some community that has formed. Some of the men form virtual support groups to help each other through their isolation. The website also includes the most polarized grouping of masculinities. There are many whose misogyny and hate have led them to withdraw and go their own way. There are others, however, who seem to have come to MGTOW because they have been shunned (perhaps justifiably so) by those closest to them and have claimed the mantle of withdrawal as a way to take ownership for their isolation.

## Chapter Summaries

For this research project, I have explored eight spaces on the Internet where masculinity is negotiated, practiced, and reinforced. Seven of these eight websites are explicitly anti-feminist. These sites were selected because pre-field work identified them as making their misogyny most explicit. The eighth, which was selected as a foil, also illustrated the ways that oppressive structures, like sexism and patriarchy—if not misogyny—are assembled into practices of masculinities.

Digital fieldsites were selected because they offer entry into spaces where meaning making is articulated, where identity formation is negotiated, and where this is all documented. This research project is an investigation into misogynistic masculinities. There is a temptation to assign these masculinities to men on the manosphere. But these men do not live exclusively on the manosphere. They may go online to commiserate and organize, but they lash out in their workplaces, in other digital spaces, and in within their domestic circles. The fieldsites I investigated granted me access to explore the men whose misogyny (and racism and homophobia and anti-Semitism) is felt every day in myriad spheres.

Before my substantive chapters begin, I provide a thicker description and explication of my theoretical framework in a chapter that outlines how I take up Deleuze and Guattari's assemblage theory. In this theoretical chapter, I discuss the importance of the process in which components of an assemblage are amassed and relate to each other. This process produces new emergent properties in the assemblage and explains the irreducibility of the whole to its parts. I then explain the fluidity and movement of an assemblage while drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of deterritorialization.

Because affect and emotions provide an entry to the assemblage and a nimbleness to follow the variability and fluidity of the assemblage, I conclude this chapter by defining my theoretical operationalization of feelings, affect, emotions, and how these all relate to each other in a sociology of emotions.

The substantive portion of my dissertation, my analysis and discussion, begins in the third chapter. In “Assembling WHECMs,” I elucidate how maleness, whiteness, heterosexuality, and Christian, colonial, conservatism are an assemblage of inequality that is used to exalt straight, white, right-winged men as sacred. I articulate how the advantaged poles of axes of oppressions come together to form an ideal type of masculinity. Further, I explain how these masculinities extol themselves as a model of Christ or lone purveyor of Truth, which affords them their position as head of family and society. I then illustrate how this assemblage of masculinities swirls together to create an assemblage of misogyny, racism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, and colonial capitalism.

In the fourth chapter, “Paranoia–Border Work–Discomfort,” I explore the ideologies, beliefs, and emotions that circulate on the manosphere. The chapter begins with a discussion of paranoia (Sedgwick 2003) and the belief amongst some of the men on the manosphere that they are under attack from a global elite who are weaponizing identity politics via the main stream media and institutions of higher learning. Drawing on Ahmed (2014), I argue that the exaltation of men and masculinity is secured through an emotional practice I call border work. In order to cope with the discomfort of an Other, men use emotions—they backlash—to enclose their clique and exclude others. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the cruel optimism (Berlant 2010) of the masculinities I investigated and the borders they erect.

Chapter five, “Masculinity as a Movement,” discusses the ways that the men I investigated have organized to take action and backlash against women, minorities, and the progressive left. I discuss five strategies advocated for on the manosphere: expanding the white race by propagating with submissive white women; forms of economic democracy; trolling and meme warfare; violence, culminating in a racial holy war (RAHOWA); and desertion. In juxtaposition to the explicitness of these strategies, I conclude the chapter discussing the ways that the men who perform hybrid masculinities are complicit in the strategy of desertion.

I conclude this dissertation by reflecting on how a significant number of men who visit websites like those I investigated are being led to aggressive, violent, and oppressive behaviour. Revisiting my research problem, trying to gain an understanding of these men and masculinities, I argue that there is an increasing need to understand those in whom misogyny, racism, homophobia form to create supremacy and oppression. After summarizing my findings, I discuss potential limitations, including a discussion on internal validity and generalizability. I then, discuss the applications and implications of my research before articulating eight potential areas for further research.

## Chapter 2: Assemblage—A theoretical framework

### Defining Assemblage

An assemblage, in its multiplicity, necessarily acts on semiotic flows, material flows, and social flows simultaneously (independently of any recapitulation that may be made of it in a scientific or theoretical corpus). There is no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author). Rather, an assemblage establishes connections between certain multiplicities drawn from each of these orders... (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:22–23)

An *assemblage* is both a collection of things, like a library, a gathering of people, or a cluster of characteristics, and the process for how all of the components have and continue to come together into one larger whole. The former aspect, the arrangement<sup>3</sup> of components, describes how components are situated relationally and is a descriptive tracing of the components and diagramming of the assemblage. Books in a library, for example, can be found based on the place that they should be, sorted by genre and topic and then ordered according to a schema.

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<sup>3</sup> Originally translated from the French word *agencement*, Massumi, the first translator of *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari 1987), chose to deviate from the word's more direct translations—layout, organization, or arrangement—because the English meaning does not include the processual element.

The latter aspect of an assemblage, the continual coming into arrangement, describes the way components break apart, come together, and influence each other. Assemblage brings forward the way things gather and become assembled. Assemblage points to the way aspects of a component might decay or break off within the assembly so that the assemblage might have certain qualities. Assemblage includes the cause and effects of a term so often black boxed: “the sum is greater than the parts”—though an assemblage also accounts for the sum is less than the parts and the totality is completely anathema to its components (like when two disparate fluid compounds are mixed together to form a solid). To illustrate this using the example of the library, the assemblage includes the librarian and their education in the Dewey decimal, the publishers who pitch to have their books included on those shelves, the person who wanders looking for a copy of “Catcher in the Rye” only to find a misplaced book on bird calls. An assemblage, too, includes the transformation of being labelled, like the “misplaced” book, deviant in its location next to fiction writing, “missing” from the nature section, and “lost” according to the library.

To understand men and masculinities studies through the lens of an assemblage is to understand that masculinities do not simply fall into an order. Men are not just hegemonic or complicit or marginalized or subordinated or hybrid. Men can be any combination and permutation of these things, including discovering new ways of being in the world and performing their gender. The gender and masculinity assemblages also include those people, institutions, and things that attempt to define masculinity and socialize what it means to be a man. The gender and masculinity assemblages include parents, the education system, coaches, peers, and media—including the Internet sites

men visit. As I will illustrate in later chapters, for those who visit the manosphere, the masculinity assemblage includes gender, race, sexuality, claims to power and supremacy, and emotional reactions, amongst other components. But assemblage theory also allows me to consider how these components are put together and interact in ways that continually vary.

In what follows, I expand on both aspects of assemblage, the arrangement and the process of being arranged, by drawing on Deleuze and Guattari. I describe how the molar and molecular get taken up to explain emergent properties and irreducibility. I then explain the fluidity and movement of an assemblage while drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's deterritorialization made possible by the detachability of an assemblage's components.

### **Of Molecules and Moles: contextual snapshots and heuristics**

Drawing from chemistry and geography, Deleuze and Guattari use the molar and molecule as concepts to conceive of objects as masses of parts, as assemblages of a mix of many components. In geography, the *molar* is an aggregate of matter and mass of terrestrial substance and landscapes. In chemistry, a mole is a measure of a large number of atoms or molecules of a given substance. The *molecule* pertains to atomic properties and their motion. Molecules are the tiny parts that add up to something more. The molecular aspects correlates to geographic vibrations of landscapes, the telluric currents, and grains of sand and earth. Deleuze and Guattari use molar and molecule as concepts to describe the aggregation of many things (i.e., molecules) into a larger whole (i.e., molar).

In terms of the whole being an aggregation of many interacting particles, we can think of ecosystems full of organisms, an organism full of molecules, molecules full of atoms, and atoms being composed of neutrons, electrons, ions, and quarks. The whole conveys one thing, a totality, but we can zoom in and discover that the whole is a swirl of active components. So, the molar is a productive process of coding the whole that homogenises each varied component into an aggregation of all components. Molarity, then, forms a binary, hierarchical system of segmentation. Deleuze and Guattari employ the molecular as more fluid form of segmentation to discuss the often unseen, moving parts that make up the whole. Importantly, though, molecules interact—they are in relation to each other—and this creates fluidity and motion. The motion of the molecules is a potential to destabilize the molar, in its perception as a whole.

Throughout their works, Deleuze and Guattari draw on many fields to conceptualize their arguments in myriad ways while also allowing the concepts to be variable. Above, for example, saw the authors draw from geography and chemistry. In this spirit, I want to suggest that we might also think of molarity as an aggregate of molecules in a statistical sense. In regression analysis<sup>4</sup>, data points gets plotted on a graph to represent patterns being exhibited by two variables (Meyers, Gamst, and Guarino 2013). With a large enough sample, there will be a mess of data splattered all over the graph. A regression line gets drawn, using a statistical formula to estimate the

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<sup>4</sup> This analogy is just as apt for non-linear and multivariate analysis, though I have no doubt that any statisticians and quantitative sociologists will find probabilistic mathematical oversights on my part, argue about a higher Pearson  $r$ , or that I am cherry picking non-perfect positive relationships. While I will attempt to address these critiques throughout the analogy, allow me to succinctly briefly (and perhaps impolitely) reply to these concerns: it is a loose model to help envision the concepts of molar and molecule, it is not intended to explain formulae (or be probabilistically true); while there may exist relationships in which  $r=1$ , identity is not one of these. Identity is in constant variation, always becoming and so  $r$  will always be low and in flux. I am not cherry picking but using an approximate model.

relationship among the variables, to approximate the shape of the scattered data points. The linear regression line (the diagonal line in the image below) is used to summarize the totality of all the data points, but the line is rarely a perfect fit to the majority—or often any! —of the points of data.

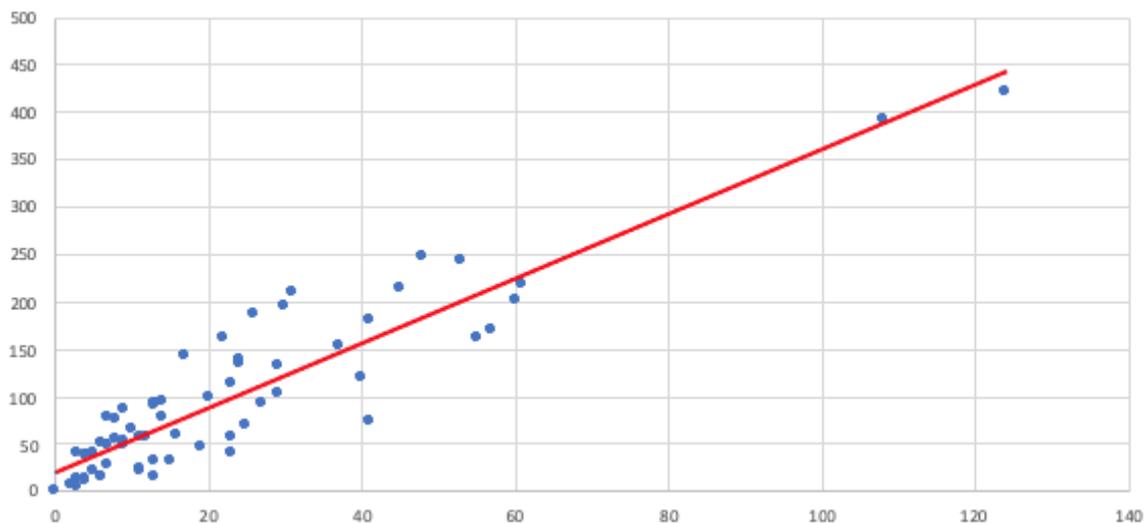


Illustration 1: Linear Regression

In this example, a very loose approximation of the collection of data points explains their domain and range, the myriad possible locations a point may find itself on the graph. The line compresses the variability and movement between the data into a simplified shape or broad way of thinking. Analyzing each datum, we can see that this line never perfectly bisects and widely misses a majority of the points. The linear regression line is molar representation that shrinks the complexity of all individual data points (i.e., molecules).

There is nothing wrong with some molar heuristics but when these get positioned as Truth, molecules are denigrated, especially those that deviate most from the norm.

Transcendent ways of thinking champion the molar, in which molecules might find their redemption and value through dialectical negation. Moreover, what often happens is that the molar stands in for the molecules, and we lose sight of the molecular. We often see the molar mass and miss the microscopic. We should, however, not lose sight of the fact that the molar is made up of molecules. Regression is calculated by data points.

Deleuze and Guattari apply this regression analysis conception to identity. The chemical and geographical applications of moles and molecules are broadened to subjectivity, the former being formed in collective, social, and political responses, what gets taken up as “common sense” (Bannerji 1995), while the molecular relates to individual actions and reactions (Conley 2005:177). Bodies, then, are in constant tension between the gravity of a molar mass and their molecularity. Said more sociologically, agents are pulled between socializing culture (that might be captured in a regression line), such as norms, mores, and folkways, and authentic expressions of their continually negotiated selves (that might get captured as erratic data points). This can also be extended to masculinities in that an aggregate of manhood and masculinity gets normalized as the only way to be a man. Lost in this conceptualization is that if we zoom in, we can see that the molar representation of masculinity is comprised of men performing a plethora of masculinities in myriad ways. Molarity, then, is oppressive because it normalizes a median identity—that may not accurately reflect any one identity—making this pervasive and presenting it as Truth.<sup>5</sup>

There is, within Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptualization of the molecular, an articulation of fluidity from the interaction between molecules. This interaction is critical

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<sup>5</sup> For more on the ways forms of oppression, particularly racism, become pervasive as “common knowledge” see Bannerji’s (1995) *Thinking Through*.

to the distinction of an assemblage as compared to a collection of things or to a Hegelian totality. The way the molecules relate to each other, the ways the components of an assemblage interact create emergent properties of the assemblage that are unique to the assemblage and not reducible to the properties of the components. Applying irreducibility to masculinities as assemblages allows us to consider the special capacities that arise in a group of men as a result of their interacting as an assemblage. When the capacities from the interaction between men get whitewashed into the molar aggregate, the molar gets treated as a hegemonic ideal and obscures the agency of the molecular, individual, unique men.

Considering the molecular composition of the molar allows us to more clearly see how the personal is political. One person's action or expression is but one molecule of many within the whole, but there is agency in molecules. Molecules interact, so one person acting in a way that does not adhere to the molar rule can inspire other people to deviate from the mean. And, before you know it, molecules can swarm and gather in new areas creating a new molarity. Just as molecules have agency, there is a stillness to molar representation in which we lose molecular movement and the ability for social change. I contend that there is political agency in calling attention to molarity and how the molar ignores molecules—particularly outlier molecules. Let me restate this less abstractly using the assemblage of masculinities. There is political agency in calling attention to the ways we instruct men to “man up” to conform to one way of being a man (or to conform to one of a limited number of ways of being a man). There is political agency in seeing past the hegemonic ideal and celebrating the myriad ways all men deviate from this ideal.

But there is comfort and power for those who deviate the least from molar lines. As such, attending to the molecular disrupts molar comforts, convenience, and privileges. Those who do enact their political agency by disrupting and challenging the comforts of molarity are often labeled as killjoys (Ahmed 2010). Molecules offer a power to give variations of self, what Deleuze would call “?being” (Parr 2005:3). This variation-of-self opens up the possibility to challenge the commonsensical, socialized norms, and universally accepted. Our molecularity is a portal to becoming a killjoy and finding a line of flight.

I have discussed that the molar is a heuristic that attempts to freeze and simplify widely varied elements into some approximation of shape. Molar moves are those that attempt to artificially apply some fixity to the volatile while molecules provide variability or movement. Molecules, however, are not the only form of movement within an assemblage, and molarity is but a portion of imposed false-rigidity of an intensive variation. In what follows I discuss (1) the movement of, within, and between assemblages, including deterritorialization and lines of flight, and (2) efforts to territorialize.

### **Becoming Man: elements that permeate and the possibility for change**

The manner by which components form and are held together are a matter of what Deleuze and Guattari call consistency. Puar (2012:57) explains this as an emphasis on relations and relations of patterns as opposed to an emphasis on content. Earlier I described how the interaction between elements in an assemblage creates emergent properties in the assemblage that are not reducible to properties of the components. To

illustrate, a flammable hydrogen atom and two flammable oxygen atoms form an assemblage of water that has the emergent properties of extinguishing fire. Similarly, various elements of marginalized and subordinated masculinities are appropriated and brought together by dominant masculinities to form hybrid (Bridges and Pascoe 2014; Demetriou 2001) or pastiche (Atkinson 2011) masculinities with emergent properties of obscuring complicity in the project of hegemonic masculinity and oppression of others.

The conceptual framework of an assemblage allows me to emphasize and attend to the process rather than the product. I can attend to the process of becoming-man by those within the fieldsites I investigated. I can identify the elements of these men's masculinity and I can attend to how the elements relate and interact rather than just labelling these men and masculinities as hybrid, marginalized, or hegemonic. At the heart of attending to the process is a focus on how things connect and the propensity for transformation, becoming, movement. This is a turn away from seeing things as static and monolithic. Instead, I am committed to attending to how things are unfolding, including bodies' power to affect and be affected (Lorraine 2005).

Giving heuristic shape to an assemblage, Deleuze and Guattari explain that it is composed of a vertical and horizontal axis. On one pole of the horizontal axis is a material segment that is a *machinic assemblage* of bodies intermingling and reacting to each other. The horizontal axis also has a semiotic (expression) segment, a *collective assemblage of enunciation*, which is a collectively formed regime of signs that include acts, expressions, and statements. This segment also includes the non-material changes to bodies because of these enunciations, such as: labelling theory in which, for example, one is criminal because they have been labelled criminal; the eugenicists' move away from

racist language to a discourse of family values (see McWhorter 2009); or the men's rights movements expression of feeling victimized (see Allan 2016). The vertical axis has a territorial-reterritorial side of stability through stasis and a side of deterritorialization that allows for novelty and for the assemblage to be carried away.

The vertical axis of an assemblage provides stability and movement. To explain this movement, I need to give some definition to both sides of the vertical axis, the territorial/reterritorial and the deterritorial. A territory is an ordering principle that joins heterogeneous bodies into an assemblage (Smith and Protevi 2018:4.2).

*Reterritorialization* is a re-purposing into another domain or new territory.

*Territorialization* is the claiming and making as “[having]-the-value-of home” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:326), where one may find and make comforts (Ahmed 2014).

*Deterritorialization* is a separation from a given, previously territorialized, purpose. To paraphrase briefly, a territory is a molarization of a space, event, or identity.

Deterritorializing is a radical changing of these molarized territories—a queering, if you will—while a reterritorialization is the making new molarizations of comfort post-queering.

Despite the differences between the sides of the territorial axis, these poles are not to be thought of as opposites (Parr 2005b). Deterritorialization is an inseparable element of territories, a crisscrossing dense network that connects all components to each other that gives the assemblage its creative potential for transformation. Deterritorializations are inherent within assemblages as transversal paths that connect in non-linear ways. Rather than a linear game of telephone where a connection between element A and E must pass between elements B, C, and D, this non-filial system of relations cuts across

the territorial lines of an assemblage in “a practice of making transverse connections, of assembling multiplicities through their connections” (Bogue 2007:2) that connects A to E, bypassing having to flow through elements B, C, and D. This transversal way is *rhizomatic* in that it is like a system of root weeds that spread across a broad area and cannot be cut off at a point to mitigate spreading. This is opposed to a structure of a tree where a branch can only grow from a stem which can only grow from a trunk. This rhizomatic property gives the assemblage its creativity and potential for transformation.

An assemblage is an intensive variation; it is in constant movement. Each of its many components are also in variation, while being connected to each other rhizomatically. The result of all of this variation and transversal connection is that an assemblage is concurrently territorialized and deterritorialized. An assemblage is always fleeting: static as the assemblage it is now and, at once, passing into a new assemblage as its components vibrate. Deleuze and Guattari (1987:324) explain that “There is no need to effectively leave the territory to go this route; but what just a minute ago was a constituted function in the territorial assemblage has become the constituting element of another assemblage, the element of passage to another assemblage.” An assemblage is always a becoming between two (or more) terms, between two (or more) territories, between two (or more) assemblages. This is to say that the positions do not exchange places but, instead, simultaneously coexist. There is no discreteness between the assemblages as they become something new. Deterritorialization, then, is inherent in a territory as immanent transformation.

There are two forms of deterritorialization: absolute and relative (Parr 2005b:70). *Absolute deterritorialization* is a virtual movement. These are the myriad, haphazard

encounters that may (or may have) sprout new directions or novel actions. These are the shimmers that occur in the connections between molecules that create the potential for actual/relative transformation. An absolute deterritorialization is a potential power, a capacity to affect.

*A relative deterritorialization* is a reactive power. These are the movements in the actual, what we retroactively give name to as molecules shift into some configuration that gives an approximation of a new molar shape. Relative deterritorializations are *lines of flight* that spring from transversal vectors of absolute deterritorialization. Lorraine (2005:147) explains this, stating that “A ‘line of flight’ is a path of mutation precipitated through the actualisation of connections among bodies that were previously only implicit (or ‘virtual’) that releases new powers in the capacities of those bodies to act and respond.” Lines of flight are points of rupture. They are the visible metamorphosis of the assemblage from which they shoot, *and* they offer the potential to take flight and seed other assemblages.

There is promise to lines of flight, as sprouts of the rhizome may shoot in new directions and regenerate from the smallest of remnant of the rhizome. I contend that deterritorialization and the rhizomatic properties that include lines of flight are critical components of the hope for transforming the hateful masculinities on the manosphere. Rather than viewing misogyny as an infection on a branch and trying impossibly to prune it, we have to realize that misogyny and similar forms of hate and oppression are rhizomatic. The components of masculinity, like misogyny, are not localized but permeate and can regenerate. We will not succeed in trying to cut misogyny out, but we can try to inject these men and masculinity with something that will spread throughout

the rhizome, creating new emergent properties, and helping to transform these men. While my research did not unveil many examples of transformation—perhaps because I targeted spaces that were aggressively misogynistic and promoted dominating masculinities—I did observe a softer masculinity emerging in some MGTOW spaces. This softening arose as MGTOWs formed temporary circles of support for each other for: one member who approached the anniversary of his loss of parental visitation, a member who shared how his experience with sexual abuse led him to MGTOW. I was not able to follow the men who formed these circles to see if the transformation from MGTOW sovereignty to a circle of care spread beyond the circumstance observed but, even if brief, these were lines of flight.

I have discussed assemblage including qualities such as molar and molecule, and movement via deterritorialization and lines of flight. Assemblage theory has explanatory purchase in describing the ways that categorizing traits, such as hegemonic masculinity, marginalized masculinity, hybrid masculinity, and aspects of identity, such as gender, race, and sexuality break apart and come together to form subjectivity. This process of identity construction counters static conceptions and reifications of identity and is concerned with myriad elements that help form a person's identity. In these ways the assemblage theory I have described is similar to intersectionality and, so, I want to explain why I have not employed intersectionality as the theory for this dissertation.

Where the assemblage theory that I employ differs fundamentally from intersectional theories is in how it is aimed at “studying up” (Messner 1996) by investigating those who occupy privileged intersections. Intersectionality foregrounds political, legal, and structural inequality (Sumi et al. 2013). Moreover, it does so from a

vantage point that gives voice to the marginalized. So that, in using Crenshaw's (1989) model of the intersection, it is forms of discrimination and inequality that flows through the intersection rather than identity (Bogic 2017). My research investigates the men and masculinities that gather in online spaces in a backlash against women and feminism. The masculinities I investigate, even when oppressed by various identity axes (including their own masculinity), are also always benefiting from a position of power. So, while I am interested inequality and forms of oppression, I am interested in how it is constructed in the identities of those who benefit from it.

While intersectionality is intended to emphasize inequalities, there are scholars who have treated intersectionality as a theory that attends primarily to overlapping aspects of identities (Sumi et al. 2013). My position is that there is room within assemblage theory to offer a framework for these positions by explaining rigid identities (or that which some people claim as a rigid identity) as a molar aspect of a territorial machinic assemblage.

Machinic assemblages make up two quadrants of an assemblage's tetravalence. Assemblages have four quadrants distinguished by a vertical axis of (re)territorialisation and deterritorialization and a horizontal axis of collective assemblages of enunciation and machinic assemblages. Any assemblage has a machinic assemblage that territorializes and deterritorializes. Explaining these two quadrants, Deleuze and Guattari (1987:4) write that:

One side of a machinic assemblage faces the strata, which doubtless make it a kind of organism, or signifying totality, or determination attributable to a subject;

it also has a side facing a *body without organs*, which is continually dismantling the organism, causing a signifying particles or pure intensities to pass or circulate, and attributing to itself subjects that it leaves with nothing more than a name as a trace of an intensity.

It is within the quadrant that faces the strata that “grids happen” (Puar 2012:49) as attempts to totalize the intermingling and amalgamation. It is within the elements and qualities of this quadrant that rigid analytic categories have heft. Categories, such hegemonic masculinity, and aspects of identity, such as sexuality, are neither static, nor stable. But they are often socialized as such. Assemblage theory captures the attempts to molarize and make categories rigid while also considering their movement (*i.e.*, molecular and deterritorialization).

It bears repeating that assemblages are in constant motion. Despite efforts to make something static and molar an assemblage is always in passing. Its molecules are in constant flux, which in turn shapes even the molar. And the assemblage itself is always becoming something else and allowing for the passage into another assemblage. Because movement is foundational to the assemblage, examinations of assemblages should attend to this movement. And because affect and emotions provide an impetus and a reading of movement and becoming, a study of identity, framed through assemblage theory, should attend to affect and emotions, what I broadly label as feelings.

This study, which is centered on the men and masculinities on the manosphere, attends to the reactions documented on various websites to capture the ways that these masculinities form, break apart, and are held together. As such, my analysis includes

attention to feelings as a way of reading the way masculinities are becoming-constructed. There is, however, considerable ambiguity in, conflation between, and disciplinary uses of affect, emotion, and other terms of feeling. In what follows, I define how I operationalize the varied terms and elucidate my conceptualization of feelings in a way that rectifies the tensions between disciplines.

### Parsing out Feelings

The term emotion is used to capture a broad range of implicit ways of knowing (Shotwell 2014). There are many theoretical orientations and analytic angles into the study of emotions from, for example, the psychobiological to social, from indeterminate to conscious, from corporeal to discursive. Despite alluding to varied affective phenomena, these orientations and angles reveal that emotions are imbued with and formed by power (Ahmed 2014; see Seigworth and Gregg 2010). Engaging with emotions on all levels and across all contexts requires moving through these varied, often conflated, and sometimes ignored aspects of implicit knowledge. The epistemological and ontological diversity of implicit ways of knowing can be an obstacle to articulating clear, distinct definitions of the varied, ineffable but prominent forms of understanding our experience. In what follows I provide my theoretical operationalization of feelings, affect, sentiments, emotions, and moods.

I use *feelings* as a referent to the broad category of what, in popular discourse, is referred to as emotion. This is to say that my use of feelings is a catchall umbrella term for affect, sentiments, emotions, and moods. I draw here on Campbell's (1997) use of feelings, which includes emotions both as classic passions (e.g. anger, love, and fear) and

shadow emotions (e.g. exploited, confidence, and Campbell's "white-master's-well-fed-dog"). I invert, if you will, Rogers and Robinson's (2014:283) operationalization of affect as "the most general term to describe the way we feel about people, ideas, and happenings, and [affect] is often used as a primitive in defining other affective terms in the sociology of emotion – including sentiment, emotion, and mood." I do this to synthesize into my framework Campbell's radically important revelation that feeling states are shaped and produced through expression. Also, I use feelings as a catchall to make the term affect less "primitive" by using it explicitly, drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's (1987, 1994) notion of affect, referring to the ways power is intertwined with feelings.

*Affect* is an in-betweenness that opens up exploration into relational power as force and capacity. Affect is the emergence of what will come to be known as emotion before we know it as such. It emerges as resonant chords in-between polarized notions. In between virtual–actual, potential–emotion, psychobiological–social, indeterminate–conscious, and corporeal–discursive, affect emerges in the hyphen connecting the disparate without joint or scar. While similar to the broadness of feelings, I use affect to call attention to and explain power exerted through feelings. Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 1994) define affect as the change that occurs when bodies collide or come into contact. In this contact a body can affect, be affected, or both. This is a power acted out as a reaction. At the same time affect is also the body's continuous intensive variation in its capacity for acting. This is the potential power to act upon, coerce, and force.

I also employ sentiment, emotion, and mood to distinguish between feeling states. *Emotions* are feeling states that are discursive in that they are "culturally delineated types

of feelings” (Thoits 1989). My employment of the term discursive, however, is not tied exclusively to the analytic move of naming. Instead, emotions are formed in their expression, which need be neither linguistic, nor conscious—though it may be. Emotions can be captured in exclamations (e.g. “I love you!”), demonstrations (e.g. tears of sadness), and the body’s proprioception and leaking of expressions (see, for example, Massumi 2002). My conceptualization of emotions is one that uses duration and intensity to distinguish them from sentiments and moods. Emotions are fleeting and intense feeling states directed towards an object, though there is a range to each dimension of ephemerality and intensity, that are retrospective (e.g. “I love you” and tears as expressions of past feelings now emerged).

Socially constructed and responses to symbols in a culture (Robinson, Smith-Lovin, and Wisecup 2006), *sentiments* are feelings that are more enduring and less intense than emotions. Like emotions, sentiments are directed towards an object. Confidence is one such sentiment. Though he classifies confidence as an emotion, Barbalet (1998) explains that confidence requires evidence acquired through the continual repetition of lived experience. Under my conceptualization, confidence is a sentiment. Drawing, then, on one’s cultural experience of an object allows one to express a sentiment (confidence) towards said object that lasts until proven otherwise.

*Moods* are feeling states that are less intense, lingering, and less directed from and towards an object (Thoits 1989). Though Thoits (1989) indicates that sociologists seldom study these, my perception is that these are rarely explicitly operationalized as an intent or variable of study. Moods are, however, at play in the study, but not named as such. In Barbalet’s (1998) exploration of resentment, he draws upon a study of men’s sacrifice

and the entitlements they feel come with said sacrifices. There is an unarticulated mood that escapes around the men's perceived social contract. This mood may help shape these men's habitus, which in turn helps form the collective emotion of resentment. Moods get subsumed within other concepts, such as habitus, or included within the black box that ignores explanatory purchase (e.g. false consciousness).

Though I distinguish between these feeling states (including affect) I do so with the caveat that these are all imbricated and that the lines of distinction between the concepts are fuzzy at best. I also wish to make explicit a proviso. While I make distinctions for analytic purposes, which allows me to critically investigate men's extempore backlash and premeditated reactions, I recognize that these analytic distinctions draw on a history of distinguishing between concepts that perpetuate a gendered injustice. As Ahmed (2014:207) explains:

A contrast between a mobile impersonal affect and a contained personal emotion suggests that the affect/emotion distinction can operate as a gendered distinction. It might even be that the very use of this distinction performs the evacuation of certain styles of thought (we might think of these as 'touchy feely' styles of thought, including feminist and queer thought) from affect studies.

In *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, Ahmed uses the term "impression" to avoid making analytic distinctions. For this project, I *feel* that there is a demand for analytic categories to satisfy a defence of a dissertation. My decisions on how I parse out and take up these feeling categories, though, can harm those (individual and collective) I love. As I will

discuss later, feelings are powerful and create an “us” and a “them.” The distinctions I make here perpetuate, at least somewhat, these divisions and the subsequent effects. Feelings are political. My proviso, then, is to acknowledge the feminist and queer thought to which I am indebted. I prefer the broadness of “feelings” (my own attempt to avoid distinction, akin to Ahmed’s use of “impression”) and often extend this broadness to each distinguished term in my common vernacular.

I have parsed out the distinctions I employ between feelings, affect, sentiments, emotions, and moods. There is, too, a fuzziness in the subjective, relational, collective, and social ways feelings get discussed and operationalized. Seigworth and Gregg (2010), for example, outline eight competing and imbricated ways feelings get taken up within the field of affect studies. Discussing the psycho-biological, collective, social, and expressive views feelings, I explicate how these direct bodies.

### **Social to Biological: A sinusoidal model of emotions**

There are intense bodily responses to our everyday encounters, to the social institutions we interact with, and to events that occur in broader public spheres. When I speak of bodily responses, I mean, of course, the physiological individual body. I also mean the relational individual body and the collective body. A person encounters an object, she is stimulated by the encounter and this causes a physiologically specific response (Kemper 1978). Epinephrine leaks as anxiety builds and noradrenaline pumps into her body in ire. Her skin tightens. She feels the hairs on the back of her neck stand as her body reads the direction of the wind. Her blood leaves her fingertips in preparation to

rush her legs should she need to fight or flee. There is a half second, pre-conscious response to stimuli.

But bodies are not only psycho-biological. Bodies are shaped in the social. Indeed, humans are social and so a focus on a human “nature” of emotions must also include a focus on the social. This social includes the relational, the feelings felt by the self and the feelings a person feels directed toward a social object that disclose the person to herself (Denzin 1984) and distinguish from those who are not herself (Ahmed 2014). The human “nature” of emotions must also include the socialization of norms, formed in common awareness, attention, mood, and symbols (Collins 2004; Goffman 1967), and values that become invisible to those who do not have to counter the encounters tainted by the stickiness of symbols (Ahmed 2014).

Bodies, too, are collective. Collective not in the aggregate sense, though they are that as well. But collective in the sense of a common or similar habitus, which is to say shared habits, tastes, and dispositions shaped by shared histories and cultures. This collectiveness shapes and is shaped, concurrently, by socialization, relationality, and the visceral. Collectiveness, socialization, relationality, and the psychobiological are co-constituted in feelings. Feelings are a mortar amongst the psycho-biological, the relational, socialization, and collectiveness. Emotions are an in-betweenness (Muñoz 2009).

Feelings are connected to expressions (Campbell 1997). Feelings do not lead to action; they are actions (Ahmed 2014). As we are affected, we move towards or retreat and this provides an orientation. Feelings are bodily judgements that are directed towards objects and, in so doing, become directive. As emotions are directed towards objects,

they become judgements of that object. An object judged as good directs us towards the object. An object judged as bad directs us away from the object. The object, once judged, becomes a sign. When viewed later, the sign triggers the historical expression of emotions and these emotions become directive—orientating and instructing actions based on the sticky symbolism that gets entangled with the object. This orientation, or direction, delineates between bodies to create borders between an “us” and a “them,” and contours what bodies are able to do by increasing or decreasing power on a body.

How people respond to their contact with other people (or objects) forms the relational distinctions between the person and Others. Feelings “produce the very surfaces and boundaries that allow the individual and the social to be delineated as if they are objects” (Ahmed, 2014: 10). As bodies come together, feelings stir various vectors of movement within and between people that create surfaces and borders. Ahmed explains the vectors of: hate, a pulling away from the (imagined) Other; fear, a coil and recoiling vector of repulsion; anxiety, an infinite withdrawal-approach, the subject tethered to the object with an elastic vector; disgust, an approach followed by an urgent pulling away from the object, like the bounce of a ball; love, a striving towards, as the return of an impossible ideal; and shame, a turning away as an attempt to hide while being exposed. While Ahmed elucidates these six emotions and their vectors, there are, of course, other feelings with their own movements. These vectors are an orientation towards or away but there are intensities and angles to the movement.

Feelings, too, can be read and misread. Subjects may read the directionality of a vector and misread the emotion. Hate, fear, anxiety, and disgust all include a withdrawal as one part of the total movement. Also, feelings need not be conscious. As such they are

(mis)readable by others as well. All (mis)readings give these feelings form. It is my contention, then, that in giving them form, readings allow feelings to be taken up as emotions while directing these in certain ways. The (mis)reading of feelings that give form are expressions of emotions, but “*expression is the activity through which our psychological states, including our feelings, become individuated for both others and ourselves*” (Campbell 1997:48–49 emphasis in original). Feelings, then, are not antecedent to expression. As opposed to much philosophical work on feelings (“emotions”) that views emotions as a natural, pre-existing ontological thing that we simply give a name to, my use of feelings, following Campbell, views feelings as emerging through expression. The reading of reaction and the form given to these actions is the activity that makes—creates, structures, and gives shape to—our feelings for ourselves and others. In discussing how expressions individuate feelings, I have mentioned that feelings may be conscious or not, and formed by and for oneself and others (the individual and the social). There is an implied betweenness to this.

Kemper (1990) discusses where early contributions to the sociology of emotion fit within dichotomized organizing matrices for thought and research: micro versus macro, quantitative versus qualitative, application of political economy or not, application of gender analysis or not, managing versus accounting for emotions, prediction versus description, biology versus social construction. The breadth to which emotions, as outlined by Kemper, have been taken up in sociology suggests that these phenomena are, under my conceptualization, feelings (an intentionally broad term that avoids the gendered injustice that accompanies historical use of emotions as a catchall). Despite positioning the research of emotions on one side of each pole, the myriad ways feelings

are used to explore all sides of Kemper's poles and the nexus in between them suggests that feelings are a phenomenon—an energy—that runs between and amongst the poles. Kemper hints at this, perhaps unintentionally, when he writes “The diversity of approaches all devoted to a discrete phenomenon augurs well for the attainment of knowledge in sufficient breadth and depth to potentiate a remarkable synthesis” (22). A synthesis occurs from the interaction between thesis and antithesis. In this dialectic model, thesis, antithesis, and synthesis are analytic, archetypical categories of knowledge. But these archetypes are always a becoming. Becoming is negotiated intuitively and is known implicitly. Feelings form each category and provide a link between each dichotomized side. Feelings, then, are a yoke between the individual and the many facets of the social. This betweenness informs my view of emotions.

I understand feelings to be individual, in the body, phenomenological, in the interaction, and in social structures. It is for this reason that they are, à la Kemper, within the many dichotomies. Denzin (1984) explains that emotions are a “circular process that begins and ends with the transactional and actions of the self in the social situation interacting with self and others” (58). I want to draw on and expand upon this circularity to argue for a sinusoidal model of feelings. Here I am using the form of a sine wave as an explanatory model. This is not a formulaic model that suggests any mathematical ratio between the various levels in which emotions operate. My explanation of this conceptualization uses some linguistics from calculus, but I will try to translate and unpack this into a more accessible vernacular.

Sinusoidal refers to periodic graphs that are expressed using the sine (or cosine) function. At its most basic expression— $f(x)=\sin x$ —a graphical representation would look like this:

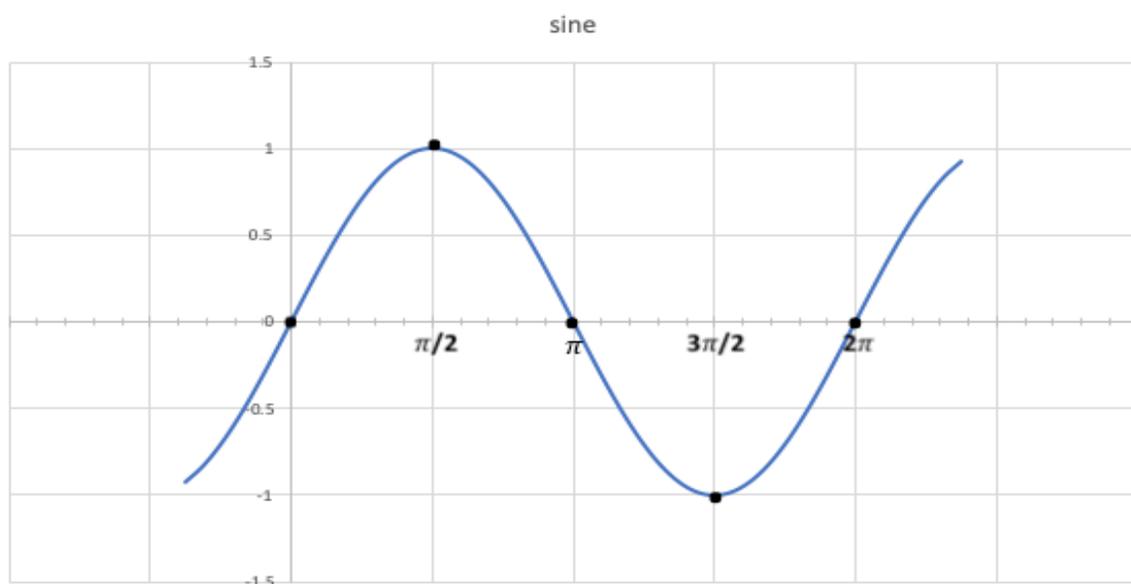


Illustration 2: Sine Wave

For the purposes of this argument, I want to suggest that the x-axis is time and that the y-axis relates to social involvement. On the y-axis, negative numbers pertain to an individual body and positive numbers are increasingly social. Again, this is not a mathematical model, so I am not suggesting that the individual body is negative, nor am I suggesting that there is an equal correlation between the rise into the social as the fall into the personal. While I will focus on one period<sup>6</sup> of the graph, much like considerable research focuses on one emotional reaction, the sine function is historical, immediately

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<sup>6</sup> A period is one cycle of the sine curve. A full cycle (360°) begins at 0 and is completed at  $x=2\pi$ . In trigonometric representations, quadrant hinge-points are located at  $\pi/2$ ,  $\pi$ ,  $3\pi/2$ , and  $2\pi$ . These correlate respectively with geometric representations 90°, 180°, 270°, and 360°, respectively. It is worth noting that calculations that occur within one quadrant have similar values to other quadrants, though there are differences in the directionality of the value.

present, and reverberates into the future. Like the sine wave, feelings are infinite. Our feelings are historical, immediately present, and reverberate into the future. As I focus on one period (from 0 to  $2\pi$  in the image) of the sine function, and one period of a feeling it is important to remember the infinite property of both.

Feelings are both social and individual. Each of these aspects acts upon the other. At the social level, feelings operate by flowing between the micro- and macro-sociological levels. The micro level, represented on the graph at  $x=0$ ,  $\pi$ , and  $2\pi$  (+/- an infinitely small amount), can be explained using Denzin's phenomenological, relational interactionist emotionality framework. Through the common stock of phenomenological emotional understanding, feelings form and become embedded in social structures, represented on the graph from  $x = 0$  to  $\pi/2$ , beginning with small groups but growing into larger structures and institutions. The feelings within these social structures also act upon and influence feelings in everyday interactions ( $x = \pi/2$  to  $\pi$ ) (Barbalet 1998). The top half of the graphical model illustrates feelings flowing "up" from the phenomenological, building into dyadic and small group relationality. This in turn flows and builds into larger and larger group sociality, including institutional levels. This model also captures feelings flowing down: the institutional level shapes group relationality, which shapes the phenomenological.

A person's interactions with social objects also causes emotions, sensation, and moods within the body ( $x=\pi$  to  $3\pi/2$ ) often explained biologically and psychologically. The psycho-biological, however, are also influenced by the phenomenological. The wave of feeling passes through Denzin's phenomenological stream (at  $x=0$ ,  $\pi$ , and  $2\pi$ )—influenced by the social factors discussed in the previous paragraph. Feeling states within

the body also begin to travel outward, moving from the visceral to the skin of the body ( $x=3\pi/2$  to  $2\pi$ ), shaping social interactions (Kemper 1978; Scheff 1988) and embedding feelings into the relational interactions. This sinusoidal model also reflects the neurological point of non-consciousness in which the body explores an infinite potentiality, Massumi's (2002) half second, that affect theorists explore. Affect occurs at  $x=3\pi/2$

What the sinusoidal conceptual model illustrates is a(n infinite) flow where feelings are embedded in the body, interactions, and social structure, and how feelings flow between each of these. Having expressed a view of feelings that includes the individual, the social, and the flow in-between, I wish to declare a disciplinary bias for my project. I am interested in what feelings do on a social level. I focus, then on interactions, how these shape structure, and the practices in between. I focus, too, on structural emotions, how these shape interactions, and the practices in between. While this focus might give insight into bodily and neurological aspects of emotion as reactions to the social, I am interested in how feelings circulate and orientate as power, through the stickiness (Ahmed 2014) of an invisible history of socialization that flows through the present to reach into the future. This model is critical to my understanding men's emotional backlash to the loss of patriarchal, racial, and heteronormative power, as paranoia, border work, and discomfort. The model also allows me to connect men's reactions to the calculated responses aimed at advancing white, heterosexual, male supremacy.

### **Circulation of a Sticky Invisibility: Feelings and Socialization**

Feelings can work in practice by circulating through words and figures and sticking to bodies. Feelings are ways that our physical bodies become aware of internal depths and recesses. They limit and empower our reach into the world, as they impress power on a body at varying levels. The impression of power, what Ahmed (2014) calls a stickiness of emotions, occurs through socialization. Once normalized, socialized comforts become invisible in their taken-for-grantedness.

Socialization is the process through which people learn norms, beliefs, and values. It is a process influenced by people's perception of how others view them. Cooley (1902) explains that this perception, the "looking glass self," is formed from experience in social life. Feelings are intrinsic to and a by-product of our experience. Katz (2012:17), for example, asserts that emotions arise in a process where "action becomes meaningful through private practices, then becomes social in a publicly shared way, then again becomes privately meaningful in ways others can not appreciate."

There is a three-stage experience of social life that begins individually, socially constructs experience, and forms emotional borders. Meaning is gleaned through personal experiences as we come to know our world through our encounters with it. This personal experience is then further formed through a process of social construction. Personal experience becomes social as it gets shared with others. Individuals convey their experience and subtle negotiations of the differences in experience occur so that a collaborative narrative can be felt. Negotiating differences between meanings gives rise to hiding the disparate—the experiences outside the norm. A norm becomes normalized and socialized, which in turn becomes a collective feeling. Emotions arise to detect,

process, and police these distinct meanings. The sociality of shared experience leads to emotional registers to understand the boundaries of shared meaning. But these emotions also coerce deviants by branding and circulating with them.

Feelings, then, stick to bodies whose experiences differ and delineate between bodies. Creating borders between an “us” and a “them” and distinguishing where each begins to take form, feelings circulate with the Other. Like the sine wave, the circulatory feeling is historical and infinite. Feelings continue on, sticking to the body, and are embedded in a forgotten history. While one might bracket off one cycle of the sine wave in the present, the wave is at once extended into the past and into the future. Feelings, though expressed in the present, are at the same time socially constructed in an invisible history of socialization and extend into the future, arriving before the sticky subject, to ensure a socialized discomfort for the deviation.

This stickiness “*still tells us a history of the object that is not dependent on the endurance of the quality of stickiness*” (Ahmed 2014:91). It is this stickiness that affects people and allows people to affect others. It brands one’s body and leaves an impression. Stickiness is power. As it sticks to bodies it affects both the bodies stuck to and those encountering these bodies. Drawing on its historical embeddedness it reinforces distinctions of otherness and causes a movement towards and/or away from distinctions, thereby contouring what bodies are able to do. This stickiness, too, is a power of potential. As the stickiness of feelings veers into the future, it precedes the tacky body and instructs those to be encountered how to receive the forthcoming. Though a precedent, these sticky emotions are also always at once present and historical—a plane of immanence. The forewarning draws on and engages in the socialized (socially

constructed) history. The receiver of the warning fears the Other, for example, because he has been told to fear the Other, because she has feared an Other, or both. By pasting the emotional division to the Other, a power to always potentially divide, ostracize, and condemn looms.

This impending impression, which draws on an invisible history, also affects the Other in the present, who must attempt to untangle the lines of force that reach back into history and socialization to strategize ways to counter future encounters, to negate (or minimize) the impending impression. These present efforts to plan for future consequences of the circulating emotions draws energy and focus, which can often be used to increase the adhesiveness of the emotion. Bodies being feared are distant as they plan to counter the encounter, as they negotiate how to parry against those who fear and attempt to ward off the labels that precede them. But their distance gets read by dominant (and dominating bodies) as untrustworthiness. The misogynist, for example, reads women as angry. The misogynist then reads women's distance as a resting bitch face and, therefore, receives her as a bitch. The stickiness of some surfaces, objects, and signs is a historical effect of relational contact between each other that can bind things together or block the movement of other things. Through sticky power, as a point of reaction and line of potential and plane of immanence (Seigworth 2005), feelings are migratory and elastic, binding to objects, signs, and surfaces. The invisible history, present and potential affect that bond together to create a tackiness is crucial to the circulation of emotions, which form the relational distinctions between people.

## Summary

In this chapter I have described an assemblage as both a collection of components and the ways these elements come together and interact to give the assemblage emergent properties. I have also described the variability of the components, discussing Deleuze and Guattari's use of molecules to conceptualize this, and cautioned against heuristics that aggregate these, explaining how Deleuze and Guattari use the molar to conceptualize this. A snapshot of an assemblage is a freezing of the assemblage within a particular context that obscures the variability of the components across time and contexts. The heuristic to aggregate these components ignores the individuality of the components and the interaction between them that produce irreducible emergent properties.

I have also discussed the variability of the assemblage. The assemblage is in constant motion of construction and sunder. This motion occurs as the assemblage takes on new components, some components diminish, or new interactions between components create novel emergent properties. Deleuze and Guattari offer the concepts of territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization to explain this. In short, this is a continual and iterative process of the way we know the assemblage, the ways that breaks apart and is the process of transforming, and the efforts to hold on and solidify our way of knowing the assemblage. The variability of an assemblage is also an ability to survive discreetly and sprouting of from any point in any direction, in what Deleuze and Guattari conceptualize as a line of flight, no matter how much of the assemblage remains.

The theoretical framework of assemblage, with concepts of molecules, molar, territorialization, deterritorialization, reterritorialization, and line of flight, is generative for thinking about individual and groups of men. Individual men never perform one

consistent identity. Our identities are made up of myriad components and each of these components vary, therefore our identities must also vary. If our identities vary, we can never settle into a category; the motion of our identity limits its capture into a configuration of practice (Carrigan et al. 1985; Connell 1987, 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Similarly, groups of men are also in constant variation. Since the groups are composed of individuals who are in variation, the assemblage of these individuals must also be in flux. Further, groups add variation through the addition and attrition of members. For the purpose of my investigation, the conceptualization of the molar and molecular is particularly generative in that, rather than trying to categorize the myriad men and masculinities across eight websites as hegemonic or complicit or hybrid or marginalized, it allows me to see how all of these men come together with myriad other components as both victims and aggressors.

Because affect can stir movement and because emotions allow us to read movement and becoming, I operationalize the various terms that describe feelings, including affect, emotions, sentiments, and moods. I then discuss my view of feelings that includes the social, social-psychological, psycho-biological, and biological. I conclude this chapter with an explanation of how emotions create borders between bodies and how this circulates into the future maintaining borders between an “us” and a “them.” Feelings are central to my analysis throughout the dissertation. They play a central role in chapter four, “Paranoia–Border Work–Discomfort.” Ultimately, I use feelings, affect, and emotions with a conceptualization of assemblage theory to argue that the men on the manosphere are highly emotional. These men’s feelings spur frenzied paranoias that drive them to misogyny, racism, anti-Semitism, and homophobia to protect the assemblage of

maleness, whiteness, and heterosexuality that has afforded men power, resources, and esteem.

### Chapter 3: Assembling WHECMs

The identities of the men I investigated on the manosphere cohere around whiteness, heterosexuality, masculinity, and evangelical, colonial, conservatism. Every person who visits the manosphere does not explicitly avow each element, but each element is intrinsic to the other elements. Maleness, whiteness, heterosexuality, and evangelical, colonial conservatism cannot be cleaved from each other. Rather they come together in an assemblage to consecrate straight, white, right-winged men as sacred. To make these arguments, I begin this chapter by revisiting assemblage theory and arguing that the rhizomatic characteristics of the assemblage enables the various components of the assemblage to sprout and regenerate. I then describe, in turn, how: masculinity expressed itself in sexism and misogyny; heterosexuality expressed itself in homophobia and transphobia; and whiteness expressed itself through racism and anti-Semitism. There are two purposes to my reporting of the sexism and misogyny, homophobia and transphobia, and racism and anti-Semitism. The first is to document a rich description of the masculinities that form on the manosphere. As efforts to de-platform begin to realize the elimination of some of these websites, it is important to have some documentation of what occurred on these sites. As the men that visited these websites go underground, these documentations may provide insight into those who are less easy to access. The second purpose of focusing on each element is to subsequently pan out and illustrate that each of the elements are assembled. Following the description of each element, I argue that straight, white, right-winged men construe their “sacrifices” to provide for their family as a sacrifice analogous to Christ’s sacrifice. For straight, white, right-winged men, their sacrifices not only justify their perceived position as head

of the family, which in turn gets extrapolated to heads of society. The similarity of their sacrifices to Christ's leads to straight, white, right-winged men's belief that they are Christ-like and, in their view, warrants their sanctification. I conclude this chapter with a discussion about some of the implications of the assemblage of these elements.

A central tenet of this chapter (and dissertation) is that whiteness, heterosexuality, masculinity, and evangelical Christian, colonial, conservatism assemble to form a hegemonic masculinity and identity ideal for those on the manosphere. Throughout this dissertation, I refer to the subjects of my investigation—those who wrote articles, replied to the articles via the comment section, and posted to the forums—by attributing this assembled identity to them. In an effort towards efficiency, I will be using WHECM as a shorthand for the right-wing, cis-gendered, homophobic, evangelical Christian, white-nationalist, misogynistic men that I investigated on the manosphere. Hearn and de Boise (de Boise 2017; de Boise and Hearn 2017; Hearn 2015) have used the acronym WHAM to describe white, heterosexual, able-bodied, men. I follow, then, Hearn and de Boise and use the acronym WHECMs to describe the men who enact assemblages of racist, anti-Semitic, homophobic, transphobic, and misogynistic masculinities. In the next section, I discuss the central properties of an assemblage and illustrate these components within the WHECM assemblage.

### **Agencement: an ensemble and the process of assembling**

An assemblage is the way that a mix of heterogeneous elements comes together. Originally translated from the French word *agencement*, the English translation only captures the group or product and not, as DeLanda explains (2016:1), “the action of

matching or fitting together a set of components (*agencer*).” An assemblage is the puzzle, the pieces of the puzzle, and putting the puzzle together. Assemblage brings forward the way things gather, accumulate, and become assembled. Assemblage points to the way aspects of a component might decay or break off within the assembly so that the assemblage might have certain qualities. And so, understanding identity as an assemblage is a turn away from seeing things as a static essence and instead attending to how things are unfolding, including bodies’ power to affect and be affected (Lorraine 2005).

As it pertains to WHECMs, their identity assemblage is the ensemble of whiteness, heterosexuality, masculinity, colonial-capitalism, and eugenic ideals of family. It is also the process of fitting these together. Therefore, WHECM’s identities include infighting and negotiation of moving targets of each of these elements. There is disagreement, or infighting (Ging 2017), amongst and within the many websites on the manosphere as to what is an ideal form of masculinity. These disagreements can alternate between a negotiation of the dominant-hegemonic position and a manifestation of internal hegemony (Demetriou 2001), the assertion of some men’s dominance over other men. At the same time, ideal-forms of other components of the WHECM assemblage, such as whiteness, race, and conservatism are similarly negotiated and in a constant state of construction and sunder. All of the elements that assemble as WHECM’s masculinity are moving targets that are impossible to attain with any fixity. This instability, the reactions to the inadequacy and inability to meet the ideals of moving targets, the actions to assert their individual position over other men, other races, other straight people, and the actions to affirm and protect their esteem, dividends, and power

is included in the process of constructing an (unstable) identity and, therefore, part of the WHECM assemblage.

People's identities are in a continual state of negotiation as they come into contact with other bodies. The argument I am trying to make here is that their negotiation of identity does not occur only dialectically as a negation of existing identities. Rather, people are continually becoming who they are via dialogism and the emergence of iterations of their identity. The main stem of people's identity continues to grow below the surface as new stems of their identity shoot out. WHECMs go about their day with an identity assembled around whiteness, heterosexuality, masculinity, and colonial-capitalism. As they encounter other bodies—an interaction with their female boss, seeing a same sex couple hold hands, or going online to discuss an “alt-right protest”—new stems shoot to the surface.

### **Rhizome not Tree**

Later in the chapter I will elucidate that WHECMs inconsistently rank within and between axes of oppression (e.g. white women are greater than a black women). Despite these hierarchies that WHECMs express, there does not appear to be a priority of any one element to their identity. The processes in which WHECMs' identities are formed are varied and rhizomatic. The processes are variable across contexts and persons. The processes are rhizomatic in that there is not prioritization of the elements.

Each person is unique and continually negotiates changing contexts. For one WHECM, their whiteness might be the most salient element of their identity. Contexts may change and this WHECM may then find that gender becomes more prominent.

Sexuality may be the most significant element for another WHECM, while gender, race, and sexuality may equally important to a third. And this prioritization is highly unstable, shifting continually. Though there is an ebb and flow to the prioritization of the elements within a WHECM's identity, this is always as a rhizomatic process of emergence. But, while each element in the WHECM assemblage may emerge as prominent over other elements, there are echelons and apexes within each element that privileges those who can lay claim to these aspects of identity.

Deleuze and Guattari distinguish the rhizome from vertically organized structures that branch off in a binary logic (e.g. man-women or white-black). In botany, a rhizome is a stem vegetation that grows horizontally below the soil and sprouts other stems. This means that what appears to be several individual plants above ground are actually shoots from the same rhizome/plant. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) argue that things are rhizomorphic when they possess five characteristics.

Rhizomes have various elements (*i.e.*, heterogeneity) and these can unite and bond (*i.e.*, connection) to each other. A WHECM's identity, for example, has racial, gendered, and sexed elements and, as I will illustrate, these often connect with each other. The various, varying elements of a rhizome continually change the nature of the entity (*i.e.*, multiplicity). WHECM identity is a continual, iterative process. The multiplicity of a rhizome means that it can only ever be described in the moment. Any documenting of it is always a reflection of what the rhizome was instead of what it is becoming. So, the lives of those who were on the websites I analyzed have changed—the contexts in which their identities are being constructed have changed—consequently there are new dimensions to their identities. Finally, the rhizome not only survives ruptures, it ruptures

to survive. Like a garden worm that is cut and becomes two, or weeds that return despite being plucked, rhizomes sprout in any direction from the tiniest fragment. Attending, then, to only a WHECM's misogyny leaves behind his racism, his transphobia, his colonialist drives, his capitalism. And from any of these fragments the WHECM's misogyny can sprout. In what follows in this chapter, I describe germinations of sexism and misogyny, homophobia and transphobia, and racism and anti-Semitism that sprout from the WHECM assemblage.

### **Sexism, Misogyny, and WHECMs' Masculinity**

There are many ways that sexism and misogyny appear on the manosphere. This is true amidst the various websites. Roosh V and Aaron Elias, founders of "*Return of Kings*" and "*Men, Women and Society*," respectively, think so little of women that they only see value in women as temporary sexual conquests. For Roosh V, Aaron Elias, and those like them, women are objectified as only serving to please sanctified men. The sexual objectification of women is misogynistic because the subordination of women occurs in relation to male supremacy. Heartiste, host of Château Heartiste, sees value in white women for their ability to propagate the white race. While Heartiste also promotes the sexual objectification, his objectification of women is anchored in viewing them as vessels to proliferate the white race *and* satisfy the sexual needs of the white man. The misogyny on Château Heartiste occurs in relation to white, male supremacy. Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOWs) think so little of women that they think that men's withdrawal from society will lead to a collapse since there will be no one capable left to build, repair, and create.

There are some differences within each website in the ways sexism and misogyny are expressed and masculinities are espoused. For example, despite their agreement in a “masculine sovereignty,” MGTOWs disagree as to the level of withdrawal from and interaction with women. Some MGTOWs advocate for a “monk life” and complete abstinence of women. Others suggest employing women sex workers to satisfy sexual needs so that MGTOWs can avoid the wiles of women. Yet other MGTOWs preach something that approximates serial monogamy. Some MGTOWs suggest forming relationships with women for sex and companionship but advocate that men ensure that the duration of the relationship does not extend for too long (though what constitutes too long is also up for debate), and most certainly safeguarding against living arrangements so as to not allow for claims to common law marriage.

Despite the varied ways masculinities get negotiated within and between the websites on the manosphere, there are some shared beliefs and customs. In what follows, I explicate a critical gendered division between productive and reproductive spheres. I then articulate the ways that these crystalize amongst WHECMs as a social contract. Finally, I describe how this contract gets policed through the surveillance of a male gaze.

Cancian (1987) has argued that a reproductive-productive split occurred as society shifted from an agrarian to capitalist society and economic production moved out of the household. Subsequently, the economic-productive sphere and individual achievement became the domain of men, while family rearing and tending to personal relationships became the domain of women. As differences between the reproductive and productive sphere became more pronounced, ideals of masculinity and femininity became polarized, and masculinity became the ideal self.

The men I investigated cling to and propagate the gendered division of reproductive and productive labour. This view circulates on the manosphere as values, beliefs, desires, and repulsions. These then crystalize amongst the men on the manosphere as a social fact (Durkheim 1982). There is a cultural politics to WHECMs' beliefs and values as these affect their feelings and behaviours. A comment by Wrong Side of History illustrates how his male gaze elicits disgust, which he anchors in (an imagined but real) social contract: "Reproductive age fat women are just all-around entitled, shit people. They've reneged on their side of the sociosexual contract but still expect male attention. No mercy." There is a justification of the male gaze as an entitlement owed from one side of a trade agreement that is a sedimentation of feelings into a social fact.

But the social contract underlies more than just the male gaze. The splitting of reproductive-productive spheres is positioned as a social agreement that leads to fulfillment. To illustrate, consider Ironsides' response to Based Papist (within the comments of one of *Château Heartiste's* articles):

**Based Papist** You're giving me nightmares. Just sent my perfect angel off to college. I told her if she comes back with short or dyed hair, tattoos or takes a major that is not among a short list of legit technical [sic] majors I will terminate college. Didn't hint it – said outright. Pictures like this fill my nightmares. No joke.

**Ironsides** Sent her off to college — to the combination hump-everything-that moves mosh pit and Marxist indoctrination camp? Instead of working to get her

married to some guy and popping out kids so that she actually has a chance of being happy and fulfilled, instead of being another miserable careerist? Hope you weren't expecting grandkids.

In this exchange we can see elements of a male gaze, disdain for female sexual agency, and what will be described in the next chapter as a media-education persecution complex. But I bring this forward to illustrate how the social contract that underlies these elements is a key component to misogyny and WHECMs' beliefs about the good life. It is not simply a woman's role to bear and raise children, but her fulfillment can only be attained through marriage and family. WHECMs suggest that women's exclusive placement in the reproductive sphere leads to the satisfaction of their desires.

Alongside the splitting of the reproductive and productive spheres there has been a gendered division of characteristics (e.g. male-female, aggressive-passive, lead-follow, power-beauty, etc.) that fall along a Pythagorean table of opposites (Lloyd 1984). This gendering of characteristics includes a reason-emotion divide that assigns reason to men and emotion to women. The splitting of these characteristics is more than an ascription of qualities to one gender. It is equally about the exclusion of qualities—women are not only emotional, they are unreasonable. As Chip Baskets, a visitor to *Return of Kings*, remarked about women “Because they don't use logic. They use emotions, a truly inferior tool.” Men are not only emotionless, but feelings are subordinate. The subordination of women and the feminine that is an aim of hegemonic masculinity also subordinates emotions. Importantly, internal hegemony also marginalizes the enactment or use of anything deemed feminine. Emotions, then, carry a mark of discountenance.

The false divide between reason and emotions, and attention to that which they claim is reason serves as a misdirection to the men I investigated, distracting WHECMs from the transformative power of feelings.

There is a functionalist mechanical solidarity to the belief that men work and women raise families (and satisfy their man). While explicating the independence between spheres and genders as society moved from agrarian to capitalist, Cancian also argued that there have been intermittent periods of liberation during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These have led to changes from traditional, bifurcated gender roles to self-fulfilling independence. Beginning at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and continuing today, there has been some movement towards an interdependence that does “not legitimate predetermined roles or a sexual division of labor; they are blueprints for ‘relationships,’ not marriages. Both partners are expected to work on the relationship, communicate openly and develop themselves” (Cancian 1987:40). With the move to interdependent relationships came more flexible roles for men and women. It is this interdependence that sees women moving out of the reproductive sphere and into the productive sphere that WHECMs across the manosphere lash out against. Consider, for example, Truth’s comments on a *Return of Kings* article:

It is a sad sign of the times we live in when we see a society full of women constantly attached to their smartphones, doing who knows what, in order to fulfill their empty lives with short term pleasure. You can only imagine the amount of lies she is coming up with to tell her significant other, while posting what she really was doing in full detail for the world to see, without even realising

that she is at some point, likely to be caught for her actions. Until men are willing to stand up for their own dignity and self respect, then I simply have no sympathy for his personal circumstances regarding his love life. The days of honest women who would stay home and respect their husband, are over.

Interdependence challenges the production-reproduction divide. By extension, interdependence challenges notions of the family that—as I will show later in this chapter—WHECMs use to exalt themselves and it challenges a former American way of life that WHECMs, like [disqus\\_2015ScorpioWater](#), look back fondly on:

America today is the not the America when you were a kid. He has a point about how America changed over the years. Globalization, corporate cronyism, the breakdown of families and community are real problems in America. I think the author is looking for traditional feminine women, the kind that cook and clean and take care of the home. Not many American women do those kinds of things. I remember it used to be easy to meet those kinds of women decades ago. I recall my girlfriend in college did my laundry, and I never even asked her to do it, she just felt as my fiance that she would want to do housework, that was over three decades ago, most college age women today would never do that kind of work, even if their boyfriends begged and charmed them.

Because the equity of interdependence frees women from being subordinated to a patriarchal family model, WHECMs backlash against women, feminism, and progressive

notions of equality. This backlash is always aimed at enforcing, protecting, and expanding the superordination of men. WHECMs reinforce their supremacy through sexism and misogyny.

WHECMs police and crystalize their belief in the productive-reproductive split through the surveillance of women and the female body via the male gaze. There is a male gaze that views women's value aesthetically, but this is always as a function of WHECM pleasure. This is true to the point where tattoos and odd hair colours, regardless of other aesthetics, repulse many WHECMs because these are associated with left-winged feminists who do not centre WHECMs or the family structure (from which WHECMs derive their grace).

To illustrate, recall the earlier conversation between Based Papist and Ironside in which Based Papist threatens his daughter if she comes back from college "with short or dyed hair [or a] tattoo." Recall, too, Ironside's response "Instead of working to get her married to some guy and popping out kids so that she actually has a chance of being happy and fulfilled, instead of being another miserable careerist?" The male gaze is indicative of a broader view that sees women's value as intertwined with her role as matriarch of the family. And this view becomes an orientation when it steers men to backlash against women's agency and refusal to be assigned to only the reproductive sphere.

But the male gaze is more than an aesthetic appeal. Consider the masculinity enacted by Aaron Elias and those like him, masculinities shaped by the pick-up artist heritage of the manosphere. Elias' male gaze influences his view of women as a

patriarchal dividend and dictated what beauty standards merited an approach<sup>7</sup>. A popular concept amongst PUAs is social market value, which they usually shorthand to SMV. The theory of SMV views men and women under a capitalist frame (market value) that esteems men over women. SMV, then, is very much a patriarchal-capitalist manifestation whose “values” can be traded for resources or dividends.

SMV and the male gaze are more than a matter of taste. The male gaze is both disciplinary and controlling and the value (*i.e.*, SMV) these PUAs afford reflects who they think can be controlled. Disgust directed towards a tattooed, pink-haired feminist is as an expression of a desire to control the female body, which WHECMs feel entitled to due to their sacredness. It is a display of power that works in step with other forms of control over women’s bodies, like abortion laws that reinforce women’s value as only found in the reproductive sphere. It is reproduction that also forms much of WHECMs’ homophobia and transphobia.

### Homophobia and Transphobia

Hatred towards lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, and queer people (LGBTQ)<sup>8</sup> gets expressed on the manosphere in myriad ways. Transgender men and women are deviant—for example, André du Pôle wrote an article on *Return of Kings* that claimed

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<sup>7</sup> In PUA, an approach is the term for engaging the opposite sex.

<sup>8</sup> I want to be as inclusive as possible to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, ally, pansexual, and two-spirit community and recognize all identities. I only discuss LGBTQ in this chapter because the masculinities on the manosphere that I observed only expressed fear and hate towards these folks. While I assume there would be negative emotions directed towards all or most members of the community, I did not encounter anyone with enough empathy to consider much nuance to sexual identities.

that “people knew intuitively that trannyism was a sign of pathology and degeneracy, but now normies believe trannies are poor innocent victims who should either be considered normal—hence trivial—or pedestaled”—and homosexuality is subordinated because of an association between homosexuality and the feminine. Homosexuality gets expressed as an inferior masculinity—for example, on Château Heartiste, Lichtoff claims that women surrounded “by suited fags [are] starved of genuine masculinity.” But this occurs only as men on the manosphere consider gay men, so, once again, (white) men are the referent even within a LGBTQ rubric. There is also a fear on the manosphere that children, who are assumed to be heterosexual, might be made homosexual, either directly by members of the LGBTQ community (e.g. the reasoning in debates about bathroom access that argue that children would be susceptible to sexual grooming) or through the media’s normalization via inclusion of LGBTQ characters in their stories. One example of this occurred on Dalrock’s website in which Opus commented:

Somewhat off topic perhaps I wish to announce after two very unpleasant experiences in the last fortnight that I have formed the view that once again Homosexuality and its propagation must be outlawed. LGBT and their hijacked rainbow are amongst many other things Pied Pipers of Hamelin leading our children to destruction. I’m sorry but that is how I see things (love the sinner hate the sin as the Catholics say).

And Red Pill Latecomer replies:

I'm willing to tolerate homosexuality in private homes and red light districts (remember those?).

But no gay marriage. No gay adoption. No teaching it to children in schools. No public displays of perverse acts outside of the red light districts.

And short of censorship, how can we pressure Hollywood to once again make gay characters taboo.

Each of these and the myriad other ways in which masculinities on the manosphere react to LGBTQ are worth investigating. But I want to illustrate how the deviance from family and, more specifically, propagation is a driving mechanism for homophobia and transphobia. I want to focus on this element because this mechanism is a line of force that runs through misogyny, racism, and Christian, colonial-capitalism.

It is under the rubric of a normal (Nordic) family that actively produces a new generation of Nordic children that homophobia rears its head at those who cannot or will not contribute to the eugenic aims of the normal family. McWhorter (2009) has argued that that racism, sexism, and heterosexism need to be analyzed simultaneously, arguing that race and sexuality are central organizing factors of biopower that are unable to function without each other. Central to this fusion is the use of the SNAF family by eugenicists to shed their Nazi image.

After the Holocaust, even the most racist eugenicists could not ignore that there was more variation within the groups they despised than there was between themselves and those they despised. Acknowledging that there was wide variation within identity categories, eugenicists focused on being more specific about qualities that made people

inferior—qualities that were attributed to races other than “normal” men and women of the Nordic race. This focus on inferior traits, rather than inferior races, was framed as a support of “Normal Families”—again, a turn of phrase to replace Nordic families—and the rearing of bright, hard-working, civil, and moral children. Later, this support of families would include protecting families from feminism and homosexuality. Under the moulding of eugenicists, the idea of family came to promote Nazi ideals by melding together misogyny, racism, homophobia, and ableism.

Homosexuality is a threat to WHECMs because the sterility of gay sex does not allow for the propagation of the (white) species and is therefore a threat to the normal (Nordic) family. To illustrate this threat, consider the following exchange that occurred on *Château Heartiste*. Amidst a discussion about sexuality that arose from someone uttering a homophobic slur, the conversation eventually turned to one user, Corporal Hicks, who challenged Heartiste’s heralding of anal sex (with women) by tying this together with homosexuality and (white) birth rates:

Anal sex is sterile by definition, and should be condemned in the strongest possible terms. We wring our hands incessantly around here about the demise of huwhytey birth rates and yet sanction this.... Makes no sense. You do know that Lawrence v. State of Texas (overturning prohibition of sodomy) paved the way for legalization of “homosexual marriage” nationwide. Any girl that “coyly begs for anal” reads too much Cosmo and has too much Poz coursing in her bloodstream. Anal is against a natural woman’s prime directive: REPRODUCE. Homosexuals were DRAWN AND QUARTERED legally in the U.S. in the

1800s, when men were men. Sodomy is abhorrent and merits death. Just my modest \$0.02 worth.

For WHECMs, the problem with homosexuality is its sterility. The function of the normal (Nordic) family is to expand the white race through a patriarchal family model in which men (WHECMs) are sacred and entitled to patriarchal dividends. But homosexuality upends the proliferation of the family model and, in so doing, threatens the white race and makes men profane.

This is a central difference between the WHECMs on the manosphere and a more liberal masculinity, like that espoused on *The Good Men Project*, that is more inclusive of homosexuality, but this is often contingent on an understanding that the aim of having a family is the ideal. Those from the latter category may be more tolerant, but this is often on the condition that the family remain hegemonic and the status remain quo. In liberal spaces, tolerance is subsumed by a notion of family. In one article, “8 Things You Must NEVER Do When Raising Boys,” the author suggests making discussions about dating and marriage gender neutral, writing “...instead of saying ‘When you get married, you and your wife will make decisions together,’ we say, ‘When you grow up, you and the person you marry will make decisions together.’ If your kid is gay or bi, he won’t feel like his parents just expect him to be straight.” While this author would likely create a more accepting environment than Corporal Hicks, by promoting marriage they still offer a fraught environment that is entangled with misogyny, racism, and homonationalism. It is this entanglement that is central to the identity of the men I investigated on the manosphere. And, though we may only witness an outburst or violence in the name of

one of these elements—misogyny, racism, homophobia, or homonationalism—each outburst serves to subordinate one aspect to maintain the supremacy of the WHECMs. Hatred, vitriol, and violence may only be directed at one aspect of identity, but this is done to elevate the assemblage of whiteness, heterosexuality, and masculinity.

### Whiteness, Racism, and Anti-Semitism

Discussions of race materialise on the manosphere independent from misogyny, homophobia, and right-winged politics. Many of these discussions seek to rationalize social inequalities with narratives of racial biological determinism and locating the cause of inequalities within racialized cultures. For example, Aaron Elias, host of *Men, Women and Society* (MWS), responded to a comment on one of his blog posts with the following statement:

- 1) Racism is, broadly speaking, the belief that the various human races have different abilities. This is a fact. Blacks are stronger than whites, but not as intelligent. Asians are smarter than Whites, and so on, and so forth. Of course, I am only talking about populations, so pointing to one black dude who has an IQ of 100 does not mean that the average IQ of blacks isn't around 80.
- 2) It's not about skin color, but about the entirety of one's genetic makeup. Blacks aren't just whites who happened to not have white skin.
- 3) We've pumped trillions into Africa, and we've probably pumped half a trillion, if not more, into welfare for blacks. What is the result of that? Could it be that their lack of achievement is due to their low IQ and assbackward culture?

Sometimes a WHECM's hatred of a race is demonstrated with the use of ethnic slurs and racial epithets. Most often, though, whiteness is affirmed with displays of racism and anti-Semitism that arise enmeshed with notions of the normal (Nordic) family, practices of men's right divorce activism, hypergamy, hegemonic masculinity, immigration reform, fears of miscegenation, and the elevation of whiteness. It is in these connotations that WHECM assemblages include unmistakable white nationalist elements.

I choose as exemplar of white nationalisms inclusion into a WHECM assemblage a quote taken from a comment on MWS. I have intentionally mined an exemplar from this site because, unlike the overt white nationalism espoused on *Château Heartiste* and from some of the authors on *Return of Kings*, MWS is a website that focuses on gendered aspects with society. This quote is indicative of the pervasiveness of racism and anti-Semitism in WHECM spaces.

If white nationalists want to save the white race the solution is easy. Take women's rights away. Not many men will sign up when the divorce laws are this terrible. Not many men will sign up when women behave this bad and have the power to destroy a man's life in a divorce without any reason. Sadly most white nationalists are pussy beggars. They gladly ignore all the crap white women do if they are willing to make white baby's. I would love to see the white european people succeed. But if they dont get their women in line i dont think it's going to happen. Just complaining about immigrants won't help if you're not willing to

address your own in-group problems. Even if immigration stops today the white race will still be doomed if white women dont change their ways.

The comment above from ben illustrates one of the ways white nationalism, misogyny, a patriarchal family, men's rights activism, and conservative immigration politics assemble. But feelings are fundamental to the formation of this WHECM assemblage. Love, like Ahmed (2014) finds, returns the impossible ideal of whiteness. Fear drives the rhetoric for border security. Disgust has men pulling away from women and the current divorce laws. Shame turns the subject inward, as white men look inward to "get their women in line" and white women "dont change their ways." Emotions give shape to a WHECM identity that is, at a minimum, complicit in its support of a white nationalist project. Quite often WHECMs' complicity expands to active engagement in white nationalist efforts to elevate whiteness and to ensure the continuation of patriarchal and racial dividends. This is why ben "would love to see the white european people succeed" even though he tries to keep some distance from white nationalists.

The white nationalist project also seeps innocuously into discussions on the manosphere and WHECM identity as anti-Semitism. In the next chapter I will discuss a persecution complex in which many men on the manosphere claim a victimhood to a global elite that is often viewed as Jewish. In those discussions and in white nationalist spaces, like *Château Heartiste*, anti-Semitic comments are pronounced. But I want to illustrate a subtler example of anti-Semitism infiltrating WHECM spaces. To do so, I give some context about an anti-Semitic symbol.

An (((echo))), when a name or word is encased with triple parentheses, is used in two primary manners. First, when it encases a name, it is done to indicate that the named individual is Jewish. Though originally meant to dox<sup>9</sup>, some Jewish people and allies have appropriated the echo and use it in an act of defiance. Secondly, when an (((echo))) is placed around a term by those not appropriating it, the intention is to attach an anti-Semitic slur to the encased term. Often times, this is also meant to make clear a pejorative association between the term and a perceived Jewish manipulation.

With this in mind, consider the following assertions that appeared in the comment section of an article that advocated for a Christian family with the father as a “strong guiding hand.” Though there was no anti-Semitic message in the article, one infiltrates the article’s discussion section:

Drago: ...But most importantly, this new Christianity is (((chosen one))) approved and endorsed.

Psquare : “But most importantly, this new Christianity is (((chosen one))) approved and endorsed” If people actually read the Gospels they will see that Jesus Christ fought tooth and nail against Talmudic(((Pharisee))) Tyranny his whole life. To call this form of heresy “Christianity” is the highest form of blasphemy

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<sup>9</sup> Doxxing is the practice of publishing personal, identifying information about an individual. This removes anonymity afforded on some Internet sites and provides the threat of physical violence if the published information allows for someone to be found and confronted in brick and mortar spaces.

thunderman: Traditional Christianity was NOT Jew friendly. (((They've)))  
managed to twist it beyond repair.

While the original article is not anti-Semitic, while not all people who comment on articles articulate a clear anti-Semitism, these comments go unchallenged by author, other commentators, and Roosh, the website's host. Moreover, Psquare employs similar apologetics techniques as the author of the main article. This gives credence to his arguments amongst those who read his comments. It also displays and enacts a similar habitus, so anti-Semitism becomes embodied and intertwined with misogynistic masculinities.

And anti-Semitism blends not only with Christianity and misogyny, but with other forms of oppression and racism. For example, in the following conversation that occurred on *Château Heartiste*, anti-Semitism and racism combine as Vagina dominator condemns Chinese people. This leads greginaurora to attribute qualitative differences between Chinese people and Jewish people while ensuring to dehumanize all other non-white people as well.<sup>10</sup>

**Vagina dominator** – It's like sitting next to a Chinese on a bus. They squeeze and squeeze up against you to take some microscopic particle of your half of the seat. Or they try to occupy two seats on a crowded-to-capacity bus by putting their bag on the seat. You actually have to explicitly tell them to pick the fucking

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<sup>10</sup> Notice that Mob Barley uses a rhetorical practice common to those on this website to avoid deplatforming. These tactics include typed character substitution (e.g. the letter "a" in a word is replaced with "@"), so that the word father becomes f@ther, and the use of seemingly benign words as pejoratives (e.g. "Googles" to articulate Asian people and "Skypes" to convey Jewish people).

thing up and put it in their lap so you can sit. Then they get a very resentful look. No thought given to the justice of the matter. It isn't in them. I'm saying the overreach is just a compulsion. These races have no control over it.

**Mob Barley** – Compulsive. Interesting. Googles make sense to be compulsive. But with Skypes you'd think the worrier gene would help restrain the compulsiveness.

**greginaurora** – Shame-based races only control their actions when they're publicly called out for their behavior. Guilt-based races control their actions based upon how they themselves would like to be treated. The rest are animals who respond only to force.

In addition to qualitative differences, though, there are quantitative, ordinal differences. There is some discriminate ranking within and between axes of oppression. Black, Indigenous, people of colour (BIPOC) are viewed along racial axes ranging from flawed to inhuman. So, for example, in greginaurora's comment above, Chinese people might be lesser because they are a shame-based race (as an aside, notice how guilt-based reflects Christianity's golden rule and how this is superordinated to shame-based), they are better than animals who only respond to force. There is also a quantitative effect in the combination of axes. WHECMs are negatively quasi-intersectional in that they consider identities but multiply subordination for each non-WHECM characteristic. So, for

example, a Black lesbian is thought less than a Black straight woman, or white women are greater than racialized men (who are greater than racialized women).

But this combinatory effect applies also to alignment and alliances between people with different identities. Allow me to use an example to illustrate. In a forum comment that responds to Heartiste's report of a sexually active woman who he describes as "a 5 without the insulating layer of blubber, a 2 with it" one user, vfm#7634 writes "Of course she gets lots of sex. She lives among black men." This comment draws praise from Heartiste:

astute comment. it's a myth that fat chicks get laid a lot. they don't. i've posted the studies. fat chicks have trouble finding love AND finding cock. if they are horny enough they'll dumpster dive with black dudes. most fat chicks bragging about how much sex they're getting are either primarily boffing nonwhites or lying.

By linking the inferiority of women, particularly fat women, to the inferiority of black men, vfm#7634 deprecates both women and black men, combining misogyny, anti-fatness, and racism. Heartiste ups the ante, dismissing women's sexual satisfaction by discounting the personhood of the Other. Any person who is not the ideal WHECM is not fully a person and, so, sex with them would not count as sex and those sleeping with the Other are less than those who avoid such mores.

Central to all of these elements is the superordination of WHECMs. Along the racial axis of domination there are many forms of oppression, each with qualitatively

different logics and mechanisms. Despite the varied logics, there is a binary constant: Whiteness as elite. This pattern occurs along other axes as well. The binary constant of men as elite dismisses women and anything deemed not masculine. Importantly though, axes of domination work separately *and* together to dismiss the dignity and humanity of anyone who does not meet the ideal of a White, heterosexual, cis-gendered, Christian, conservative man. This culminates in WHECMs' sentiments of WHECM supremacy that blends all of these hatreds together.

### **WHECM Supremacy as Sacredness**

Throughout this chapter, I have described ways that racism, anti-Semitism, misogyny, homophobia assemble together with colonial-capitalism to manifest on the manosphere through notions of a patriarchal normal (Nordic) family. White, heterosexual, conservative men find an identity through the assemblage of race, sex, gender, and classed politics. They also assemble each of these aspects to think themselves sacrosanct and elevate their esteem, using their sacredness as justification for control and power over others.

This sanctification is quite clear amongst the men who enact white Christian masculinities. These men encourage what Smith (1993) has described as a Standard North-American Family (SNAF) structure. The men who enact a white, Christian masculinities place men as the head of the household, as a Christianity-justified male authority, and women within a reproductive sphere. As an example, consider an article that appeared on *Return of Kings* by Eusebius Erasmus, who self-describes as “a Prairie Canadian who likes gun rights, traditional values, and economics.” I quote the self-

description for two reasons. First, it is illustrative of the fact that right-winged values, capitalism, and masculinity become intertwined. Second, I want to be intentional in calling attention to the fact that the ordination of Christian WHECMs is not exclusive to the United States. Indeed, it can be found in the masculinities enacted in the Canadian prairie communities I live. And, with this in mind, I think it paramount to recognize that Erasmus and I share a similar habitus.

Erasmus argues that society's move to left-winged secularism and the infiltration of said secularism into the Anglican church "occur because, at their core, Christian parents produce beta boys and slutty girls who do not mimic Christ's image." But Erasmus' main aim is to peddle misogyny as a solution. This gets justified by filtering scripture through his red pill philosophy in order to interpret a meaning and provide a tautological solution. Erasmus writes:

In St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians, verse 5:35, it is written, Husbands love your wives, as Christ also loved the church.

This verse has frequently been interpreted to mean that, in effect, husbands should bend over backwards to please their nagging wives – Jesus, after all, died for us ungrateful sinners! Thus many a Christian man becomes slave to his spouse, licking the ground she treads upon.

However, St. Paul's advice to women, in Ephesians 5:22, is conveniently ignored:

Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord.

In other words, women are not natural leaders in the household, and should always be subservient to their husbands. They should always strive to respect, adore, and obey their men.

Husbands should, of course, love their wives, but the Biblical meaning of ‘love’ has been diluted by cheap romantic literature and Hollywood fairytales. In Christian theology, to ‘love’ is to ‘will the good of the other.’ Thus, loving someone means sometimes exerting a strong guiding hand, steering that person away from harm, even if that person does not appreciate it at the time.

Inherent in Erasmus’ thinking—and the rationale of many men on the manosphere—is the elevation of the husband and father as the leader and “strong guiding hand.”

Further, I infer from my investigation that the father as head is formed in the (1) metaphor of the body used by the Christian-church and in the (2) self-anointment of Christian WHECMs. The metaphor of the church as body is captured in Ephesians 5:23: “For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.” Christian WHECMs view their entry into the capitalist or labour markets as a sacrifice that fulfills their obligation to family. Significantly, they also view their “sacrifices” as similar to Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. WHECMs then extrapolate their claimed position as head of the family and “Christ-like”

sacrifices to anoint their identity and assume that they are Christ-like. WHECMs ordain themselves as a new god.

When WHECMs are not exalted and afforded power over others, they view this as sinful and detrimental to society. Similarly, alternative models of the family weaken the dominion of WHECMs and harm individual members of the family, the family as an institution, and society. This drives contempt towards liberal welfare for single mothers. As Dalrock has preached:

The truth is that we have formally adopted a new family structure to replace marriage, the child support model. While we keep marriage around in a ceremonial form, wives forever retain the option to convert these nominal marriages into the child support model at will.

There is a contempt being expressed towards women who do not submit to the dominion of a patriarchal head of the family. But there is, too, contempt towards the social welfare that enables this agency and, in so doing, is posited as having eroded (the patriarchal) family structure.

The “the child support model” is one that replicates and extrapolates Men’s Rights Activist (MRA) logic. Loosely, this logic views the biases of family courts in favour of women as demanding the fruits of men’s sacrifices, while severely limiting men’s dividends. Dalrock and this ecclesia amplify this rhetoric and expand it to the social-political level. Similar to how divorce courts remove fathers as head of the family yet requiring the contribution of resources in the form of alimony and palimony,

WHECMs are removed from the head of the society. According to this logic, WHECMs fund single-mother families with the taxes collected from their labour without authority over whom those funds are allocated to. At the heart of WHECMs' contempt and complaint is that the "child support model" does not recognize WHECMs' anointment. Having been removed as head of family and head of state, the sacredness of men and masculinity is jeopardized. Family is important to WHECMs because, in the way they conceptualize it, it anoints men and masculinity as sacred. Feminized, liberal society, especially through "the child support model," makes men and masculinity profane. It is this profanity to which these Christian WHECMs react.

Men's putative position as head of family and society through a logic of sacredness is not exclusive to the Christian WHECM. Much in the way the Protestant work ethic and religious roots of capitalism have faded from view (Weber 2003), the sacredness of WHECMs is often secularized. Many WHECMs anoint themselves in an image of Truth. As such, the rise of feminism, diversity, and equality in society is equated with an increase in false authority. Roland Tomassi, host of the website *The Rational Male* (TRM), provides an exemplar into this thinking:

the Feminine Imperative has covertly (and recently overtly) assimilated authority of church... The corporate workplace, big and small, has similarly been assimilated over the course of over six decades now; to the point that a feminine-primary influence has become a de facto authority under the premise of diversity, gender-neutrality and combating a presumed endemic male-sexism. All of which feed into the default, feminine-correct, presumption of female victimhood. Thus,

we see the rise of the ubiquitous, almost universally female staffed, Human Resources departments whose true purpose is not about hiring, company morale or corporate culture, but rather an enforcement of feminine-correct initiatives and bylaws intended to give unquestioned authority to the feminine-correct social narrative.

There is paranoia within the output from TRM. While the articulated message is that increased equality equates to a suppression of men and Truth, this message is a result of a paranoia about masculinity's fall from grace.

Paranoia and masculinity's grace are imbricated with each other and with the dichotomized, modernist epistemology that shapes the work on TRM. Consider the following text in which Tomassi further describes the infiltration of masculine spaces and offers this as a causal reasoning for the erosion of masculine grace.

The second purpose in the goal of female inclusion into male space is really a policing of the thought dynamics and attitudes of the men in that space. When women are allowed access to the locker room the dynamic of the locker room changes. The locker room can take many different shapes: the workplace environment, the sports team, the group of all-male coders, the primarily male scientific community, the 'boys club', the group of gamer nerds at the local game store, even strip clubs and the sanctuary you think your 'man cave' is – the context is one of women inserting themselves into male space in order to enforce the dictates of feminine social primacy.

When the influence of feminine-primacy is introduced into social settings made up mainly by men and male-interests, the dynamics and purpose of that group changes. The purpose becomes less about the endeavor itself and more about adherence to the feminine-inclusionary aspect of that endeavor. It starts to become less about being the best or most passionate at what they do, and more about being acceptable to the influence of the Feminine Imperative while attempting maintaining the former level of interest in the endeavor.

Men unaccustomed to having women in their midst generally react in two ways; According to their proper feminized conditioning, they embrace the opportunity to impress these 'trailblazing' women (hoping to be found worthy of intimacy) with their enthusiastic acceptance of, and identification with, their feminine overseer(s), or they become easy foils of an "out moded" way of thinking that the new 'ingroup' happily labels them with.

Once the feminine-primary in-group dynamic is established a 'feminine correct' social frame follows. This feminine correction restructures the priorities of goals, and validates any accomplishments, in terms of how they reflect upon the feminine as a whole. Thus any in-group success is perceived as a feminine success in male space, while in-group failures or simple mediocrity is either dismissed entirely or blamed on out-group men's failure to comply with, or the rejection of, the Feminine Imperative's 'correcting' influence on the in-group.

Tomassi argues that the inclusion of the feminine (and women) into masculine spaces causes men to alter their purpose. The endeavour, under a modernist view that there can be only one truth, becomes the only true path. Furthermore, inherent in this true path is the notion that because men devised the path, men and masculinity become anointed as Truth. In a logic similar to the one employed by Christian WHECMs, Tomassi posits the syllogism: Truth is sacred; men are the purveyors of Truth; men are sacred. Using dichotomous thinking, if feminism and liberal diversity lead men away from the Truth, they can only be leading men and society towards the sacrilegious.

As I have mentioned, paranoia informs this view of men and masculinity's fall from grace. There is often a fear of a manipulative, hostile culture of the feminine articulated on the manosphere. Masculinity is in crisis because the "Feminine Imperative" is akin to the devil's temptations. This paranoia of women and feminism sways between obsessive suspicion and restoration, between anxiety towards feminism and a love of male supremacy. For WHECMs, Christian and non-Christian alike, the objective is to restore the sacredness of men by offering an entitlement to a patriarchal, racist, homophobic, hegemonic masculinity.

## Conclusion

I have included in this chapter a thick description of misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, racism, and anti-Semitism. Included with these descriptions are accounts of colonial-capitalism and an idealized family that serve as a line of force that binds each

enmity to the others. My findings challenge the assumption that each enmity is a unique element that acts independently. Instead, I find that misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, racism, and anti-Semitism work together as one an assemblage. Further, thinking of each as independent obscures how each are accomplices to each other and one element of the same thing. In the next chapter, I develop a conceptual model of reproducing paranoia–border work–discomfort to explain WHECMS’ backlash towards those who are not white, heterosexual, Christian, colonial, conservative men.

## Chapter 4: Paranoia–Border Work–Discomfort

This kowtowing to females has now been legally enshrined through legislation thanks to Marxist Feminism and left wing globalist politicians such as Obama and Hillary Clinton. A woman can now legally destroy a man on a whim and he has little or no recourse. Globalist elites realized long ago the number one way to destabilize and divide society is to mess with sex and gender – emasculate men through guilt, shame and removal of human rights. infantilize women by removing consequences for any reprehensible action, brainwash them into believing they’re “oppressed” and all men owe them forever – thus bringing about the huge sense of arrogance and entitlement so many women now have.

– (Samantha Stephens, comment on *Return of Kings*)

In the previous chapter I argued that whiteness, heteronormativity, masculinity, colonial-capitalism, and eugenic ideals of family come together into a self-exalted assemblage of identity with a provisional and transitory form. I also explained how these identities sprout new shoots as they encounter other (and Othered) bodies. In this chapter, I develop a conceptual model to explain the emotional backlash that WHECMs release in response to the denigration of their exaltation and the subsequent loss—material and power—of patriarchal, racial, and heteronormative dividends. This model has three recursive and co-constitutive elements: paranoia, border work, and discomfort.

In the opening epigraph, Samantha Stephens expresses paranoia of a consortium of global elites who use identity politics to oppress white, heterosexual men. The

epigraph is taken from one of Samantha Stephens comments to a *Return of Kings* article. Prior to the quote provided, Stephens performs an emotional border work, partitioning men and boys by championing their anointment while also criticizing labels of inferiority she alleges are a result of feminism:

Masculinity has been demonized. Men and boys have been told for decades they are inferior human beings, whose only reason for living is to cater to girls and women. If they dare step out of line they are shamed into “maning up” – sort of serve, protect, provide and die for us, all the while we can treat you like shit. Men and boys are now regarded as criminals because of their gender, and have been taught from birth to be ashamed to be male.

In the above quote, Stephens also expresses a backlash against the discomfort via shame being assigned to WHECMs and their culture. In the epigraph Samantha Stephens demonstrates a common paranoia on the manosphere. But this paranoia leads to and is shaped by emotional borders that distinguish between an “us” and a “them” and the discomfort these divisions create. In one comment from Samantha Stephens, partially captured in the epigraph and the above quote, we can see the residues of a paranoia—border work—discomfort model.

In this chapter, I explain my reproducing paranoia—border work—discomfort model, by exploring how WHECMs respond to the denigration of their exaltation, the diminishment of power over others, and the loss of patriarchal, racial, and heteronormative dividends. I include a discussion on WHECMs’ expansion of

hypergamy to rationalize losses of patriarchal dividends, including unrealized sexual dividends, divorce, and social safety nets. I illustrate that WHECMs respond to the reduction of esteem and dividends through paranoid narratives in which they imagine that they are objects of persecution and are under a concerted attack. I then argue that WHECMs defend against these perceived attacks by fortifying the boundaries of their identity with what I call emotional border work. But, much of this border work causes discomfort through a loss of esteem and a sense of shame, which perpetuates a repeating sequence of paranoia-border work-discomfort.

## Paranoia

At the height of my PUA days, I declared feminists as my enemy. They were degenerate, antifamily, and promiscuous. This was at the peak of when I embarked on behavior that was degenerate, anti-family, and promiscuous. My attacks against them were one way of relieving the guilt and discomfort of my own behavior, since most of the girls I slept with had to have feminist thoughts in their minds to allow me to gain easy sex. I was experiencing pleasurable orgasms with the enemy in the evening then writing about how bad they were the day after.

I went one level up. Who created feminism? Who pushes their ideas? The Jews. They were crafty, intelligent, persistent, and masters of propaganda. Their negative influence on Western civilization must be countered, I thought. I examined their tactics and mimicked some of them in my own informational outlet, *Return of Kings*, which has Jew-pilled thousands of men. I started thinking

how to be more effective with propaganda and create opposing narratives, until I realized that in order to counter the Jew, I had to become more like the Jew.

–Daryush "Roosh" Valizadeh

“You Become What You Fight”

*Return of Kings*

What makes us paranoid? The above quote shows us that the object of our paranoia is not stable. The object of Roosh’s paranoia, for example, changes from feminist to “the Jews.” With paranoia, too, our imagining of the Other and their potential surprises consumes our thoughts as we invent new delusions that shape our beliefs. Roosh’s thoughts became consumed with the invented delusion that Jewish people created feminism as he examined their imagined tactics. Roosh becomes so consumed with the Other that he eventually determines that he must mimic them, “I realized that in order to counter the Jew, I had to become more like the Jew.”

It is my claim that the backlash that builds and circulates on the manosphere is a by-product of a series of three recurrent elements. In this section I discuss the first of these elements, paranoia. My understanding of paranoia draws heavily on Sedgwick’s (2003:130) articulation of paranoia as an epistemology or “a way, among other ways, of seeking, finding, and organizing knowledge”. For Sedgwick, paranoia is a system of four parts that work together. Paranoia is an attempt to minimize the negative emotions that accompany surprises (130-131). Paranoia is imitative. It understands by imitating and it requires imitation to be understood (131-133). Paranoia is an implicit conjecture from which conceptions of reality emerge to in a failed attempt to manage the emotion (133-

136). Only this conjecture solidifies, rather than alleviates the paranoia and, in so doing, obstructs the pursuit of positive emotions (136-138).

I also wish to draw on Berlant's (2010) notion of cruel optimism to add some framework to Sedgwick's paranoia. Berlant has explained that cruel optimism is when our desires become an obstacle to flourishing. Our desires are directed towards chasing the happiness, safety, and reassurances that we presume follows the attainment of the object of desire. But the satisfaction from these desires are fleeting. They are shimmers, tastes, and glimpses of optimism. But, on their own, they are not the good life. Cruel optimisms are the sleights of hand that we have been socialized to play on ourselves, misdirecting us from the good life. What makes matters worse, or perhaps the worst, is that the object of cruel optimism may be too agonizing to detach from. As Berlant (2010:94) explains:

What's cruel about these attachments, and not merely inconvenient or tragic, is that the subjects who have *x* in their lives might not well endure the loss of their object or scene of desire, even though its presence threatens their well-being; because whatever the *content* of the attachment is, the continuity of the form of it provides something of the continuity of the subject's sense of what it means to keep living on and to look forward to being in the world.

It is my view that paranoia operates as a cruel optimism. Paranoia is a desire directed towards minimizing surprises, but these efforts are fleeting and—cruelly—obstruct the pursuit of positive emotions and relations with others. After discussing

paranoia, border work, and discomfort, I will conclude this chapter with a brief discussion of cruel optimism and how the paranoia–border work–discomfort system interacts with the WHECM assemblage that assigns sacrifice to WHECMs and the productive sphere creating a toxic masculinity.

In this chapter, as I discuss some of the paranoid manifestations that appear on the manosphere, I will illustrate each of Sedgwick’s four aspects of paranoia. To illustrate these elements briefly, let us consider Roosh V and his quote above. Roosh attends constantly to feminists. He also imitates the “degenerate, antifamily, and promiscuous” character he imagines in feminists as he has sex with as many different women as he can. Yet, all of his anticipation and imitation of feminists does not bring him reprieve. Instead, he must “level up” and construct a new enemy, Jewish people, who then share his paranoia and who he mimics and aspires to “become more like.” Roosh’s continual attention to his enemies is a devotion to limiting the negative effects he imagines of feminism and Semites. But in so doing he cannot attend to finding positive emotions. He, instead, circulates his paranoia on his website, *Return of Kings*, in the hopes that others will imitate his delusions and he will, thus, be understood. When Roosh writes that his website “has Jew-pilled thousands of men” he is claiming to have revealed his delusion to his readers. In a summary of a book on Taoism, Roosh has a moment of reflexivity in which he admits to “telling men to essentially be like me in order to be ‘excellent.’”

By arguing that paranoia is instrumental to the backlash by the men on the manosphere, I am also arguing that there is a victimhood inherent in the dominating, aggressive forms of masculinities, like those enacted on *Return of Kings*. In the quote above, there is an underlying victimhood as Roosh struggles to minimize the negative

affects of feminism's on the family and Jews on Western civilization. There is an underlying victimhood to paranoia. This paranoid victimhood is consistent across the manosphere as WHECMs lay claim to being under attack from feminists, a global elite, or both. To understand WHECMs' paranoia of women and feminism, it is pertinent to discuss the concept of hypergamy that circulates on the manosphere, how its biological deterministic rationale is used to explain the rejection of men's advances, and how it gets extrapolated to a social level to criticise a welfare state that encourages divorce and frees women from a patriarchal family structure.

### Hypergamy

Much of what has come to be known as the manosphere has been formed by the beliefs and values that linger from the Pick-Up Artist (PUA) community. Not long ago<sup>11</sup>, men went online to share tactics and stories of how they picked-up women. On PUA forums men would pose questions, strategize, and recount their escapades. As some people figured out ways to monetize their following, proficient PUAs began creating their own websites, YouTube videos of PUA interactions, writing books<sup>12</sup>, and offering training retreats/bootcamps. As the community grew, some attention was paid to financial success. Not only did men see money as something that would increase women's attraction to them, the conquest mentality that saw men seeking to accumulate their notch

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<sup>11</sup> PUA continues today. Though there has been a considerable shift in the approach to most recent pick-up. For further exploration Jane Ward has a book in progress, *The Failure of Heterosexuality: How Sexism Doomed the World's Most Cherished Union (and Hid the Wreckage)*, that includes the investigation of how today's dating coaches are displaying what she calls an Instrumental or transactional feminism, in which men learn to offer empathy and solidarity in exchange for sex and profit.

<sup>12</sup> Neil Strauss' book, *The Game*, appeared on *The New York Times* bestseller list. Strauss has been voted (I have no clue who votes—it's probably not audited by the good people at PricewaterhouseCoopers) PUA of the year. He also posts on the manosphere.

count with women is harmonious with the drive to accumulate financial resources as well. Somewhere along the line, discussions of pick-up began to include philosophical, social, and political elements. These discussions helped to form today's manosphere, so it should come as no surprise that there are residues of PUA's epistemic and ideological infrastructures.

A fundamental PUA theory that winds up informing much of the way the men on the manosphere understand reality is hypergamy. Broadly, hypergamy is a biological deterministic philosophy that women are genetically wired to be sexually attracted to alpha men, while being driven to secure resource stability. Since most men are betas (i.e., not alphas), they will only enter into relationships with women if they convey an ability to provide for the family. Aaron Elias, the host at Men, Women, and Society, has reduced hypergamy to: "Western whores takes it from fifty Brads and Chads in their 20s, but once they hit the wall, anyone with a steady paycheck will do." The concept is often further reduced in comment sections to the maxim "Alpha fucks, Beta bucks."

While this concept began with PUAs to influence the men to become more alpha and less beta, hypergamy has instilled a paranoia in men that women will reject them by not sleeping with them, using them for money, cheating on them, leaving them, and divorcing them. The continual suspicion of rejection not only detracts men's attention from connecting with women, but it spurs men to beat the rejection to the punch by behaving in vile or violent ways to pre-emptively justify the rejection. Men's paranoia becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy. To restate this using Sedgwick's (2003) framing, the underlying paranoia that began as a theory for PUAs has gotten stronger as it has failed to alleviate the original paranoia. As paranoid men have attempted to eliminate the surprise

of rejection, they have imitated imagined rejection from women and each other's imitation of this to the extent that the theory has blocked men from seeking positive affects.

There are many reasoned critiques of the biology, psychology, and logic that gets packaged as hypergamy, but I want to focus on a sociological critique. Though these men employ hypergamy as biological, they do so to explain the social, often acknowledging the social elements without addressing or thinking through this scope. Those championing hypergamy attempt to connect biology to the social yet are dismissive of and lazy in their thinking of the sociological. For example, in the following comment on a *Return of King* article, Clark Kent crudely attempts to use hypergamy to explain the difference between men and women:

Women's love is based on a hypergamous instinct. All women are looking for the best available man that they can purchase with their youth and vaginas. A woman's attraction to a man can flux and flow and change depending on his perceived status within society at any given moment. A good guy's love for a woman is more simplistic... If she is attractive, smiles at his jokes, turns him on, gets off on his cock, there is at least some kind of personal connection... he will fall in love with her. Over time he may imagine that her love for him is similar in kind to his love for her and he will decide to trust her in the same way he would trust a man with whom he considers his closest friend.

Though Kent's comment reveals a male gaze and entitlement to women's sexual subservience and emotional labour—notice her placatory role regarding his jokes—that lead to a “personal connection,” and though he posits that women's attraction is dependent upon social status, the sociality of hypergamy is ignored in explanatory reasonings. Instead, attention is only directed towards biological reasoning. Consider comments on another *Return of Kings* article. The following excerpt is a response from Director to Dawson Stone who tried to employ a biological rationale for gender roles in relationships that followed a masculine production and feminine reproduction split:

This sounds like you don't understand biology or evolution. Sexual selection is a way to control to some extent improvements in your own genetics. It's doesn't always work of course. We get turned on by that which we desire which deep down seems to be based on genetics. It's possible that these attractions can be fouled up with propaganda but biology will always take back that which belongs to biology.

For Director, desire is based on genetics. And, though the biological might temporarily be led askew by social elements, biology will overcome and correct social deviations. Further, Dawson's rationalization of the social splitting of productive and reproductive spheres as biological ignores the historical-social causes: the splitting of these spheres in conjunction with the social move from agrarian to capitalistic societies. The championing of the biological and the subordination of the social does not limit those on the manosphere from attempting to explain social elements. However, these elucidations are

limited in that they only appear to be able to offer a linear extrapolation of a biological reasoning.

One *Return of Kings* commenter, Niagara, shared a response that is telling, as he links female sexual agency to family courts and a social debauchery:

Bingo!, I've seen many women turn from decent wife and mother to malicious whore very quickly. Society condones and even encourages it these days. I mean in the courts, media, with programs like mothers allowance and the fact that anything seems acceptable in todays degenerate society. They're emboldened.

Niagara's comments are an echo of the extrapolation PUAs have made. "Men, Women, and Society" host Aaron Elias, for example, pitched pick-up strategies that relied on notions and theories of some biologically natural "alpha male"—a hegemonic masculinity as ideal-type, if ever there was one—and then moved these already flawed concepts to social discussions, like parenting, child raising, and extrapolating hypergamy into a Keynesian function where the state acts as a beta male provider, which, it is argued, acts against a natural Darwinism that leads to gendered spheres.

The implication is that if we didn't interfere with nature, society wouldn't go belly up. In a much harsher political climate, single mothers simply would not survive. Thus, their children would not survive. As a consequence, the children of people who make shockingly poor life decisions will not survive. Their genes will die out, and society would arguably be better off as a result.

However, interference of the nanny state completely distorts this evolutionary mechanism. Mothers no longer need to pick a mate who would support and protect them. Instead, Daddy Government and all his minions will make sure that no matter how poor the judgment of a single mother, all her problems will be solved. The father is a junkie? No problem at all. The mother has a history of self-medication as well as alcohol and drug abuse? No problem, we need all kinds of people to make a functioning society! The mother has hit the wall and desperately wants to have a baby? No problem, pick any of the garbage-tier guys who want to fuck you! Daddy Government will finance your life.

The notion of hypergamy that underlies PUA game underlies much thinking on the manosphere. In many ways hypergamy filters the realities of the everyday: marriage, motherhood, the justice system, media, and society at large. It is key to understand that the biological explanation of hypergamy is absorbed into the paranoia of masculinities on the manosphere as a self-fulfilling prophecy of men's rejection.

### Persecution

In the quote that opens the subsection of this chapter, Roosh identifies Jews as masterminding feminism and propaganda. Embedded within the original quote are links to other articles penned by Roosh that further tie communism and neo-conservatism, cosmopolitanism and individualism, the social construction of race and the deterioration of Christian ideals to Jewish intellectualism. Not everyone on the manosphere explicitly

attributes the attacks on WHECMs to Jews. For some, attacks come from a vague economic elite. For others, like Spaghettimonster, this is a more coordinated group: “If by now, you do not believe in a global shadow govt elite that are implementing a mix of social engineering, psy ops, false flags, ripping away liberty, and infecting our water/food supplies – you aren’t red pillled.”

What bears mentioning is that, while the paranoia on the websites can reveal the more extreme conspiracies—from flat earthers to those who believe that dinosaurs never existed—the persecution complex that arises in which WHECMs lay claim to being under attack from feminists and Jews is particularly insidious because (1) it names an enemy, (2) it lauds WHECMs as an anointed ideal and deplors the Other, and (3) it includes a martial discourse, which has elevated this from a “crisis of masculinity” to a war against WHECMs. An article that Dalrock posted is particularly instructive. Viewing a white Christian masculinity as anointed, Dalrock preaches that racialized, feminized progressives are perpetuating coordinated acts of aggression against WHECMs and, by extension, declaring an attack on God. As such, attacks on WHECMs is an act of a holy war.

This is all part of a coordinated attack from the left on everyone they deem not sufficiently enthusiastic with the party line. Antifa, Google, and Charlie Hebdo are not alone. They are part of a massive machine. Groups like SLPC are contributing by publishing lists of enemies that need to be taught a lesson, and organizations like CNN and GuideStar then get the word out:

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) is a cash cow that uses its coffers to slander mainstream conservative and Christian organizations as “hate groups.” The SPLC began by tracking real hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan and black nationalist groups, but later it added mainstream groups to its list.

...

CNN broadcast the SPLC’s “hate map” on its website and Twitter account this month (with the FRC still marked on the map). In June, the charity navigation website GuideStar adopted the SPLC “hate group” list, marking each profile of the targeted organizations as a “hate group.” ABC and NBC parroted the SPLC’s “hate group” label against Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) last month.

Punishing the wicked.

This is a religious war to the left, and anyone who isn’t radical enough is wicked, and needs to be punished:

First they came for Daily Stormer. Then they came for The Liberty Conservative. Then they came for the Family Research Council. LGBT activists speak openly about “punishing the wicked,” by which they mean anyone who refuses to take part in a same-sex wedding

In the previous chapter “Assembling WHECMs,” I argued that WHECMs anoint themselves through a process in which they view themselves as Christ-like, associate themselves with Truth, or both. And so, even beyond Dalrock’s Christian masculinity, attacks on WHECMs are attacks on a god, though for some this is the god of reason and Truth.

In all of these circumstances, this paranoia that spurs WHECMs to frame themselves and masculinities as being under attack (rather than “in crisis”) also gets framed as a war. This, in turn, emboldens many men to lash out, by trolling online<sup>13</sup> or offline. Worse, the martial discourse escalates masculine aggression<sup>14</sup> and initiates WHECMs to rationalize violence against the Other as pre-emptive strikes or justified defence. In my research, I have not witnessed the inchoate stages of heinous attacks. In the discussions about the August 2017, white nationalist, tiki-torch rally in Charlottesville and the subsequent fallout, there were many discussions on how to be better prepared to attend alt-right demonstrations, militaristic defence, and a hypothetical violence against the feminist, left-winged, racialized “enemy.” It is not far-fetched, however, to hypothesize that the increase of deadly attacks by WHECMs against women, such as the April 23, 2018, Toronto van attack, and shootings at a Santa Fe high school on May 18, 2018, and Florida yoga studio on November 2, 2018, and against racialized Others, like the shooting at a Kentucky grocery store on October 24, 2018, Pittsburgh synagogue on October 27, 2018, and El Paso Wal-Mart on August 3, 2019, have some correlation to manosphere discourse that WHECMs are under attack by women and Jews. In the final chapter of analysis, I will take up this discourse to elaborate that the men who enact WHECM masculinities are advocating for collective and aggressive action in response to the ruling elite their paranoia has imagined.

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<sup>13</sup> Consider here Moses who, on Château Heartiste, proudly declared:

Sometimes I enjoy trolling in the comment section of the Bezos-Post. The number of SJW freaks and self-flagellating Goodwhites on there is unreal. I asked innocently “What is White Nationalism”? No one seems to have an objective definition. Here’s one response I got: “white nationalism” is about non-Jewish whites who want to preserve their white European culture. That sums it up right there. Whites are not allowed to have their own culture. Jews, Blacks, Asians, Muslims — they can all have their culture. But Whites are not allowed. War is coming.

<sup>14</sup> I am not referring here to aggression as a fixed quality, but as a championed ideal of hegemonic masculinities, particularly military masculinities.

While the descriptions of those coordinating the attacks as “a global shadow govt elite” can at times read like the script to a James Bond movie, the persecution that the men expressing these masculinities feel is more often thought of as circulating as a counter-ideology through the academy and main stream media. In the next section, I address each of these socio-cultural pillars of the liberal media-education complex WHECMs blame for their feelings of persecution.

### Ideology

“it’s all she’s genetically adapted for” PJ, this isn’t her fault. It’s her ancestor’s fault [to include her f@ther & her m0ther]. We had a Chr!stian culture which protected these women from the worst aspects of their natures, but then none of her ancestors screamed bloody murd3r when The Frankfurt School moved to town and gutted that Chr!stian culture. Granted, her personality is utterly malleable & compliant & obedient – like silly putty – in the hands of The Frankfurt School [her insula dwarfs her amygdala; she has no innate Common Sense], but under our Chr!stian culture, she would have been malleable & compliant & obedient towards an expectation of good & decent & noble aspirations.

–Captain Obvious, on Château Heartiste

In the quote above, Captain Obvious explains to a visitor of Château Heartiste how the burden for the loss of a Christian culture belongs to the softness of women and the silence of generations past. As a note, this is a patriarchal Christian culture that

hierarchically elevates masculinity, excluding for example women from the priesthood. This is a colonial Christianity that sought to build its empire through an imperialistic expansion. Also, this is a Christianity expressed as a belief of what that culture was prior to the influence of the Frankfurt School. In evoking the Frankfurt School, Captain Obvious articulates one of the dominant cords present in the feeling of persecution. The castigation of the academy, felt to be left-leaning, is one socio-cultural pillar of a liberal media-education complex WHECMs blame for their feelings of persecution. Importantly, however, by juxtaposing Christian culture with the Frankfurt School, Captain Obvious offers a cultural critique that scorns Marxist, anti-capitalistic values. In doing so, he makes clear a Christian element of WHECM culture that is patriarchal and colonial-capitalistic. Captain Obvious also avows for a flattened culture that reproduces the desirability and goodness of Christian, capitalistic patriarchy, which one can only assume is an unintended example of Marcuse's (1964) repressive desublimation. WHECMs, then, expand their territory while flattening the complexities of identities and superordinating WHECMness as a moral value. This attention to the Frankfurt School also criticizes the cultural elements of ideology. But the Frankfurt school is really just a placeholder for a philosophical soup that those on the manosphere believe feeds all within the academy.

The issue that most on the manosphere view as needing to be addressed is the cultural infiltration of a feminized, liberal ideology that gained traction with the rise in a "postmodernist mindset" that values diversity and equality. The progressive, feminist aims of equality, it is suggested, silences and victimizes men. The amplification of marginalized voices creates a culture in which only the perspectives of marginalized

people are seen as valid. The paranoid view in which amplification of previously marginalized voices inherently equates to silencing of WHECMs, while somewhat tied to a zero-sum view of perspective, is at its heart a conflict of paradigms. For those on the manosphere there is but one truth for any position and that any nuance to this truth is incorrect and unjust. In this vein, the amplification of women's voices is the amplification of falsehood, fabrication, and deceit. Again, nuance is an enemy, and this enemy is propagated by an academic ideology informed by Cultural Marxism, Marxism, postmodernism, critical theory, leftist ideology, or some undefined, conflated combination and permutation of these. One visitor to *The Rational Male*, scribblerg, notes in a lengthy post that tries to synthesize the varied philosophical frameworks by regurgitating Jordan Peterson's reading, that men are "utterly fucked" as they are facing a feminism that "was weaponized in the late 19th century by Marx and Engels." Further, this postmodern, Marxist ideology has caused a turn away from reason in order to destroy society and men.

The second pillar of WHECMs persecution complex is the media, who not only promote a feminist ideology but, as James, a visitor to *Men, Women and Society*, summarizes harms men as "the mainstream media also feeds men with insecurity." The disdain for the mainstream media (MSM) ranges from a critique of its promotion of consumerism and the advertising techniques that get linked to a left-winged, feminist agenda to accusations that the media is controlled by an elite who over-represent stories that paint of people of colour in a favourable light and white people in a negative light. Consider, as an example, Heartiste's claim:

There will be plenty of these pics and stories for her to latch onto, not because there are plenty of nonWhites behaving in an exemplary (read: White) manner, but because the anti-White Gaystream Media is diligent about seeding their bird cage copy with a false impression of omnipresent numinous nonwhite feats of honor and basic decency (and equally diligent about seeding the false impression of omnipresent White treachery and ultraracism).

And while the extreme hatred that arises in the formation of white-national, misogynistic masculinity at Château Heartiste is not to be ignored, I want to also discuss the slippery slope of the more benign forms. Many discussions on the manosphere that are critical of MSM, lament the softer masculinity that gets portrayed and long for more orthodox masculinities—especially those that portray men as in charge of subservient women—to be positioned as the hegemonic ideal. The more benign responses by men on the manosphere include withdrawal.

Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW), for example, advocates for abandoning society. As Participant 19973 suggests that

The point is to NOT TAKE IT PERSONALLY. You have to view it as Neo viewed the Matrix AFTER he Assimilated the Red Pill. YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BE A PARTICIPANT, ONLY A VIEWER. And, when you are tired of VIEWING IT, escape to your refuge whatever that may be.

But this exit strategy is not limited to MGTOWs. There is almost an entire industry of escape tourism that promotes vacationing or expatriation to nations that are alleged to be less influenced by feminism and identity politics. This type of exit reflects a colonialism, which has always been intertwined with capitalist masculinities. But perhaps the most innocuous responses to MSM is a deliberate inactivity. The consumerism pushed by MSM invokes a paralysis for many of the men I investigated. This paralysis was particularly strong amongst the predominantly liberal visitors to the Goodmen Project who, when forced to wrestle with their privileges and the subsequent dividends of these were more apt to lament that there was nothing they could do, rather than commit to radical change. The men who enact liberal and complicit masculinities respond to the inequalities along axes of oppression with a blasé feeling that leaves them numb and inactive. But whether liberal, complicit, MGTOW, or more aggressive men escaping on vacation or to man caves, a common denominator amongst these men is withdrawal. In the next chapter, I will argue that this withdrawal is a tactic employed by the WHECMs I investigated to advance and cling to their supremacy.

Finally, at the heart of protests against the imagined persecution of men and masculinity at the hands of MSM is often nothing more than people wrestling with the continually moving target of hegemonic masculinity. I would argue that there is an opportunity within these discussions to open dialogue around the falsity of discrete categories of masculinity, the capriciousness of what it means to be a man, and fluid movement of identity and masculinity. However, on the manosphere that paranoia instructs most responses and the discussion slides from the original lamentation to assigning blame to women, feminists, people of colour, immigrants, Jewish people, a

ruling elite, or some combination of these. Saying this another way, some men wrestle with the constant motion of masculinity and confront this movement with emotional border work that reinforces “us” and “them,” draws the “us” in, and partitions from Others.

### **Catching Feelings: Emotions and Border Work**

I can't read this shit “Be Vulnerable... You don't have to have it all together. Be willing to share your fears and feelings, and quick to acknowledge your mistakes.”

JUST BE A FUCKING MAN. Never show your fears or feelings, never openly acknowledge any mistakes. You are the man and she wants you to be a leader and not a crybaby. Just think about how joyfully your wife will please you in every way you can imagine if she sees you as an unshakeable rock.

(Heinrich, comment on Château Heartiste)

Within popular discourse, there is a leitmotif that men are stoic and, if they show emotions, these are limited to emotions that can stoke aggression and, perhaps, love of family. The refrain of the emotionless male continues from popular discourse to academic scholarship as well (Connell 2000; Pease 2012; Petersen 1998). Perhaps this is most evident when Brannon (1976), attempting to capture dimensions of masculine roles,

included stoicism as a central component to “The Sturdy Oak” category. The refrain of the emotionless male is also taken up on the manosphere.

Despite the castigations of feelings by men enacting the masculinities I studied, I have found that feelings and emotion backlash are essential to the construction of WHECM masculinities, particularly in defining the boundaries between WHECMs and Other(s). Paranoia is entangled with affect and emotions in three primary manners. First, paranoia’s attempts to eliminate surprises are driven by an anxiety that is always returning to the object of paranoia. Second, paranoia’s imitation is mimetic (Sedgwick 2003), which should be considered with affect (Gibbs 2010). Finally, paranoia is an implicit way of knowing through the body’s affect. In response to the imagined conspiracies WHECMs emotionally react and lash out. These emotions perform what I call a border work that aims to keep the Other out and the core contained within. The emotional fortification of borders, the results of WHECMs’ backlash creates feelings of discomfort, like shame, that cling to and circulate with the men who enact these masculinities. In this section, I attend to border work. I argue that WHECMs react to their paranoid delusions of being under attack by fortifying the borders that segregate them. They do so to find reprieve from their continual, paranoid attention to the Other by isolating themselves within the boundaries of being a WHECM and the ease at being in an environment meant for WHECMs. So, despite an avowed subordination of emotions and a latching on to the idea that men are reasonable and free from emotional impulse, feelings drive WHECMs’ backlash against women, feminists, people of colour, queer people, immigrants, and Jewish people and erect borders between WHECMs and Other(s).

My argument that feelings erect and reinforce borders draws on the work of Ahmed. For Ahmed (2014), emotions both shape and are shaped by objects. Emotions contour what bodies are able to do by increasing or decreasing power on a body. How people affectively respond to their encounters with other people (or objects) forms the distinctions between the person and Others and allows people to take the shape of Others. In other words, it is emotions that “produce the very surfaces and boundaries that allow the individual and the social to be delineated as if they are objects” (Ahmed 2014:10). As bodies come together, surfaces and borders between an “us” and a “them” are distinguished.

### Border Work

Within and across the eight websites I examined, there is a shared history of ontics, which I use here to represent the material privileges, practices, and comforts that are supported through the ontological, or underlying structures, such as hegemonic masculinity, patriarchy, white supremacy, heteronormativity, and colonial-capitalism. The ontological generates a history of shared ontics, which in turn reinforces the ontological by forming a collective way of interpreting and going about in the world. It is from these interpretations and daily life that individual and collective feelings—including paranoia and backlash—emerge. Often, WHECMs express their backlash as a result of a loss of material dividends. MRAs, for example, rally around the money they “lose” when the courts order them to pay child support.

While I do not dispute that the (impression of) material losses aggravates men, it is my argument that the primary catalyst to WHECMs’ emotional backlash are the

challenges to their understanding of how society functions. The threat to hegemonic masculinity, patriarchy, white supremacy, heteronormativity, and colonial-capitalism is a threat to the supremacy from which they benefit. Supremacy can only be realized through the creation of distinctions and, so, WHECMs seek to reinforce these distinctions by reinforcing the borders between themselves and the Other. Further, the shared ontics (*i.e.*, privileges and dividends) are only realized through the border creation between bodies. Without an “us” and “them” there can be no privilege to realize. Masculinities on the manosphere collided with the Other—and, as Ging (2017) has shown, with each other—and these collision creates what Ahmed (2014:6) would call an impression, acts of perception, cognition, and emotion that leave a mark—impressing and impressing upon.

It is in pressing against bodies that WHECMs discover the edge of their own bodies and delineate borders between themselves and others. Impression allows WHECMs to discover their skin. I am not aware of where my arm ends until there is an impression against it. For example, when I rest or bump my hand upon a table, I become aware of this border of my body through the impression of the table upon my hand. The same is true for the body as identity. I am not aware of the border that delineates my identity until I encounter another. I am made aware of my identity by brushing up against or colliding with another body—an Other’s body. My awareness is signalled through the emotions I feel about that which is impressed upon me.

Feelings signal an impression, which signals a border, which in turn signals a relational identity. Feelings create a division between an “us” and a “them,” give shape to the border between these two poles (e.g. male-female, antifeminist-feminist) and delineate who is to be segregated from our in-group. As we will see in the chapter

“Masculinities as a Movement,” these feelings are leading to acts of reasserting power and supremacy. But this power can only be acted out because of the erection of borders and subsequent segregation: what I call border work. To illustrate the ways in which WHECMs do these border works, I will apply an analysis of the emotions within two discussions on the Château Heartiste website.

In the first example, which follows below, the Cis-'Gender' Philosopher espouses empathy as a characteristic exclusive to white people yet, at the same time, he is unable to understand or share the feelings of those he Others. An initial evaluation of this comment might lead one to assess this as an example of post-truth “fake news.” There is an espousal of a characteristic as virtue despite the enactment of something anathema to the declared virtue; there is a declaration of empathy that contradicts a display of contempt<sup>15</sup>. By attending to affect and emotion, however, the analysis is able to move beyond a “fake news” lens and we can realize this comment as an expression of an emotion for the purpose of erecting a border between an “us” and a “them.”

**The Cis-'Gender' Philosopher:** Jews don't write much literature for the same reason they can't act. In fact no non white race of man is capable of writing fiction that isn't a thin allusion to themselves or a quasi autobiography. A white man can write 'memoirs of a geisha'. A japanese man cannot write 'memoirs of an east end slag'. The best jewish writer today is Phillip Roth who writes about being a jewish man in all his books in a higher IQ way than the likes of Tehnesi 'Genius' Coates or the umpteen black authors talking about 'The Struggle'.

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<sup>15</sup> I am using contempt along Spinoza's (1949:176) definition, which is to say that it is “the imagination of an object which so little touches the mind that the mind is moved by the presence of the object to imagine those qualities which are not in it rather than those which are in it.”

Literature is also has many women writers. Again, because empathy is needed.

Notice the Wire about the black Baltimore ghetto was done by a white man. EM-PAT-EE GOYIM!

**Heartiste:** you make a good point. empathy is necessary if not sufficient to produce great lit. and it's just a fact that nonwhites by all observable evidence lack the same developed sense of empathy that has blessed (and cursed) NW EUro Whites.

In the example above, contempt of the Other reinforces the borders between WHECMs and the Other in an attempt to keep the Other out. Using derision to paint non-WHECMs as lacking empathy, The Cis-'Gender' Philosopher draws a border between WHECMs and Japanese, Jewish, and Black people in an effort to other them as lacking—not just lacking empathy, but as inferior. This inferiority justifies, for the WHECM, Japanese, Jewish, and Black people as an out-group. But walls need to be reinforced from both sides. Defences must be strengthened from the inside to ensure the strength of the border to contain those within the perimeter. Borders between an “us” and “them” must keep “them” out, but they must also keep “us” in.

In the exchange between The Cis-'Gender' Philosopher and Heartiste, the interior of the border is reinforced with the “self-love” of pride (Spinoza 1949:180). The hyphenated fusion between self and love that is present in pride is instructive to understand the emotional division between bodies. Both self and love contribute to borders and segregation. Self, here, is the internalization of a neoliberal condition. As

explicated in the chapter “Assembling WHECMs,” there is a colonial-capitalist line of force (Deleuze 1992), those invisible and unspoken powers that contour and socialize, that runs through WHECMs. Neoliberalism has been a tool of colonial-capitalism that increasingly pushes responsibility towards the individual. Having infiltrated the habitus of WHECMs, this individualization limits the direction and distance of the love these WHECMs can feel, locating it only within the self. The borders erected by this pride and contempt, therefore, are not so much between an “us” and “them.” Rather these borders are between many “me” and “them.”

The love of self-love is also instructive. Ahmed (2014) explains how love is the return of an impossible ideal. Love holds high the object, incorrectly imagining it as realizing ideals. The imperfect object, however, cannot meet these ideals. Love is the desire of an impossible target. The prideful self-love of the WHECMs on the manosphere, and of The Cis-'Gender' Philosopher and Heartiste above, is a love for the impossible ideal of a white, heterosexual, and masculine identity. But the WHECM identity is not some fixed entity. It is a process of constant construction and sunder. WHECM, as an ideal to be loved, then, is also always becoming and unattainable. The self-love described earlier, then, is a love of a mercurial ideal. And because the ideal is capricious and unattainable, these WHECMs erect borders in an effort to isolate and lay claim to the ideal.

Borders are reinforced with other feelings as well. Common are anger and fear, which also work to reinforce from the inside and out. In the following comment from Publius, I apply a second analysis of the emotions within a discussion on the Château

Heartiste website. Below, Publius expresses anger, but does so with intentionality as a tactic to instill fear in the Other.

I'm angry all the time. It's difficult. I apply CH shitlord lessons at work and on the streets and am openly hostile to Jewesses and Jew fags. Everyone is afraid of me. When opposing counsel is a smug jewess who wears the goggles, I make her professional life a living hell. I confront "secular" antiwhite jewesses to their face when they act like Jews. I say "you're Jewish, right?" I explained everything to a "secular" jewess to her face last year while poll watching for Trump. I put Trump signs all over buildings that are 90% Jew occupied. They are stunned and afraid.

To properly classify this feeling of anger, we should probably consider it both as affect and sentiment. I employ affect to call attention to the power exerted through feelings. I employ sentiments to describe feelings that are less intense but more enduring than emotions. For many of the men on the manosphere, anger is a slow simmer of feeling that is wielded as power to act upon coercively. These feelings arise from and help to reinforce the borders from the inside. The actor feels anger as a sentiment that impresses upon him the perimeters of the wall. Concurrently, this sentiment is used to make Others, those outside the borders, aware of their exclusion from the confines of the wall and, more importantly, to direct (Ahmed 2014) them away from the walls by instilling in them a fear, as an avoidance (Spinoza 1949:183), that causes a withdrawal.

Perhaps the most curious result of feelings and the borders erected by the WHECMs is that these borders increase the impressions upon WHECMs. Having

erected, or at the very least reinforced, borders between racialized, sexualized, and gendered Others, WHECMs lay claim to some fixed edge of their identity. The rise of diversity and diversity politics moves Others ever nearer to WHECMs' borders. This increases the frequency with which WHECMs feel the impression and discomfort of the borders. This impression is felt relationally via a comparison between social strata. Having these strata impressed upon them leads to an isolation as WHECMs break contact. This breaking of contact is accomplished, at least in part, by reinforcing the borders between groups to ensure segregation. Despite these efforts, however, borders are still made proximate, still impress upon the WHECM. The continued impression translates into a frustration. Like a shoe that is too small, WHECMs are aware of the borders—again which they actively erect and reinforce—due to the discomfort of constantly rubbing up against them. This frustration, which is felt as an injustice develops into the expression of a felt oppression. Though they actively do border work to keep the Other out, WHECMs also experience containment due to these feeling-created borders. This creates a process of comparison, frustration, and oppression, which T.H. Marshall (1964) has illustrated as the process of resentment. WHECMs, then, react to being made aware of the perimeters they erect to distinguish between themselves and the Other. WHECMs want to live in a gated community (or for Heartiste a Château or castle), but they do not want a view of the wall. One strategy to alleviate the discomfort of being impressed upon might be to shrink or recoil from the borders. However, turning inward appears to not be an acceptable tactic for many men on the manosphere. Instead, they confront their discomfort and shame.

## Discomfort and Shame

One of the ways that WHECMs experience impression in their everyday lives is by being called out for their misogyny, racism, or homophobia. Whether intended as such or not, this impression gets felt as a shaming practice. For Ahmed (2014), shame is an attempt to hide while being exposed; it is a witnessing that causes a turn away from the witness. As Ahmed explains “shame feels like an exposure... but it also involves an attempt to hide, a hiding that requires the subject turn away from the other and towards itself... The bind of shame is that it is intensified by being seen by others as shame” (p. 103). As such, shaming in the context experienced by WHECMs on the manosphere is a proclamation of the WHECMs’ wall building. It makes visible the borders that these WHECMs wish to ignore. Aware of the borders, these WHECMs feel forced to turn inward. Recall that in the last chapter I argued that colonial-capitalism is an important component of the WHECM assemblage. Because colonial-capitalism is a fundamental component of the WHECM identity and habitus, there is a dissonance between the recoil of the turn inward and the drive to colonize.

An interaction on Château Heartiste between Ironside and Carlos Danger makes evident the shame that is felt and the resolution to the dissonance of this shame:

**Ironsides:** Thinking about this while driving just now, I realized that “racist” is the most vile and hate-filled slur ever devised. “Nigger,” say, connotes inferiority and foul groidic behavior, but it doesn’t have an ideological element. I’ll explain what I mean in a minute. “Racist” is an insulting word for “white person,” “whitey,” etc. That’s why saying “Democrats are the real racists!” or “blacks are

the real racists!” doesn’t work, because everyone knows in their gut that it means “white scum.” However, it’s far worse than any other slur because it’s both a racial AND an ideological term. It basically means “white,” but the “-ist” on the end also implies that whiteness is a type of ideology. With a negative meaning, it also indicates that the ideology should be removed. Yet since the racial identification and the ideological are blended together inseparably, the only way to get rid of the “-ism” is to get rid of the “-ists,” and since the “-ists” are “-ists” because of their race, “Groid” means “low-IQ, violent brown a\*\*hole.” It doesn’t contain any indication about what should be done with the said a\*\*hole. But “racist” combines “white” with “something demonic that needs to be removed from the world” — it is an exterminationist slur, not just a term of contempt.

**Carlos Danger:** Then stop worrying about it because you are guilty no matter what you do and it makes the virtue signalers that much more pathetic. I wear racist as a badge of honor. We all should. It means I have high expectations of character and demeanor.

Ironside begins to negotiate shame’s stickiness. He laments how the label of racist elicits emotions that circulate and pre-condition his encounters. But there is a novelty in how WHECMs deal with negative emotions. In her afterword, Sara Ahmed discusses how marginalized people manage their self-presentation, always working to distance themselves from the preconceived ideas and feelings of them. Unlike those he others, WHECMs like Ironside and Carlos Danger must not be on constant guard, countering the

encounter. Rather, they lay claim to a victimhood and act aggressively against this. They work through the dissonance of their shame by expressing resentment towards an imagined liberal media-education persecution complex and they rationalize the negative impression that precedes them as an ideological tactic by an imagined enemy.

For Ahmed, there is a retreat to shame. But I have found that shame causes an advance from WHECMs. Rather than a turn inward, there is an outward aggression. This aggression builds to a turn outward, a wearing of racist “as a badge of honor.” And, as we will see in the chapter “Masculinities as Movement,” this turn outward is an indication of how the WHECMs on the manosphere are beginning to form as a movement. But the discomfort of negative emotions and the turn outward gets magnified by paranoia.

There is a paranoia that encourages the idea that a powerful conglomerate is attacking WHECMs. Dalrock, a host of one of the websites I examined, argues that the left—an assemblage of corporations, social movement groups, media, and activist organizations that advocate for equality—is attacking the conservative Christian (white man). These attacks come by launching emotionally sticky semiotics, labelling, for example, groups like the Daily Stormer, The Liberty Conservative and the Family Research Council as hate groups. While hate gets attached and circulates, there is also an element of paranoia, understood through Sedgwick’s (2003) tutelage.

This paranoia is an outwardly directed shame. Unlike the turn inward of shame that Ahmed elucidates, paranoia is an anticipatory shame that is both alienating and universally understood. By attaching labels of “hate group,” “nazi,” or “white supremacist” for example, WHECMs are made to feel ostracized and looked down upon. This leads to a paranoia that they can always be shamed and suffer justified material

consequences of loss due to their subordinated emotional position. Take the following comments from The Question on one of Dalrock's articles:

Under English common law, a man who was declared an outlaw had no rights.

The pronouncement *caput gerat lupinum* – “may he wear a wolfish head” – meant he was to be treated like a wolf in the wild. They were *persona non grata*. Anyone could take from them and it was not theft. Anyone who found them could kill them and it would not be considered murder. It was a form of political and social death.

We are seeing this phenomenon, in which a society strips a person of their rights and membership in the community, play out today.

Except they don't call them “outlaws.” They call them “Nazis” or “white supremacists.” But the intent, the actual meaning of those words and the purpose for using them, is the same.

Here we see paranoia realized in feelings of being under attack. Instructive in these sentiments, however, is the view that an idealized masculinity, which holds whiteness, heterosexuality, and maleness as supreme, is being called into question. The hegemonic masculinity to which WHECMs aspire is challenged as pessimal. As such, feminist, progressive, and queer efforts towards equality equate to moving the goalposts. In saying this I am not suggesting that men are being gaslighted. Rather, empathizing with their paranoia, I am describing how the “bad surprises” (Sedgwick 2003:130) come to be felt

as a realization of shifting ideals, which forces these men to face the cruel optimism (Allan 2017; Berlant 2010) of their masculinity.

Consistent in the management of discomfort is that feelings are at the core of a desire to avoid the impression that is made when made aware of the Other. Emotional reactions impresses upon the border of WHECMs' identity, causing a discomfort that makes them aware of this edge. White supremacists, too, evoke emotions and create an impression. As the following two comments illustrate, the main critique of this, however, seems to be in the negative emotions that get stuck to WHECMs.

**Hyperborean:** Exactly. We're at the point now where even regular mainstream Republicans are in danger of having the dreaded "neo-Nazi " and "KKK " labels attached to them – and once those labels are attached, they are pretty much impossible to remove, no matter how abjectly one grovels in supplication to the SJW, BLM and Freakazoid blackmailers.

**EducatedPoster:** As a guy who's lived his last 20 something years in Los Angeles, multicultural city USA, let me tell you, that white people, black people, and hispanic people, have been referring to anything remotely resembling white and conservative, as Nazis.

These WHECMs would rather avoid the impression of encounter and sink back into the invisible comforts of their masculinity. Instead they find themselves having to counter future encounters that might be influenced by the emotions stuck to them. This is the

motivation for distancing themselves from Nazis. They do not disagree with Nazi ends, they wish to avoid the emotions that direct future interactions.

To distinguish themselves from the negative emotions they turn to the tool they know best, internal hegemony, marginalizing some masculinities, while upholding WHECMs as ideal and sanctified. In one article on *Return of Kings*, Damian Michael argues that:

the alt right label has now been severely—perhaps irreparably—tainted by the alt Reich / alt white sub-faction within the wider alt right. And whether the perception of this taint is just or not, the undeniable fact is that it is indeed now perceived as being there, and this perception will remain there in the minds of the wider public for the foreseeable future, if not permanently...

So, in light of this problem, it is suggested that the non-alt Reich / non-alt white faction of the alt right use this occurrence as an opportunity rather than a set-back. In particular, the Charlottesville incident can be used as an opportunity to make a clean break with the alt Reich faction of the alt right by the rest of the alt right (meaning the so-called alt West, the alt lite, and the Vox Day-style alt right). Indeed, this event is a chance for the wider alt right to make it clear that the alt Reich faction of the alt right is now its own separate entity; and that if that faction is perceived to be the “alt right” as a whole, then so be it, for the actual alt right will move to another label.

According to Michael, then, WHECMs should avoid the stigma of emotions associated with whiteness by othering White supremacists. I mention this, not because I think that this tactic will alleviate WHECMs of their emotions, but to illustrate that WHECMs are feeling and beginning to negotiate how to counter their encounters. Until WHECMs confront the emotional border work they are doing to reinforce the divide between themselves and Others they will continue to ignore the cruel optimism of masculinities.

### **Cruel Optimism**

In this chapter I have illustrated the ways in which a recursive system of paranoia, border work, and discomfort become an obstacle to flourishing despite aims towards the opposite. The paranoia–border work–discomfort system is a cruel optimism (Berlant 2010) in that the efforts directed towards securing a WHECM identity and the associated dividends that follow actually create conflict, isolation, and discomfort. Allan (2017) has drawn on Berlant to work through Kimmel’s reading of white men, shame, and the fear of failure inherent in masculinity to argue that masculinity is a cruel optimism “precisely because we believe and we continue to believe that it is attainable even though we continually fail at masculinity” (Allan 2017:8). I am in agreement with Allan, but I want to elaborate on how cruel optimism arises from the very splitting of productive and reproductive spheres fundamental to WHECMs’ reasoning of their supremacy and the consequences of the associated subordination of emotions.

During the timeframe in which I investigated the manosphere, Hurricane Harvey struck mainland United States. This led to some discussions that paid honour to the men who brought their boats to the waters left by the hurricane and brought people to the

safety of dry land. Sometimes this discussion pointed out other sacrifices men make in preserving an American way of life. There are similar discussions of sacrifice and suffering being made in men's rights (MRA) spaces (Schmitz and Kazyak 2016), which held true on *A Voice for Men* (the MRA site I investigated). But, in addition to honouring the sacrifice of men there was a sarcasm pointed at those who move the goal posts. On Dalrock's website, for example, there was an article entitled "Toxic masculinity and male privilege" in which there was a clear intention to point out that behaviours deemed toxic by feminists and a left-leaning media are the same behaviours that have led men to join rescue missions, defend the country, and in many ways build the USA. While not explicitly stating risk taking as a masculine characteristic, sacrifice (including the sacrifice of limb and life) as a male task of the productive sphere was a dominant thread in these discussions.

The sacrifice so often cited on the manosphere is a form of toxic masculinity that is a cost for the cruel optimism of masculinity. The toxic masculinity I invoke here is the marginally discussed academic concept rather than the popular, oft pejorative blog concept. In the academic tradition, toxic masculinity gets taken up as behaviours that men do that are harmful to others *and* themselves. Risk taking is often taken up as a characteristic of the idealized man. Especially in circles like the manosphere, where idolized notions of the individual are championed over the collective, where frontiersmen are celebrated for building and sacrificing to colonize an American/Western way of life, an orthodox masculinity arises that sees men as going out to serve (and in the case of Hurricane Harvey, save) despite risk. For the men who enact these frontiersmen masculinities, both the risk, which can manifest as loss, and the isolation of individuality

is done as a part of an agreement that affords men certain patriarchal dividends. The notion of sacrifice that can be harmful—toxic—to men in order to obtain patriarchal dividends (often toxic masculinity à la blog concept) is a cruel optimism because it idealizes a masculinity that promises happiness yet actually is a barrier to it. In this way it is the cruel optimism of orthodox, hegemonic masculinity that moves goalposts and gaslights these men. Despite this reality, it is women, feminists, and a feminized, liberal society that becomes the object of emotion for the men on the manosphere. The border work performed by those on the manosphere not only distinguishes between masculine and feminine, this border work also acts as a barrier to the men enclosed within the borders engaging with their feelings.

Despite the expression of feelings like paranoia, shame, and the myriad emotions that helped fortify borders, the men I investigated only purposefully engaged with emotions and feelings to infantilize others and label women manic. The splitting, subordination, and ostracising of emotions results in an inability to negotiate the very emotions—and the borders these emotions create—that masculinities are wrestling with. I argue that until the men enacting antifeminist masculinities can deliberate with the cruel optimism of the borders erected between masculine and feminine, they will continue to suffer and cause suffering. To realize the transformative nature of emotions, WHECMs must independently develop their emotional sphere and then be willing to find an interdependent praxis. This interdependence, though, requires crossing the borders that distinguish between male and female. And this cannot occur until they cultivate the emotions that erect said borders. Until this time, the paranoia that imagines a persecution will continue.

## Chapter 5: Masculinity as a Movement

### Collective Action

In addition to constructing masculinities and forming emotional borders around their paranoias, WHECMs also discuss practices, strategies, and tactics towards actions that will advance WHECM supremacy. WHECMs visit the manosphere to call each other to action and attempt to motivate men towards a constructive backlash. Roland Tomassi, host of “*The Rational Male*,” wishes for his work to inspire and be used in praxis. Moreover, Tomassi explicitly calls for action beyond the micro- and meso-levels to a macro-social movement. His post “MISPERCEPTIONS OF THE RED PILL” laments the lack of action on the enlightenment he provides and implies a call to action:

... what critics don't want to confront is the far greater scope that understanding the praxeology of the Red Pill implies. Those dynamics stretch from the biological, to the psychological, to the personal and familial, to the political and the global. A man can use Red Pill awareness to get laid, deal with an unresponsive wife, challenge a female boss at work, better understand the sexual marketplace as well as the latent purposes of feminine-primary legislation designed to maximally limit men and maximally unfetter women. However, just understanding this, just discussing it or a want to have a more complete grasp of Red Pill awareness is not an effort in bemoaning a man's state within it. This is the danger I see coming from some elements within the Red Pill community; there's a tendency to see the education (or even the want of an education) in Red

Pill awareness as some substitute for acting on it. It is not, and it's high time men in the 'sphere realize that Red Pill awareness, and making it useful to an individual man, consists of both the theoretical and the practical.

While the challenge to move beyond enlightenment and the implied call to action are noteworthy, it is critical to realize that Tomassi advocates for including praxis on a social level, from reclaiming masculine ordination within the family, at work, and on "the political and the global" level.

Men have used online spaces to direct e-bile (Jane 2014b, 2014a) towards feminists and progressives. These attacks often have a very personal feel for those under attack and often appear to be originating from a small subset of people. This might lead one to infer that these forms of vitriol are motivated on the individual level, gaining heft through the aggregate of a few trolls' individual responses. As the discussion above from Tomassi indicates, the message on the manosphere is to continue with individual backlash but that the individual also becomes collective. This points to a stronger social movement and more deliberate (read: less complicit) and dominating hegemonic masculinity.

But the protest, strategies and tactics of the men I investigated went beyond trolling. Trolling and memes are undeniably one form of action, but these men also advocate for increasing the fertility rates of WHECMs, forms of economic democracy, a violent racial holy war (RAHOWA), and abandonment. In what follows I look at each of these strategies in turn.

## Fertility and Family Values

In the chapter “Assembling WHECMs”, I discussed how racism, misogyny, and cis-homophobia congeal around notions of the family with the father as the head. I further explained how this model leads Christian men to think themselves as Christ-like and agnostic and atheist men to similarly think themselves as the only purveyor of “Truth.” I further discussed how WHECMs culturalize this notion of a patriarchal family and treat it as ontological fact. In this section of this chapter, I argue that WHECMs embrace the white patriarchal family as a tactic by advocating for propagating the white race by having children with uneducated, rural, white women. This tactic is found throughout the manosphere, but is most explicit on Château Heartiste, where Heartiste advises men to “[g]o to the big blue cities, have your way with the women (they’ll be ready), then escape and find your investment-worthy damsel in suburbia, a small town, or rural God’s country.”

This underlying idea of the family that arises on the manosphere echoes of the eugenics movement that sought to protect the Nordic Family by “eradicating feminism and homosexuality altogether and keeping birth control information, devices, and procedures safely in the hands of eugenic-minded physicians and officers of the state” (McWhorter, 2009, p. 251). The eugenics movement would later focus on the fertility of white families rather than the reduction of non-white populations. It is this very fertility strategy that is reinforced on manosphere sites like *Dalrock* and *Return of Kings* and is actively encouraged by Heartiste. In one discussion on Château Heartiste, for example, Publius looks to incite an emotional reaction to incite WHECMs to propagate:

7 kids per nigger woman.

5 kids per “secular” jewess.

12 kids per orthodox jewess.

0.4 kids per pretty white woman.

These are averages. True story.

But for many men on the manosphere, there is a need to consider more than just race.

There is also a need to be considerate of with whom you aim to propagate the white race with. One should not start a family with feminists. In his article “Miscegenation For Thee, But Not For The Royal Me,” Heartiste writes:

Smart HSMV [High Social Market Value] men should eschew marriage to overeducated cunt shrews in favor of marriage and family with feminine, undereducated, sweet White secretaries from less stellar social classes. Then their good genes will spread out rather than be sequestered in a credentialati hothouse of low fertility shitlibbery.

Right now in the West, the opposite fertility pattern is happening: A+ men are matching up with hand-picked female specimens from within their social and educational (and royal) circles. They may preach the wonders of miscegenation, but their actions are solidly in the camp of purifying their blood. Miscegenation for the plebs, genetic purity for the landed gentry.

In order for this insular and ultimately deleterious genetic pattern to break, there has to be a concerted effort via culture channels of communication to explain to the masses that the elite don't have their interests in heart, in fact want them genetically destroyed in a slurry of mixed race breeding, and that they are setting themselves out quite literally as a special race of Eloi with their mating and marriage habits. We have to dump feminism, in other words, so that upper class White men can feel unashamed to pursue those lovely submissive under-educated White women who would be happy to take their seed by the wombfuls.

This is genetic egalitarianism, and in the final analysis all forms of egalitarianism issue from the genetic substrate.

The strategy, then, is to not only increase the population of WHECMs, but to focus on rural-conservative white people. For the continued superordination of WHECMs, white men must not only propagate the species by fathering children with white women, but these should be rural and under-educated since feminism has its roots within the academy and in urban centres.

And while Heartiste might explicitly tie this strategy to race, elsewhere on the manosphere this racism is more likely to be obscured by semantic substitutions, equating the tactical aspects by linking them to a wholesome, American, family values rhetoric. So, WHECMs should find a "nice girl" without tattoos or pink hair who wants to raise a family and is not obsessed with her career. So, American values really means whiteness and family values means a that which advances a white, patriarchal family. These

semantic substitutions mimic similar semantic moves that saw the eugenics movement carry on in the name of The Family rather than in the name of The Race. It is also under the guise of American family values that WHECMs can reply to charges of misogyny. The America that they actively try to build is one that includes women, so long as they are white women who are willing to replenish the white race. America includes women so long as they embrace their role within the reproductive sphere and understand that what they are to reproduce is WHECM supremacy.

### Economic Democracy

Democratic consumption is a strategy that is gaining some momentum on the manosphere. This strategy includes the tactic of singling out one company—or one company within each of a few key industries—to boycott. The idea, here, is to withdraw enough traffic (either in viewership, internet clicks, or purchases) to cause a serious enough effect to a company's bottom line. It is thought that this might cause other similarly “anti-white”, left-leaning companies to take notice, heed the potential power of WHECMs, and change their stance.

Defeating the anti-White Globohomo technoborg won't be easy or painless. We'll have to amass our forces for targeted strikes at the enemy's weak spots. Take a page from Hillary Clinton's hero, Alinsky: Make shitlib companies who penalize Trump supporters suffer by isolating, freezing, and polarizing one shitlib company, as a lesson for the others. Trump has already done that to CNN. Now we return the favor. 4Chan is doing it to Goolag. If Goolag pays a price for their

tyrannical suppression of dissident voices, then it's likely other tech companies that control the carrier transoms will back off from their anti-White agenda to avoid a similar hit to the bottom line. Attacking the anti-White fat cat oligarchs from all angles will get us to victory. #AltTech + anti-trust + class action lawsuits + counter-propaganda + government oversight + whatever else diminishes the power of the digital yld. Pax Dickinson (Gab -> @pax), for instance, is interested in creating an AltTech communications platform immune to corporatocracy censorship campaigns and purges

- Heartiste

The ideological threat to WHECMs most often expressed on the manosphere comes from the media and the academy. The boycott strategy for the latter is fairly simple: avoid sending your daughters to university and only allow sons to attend a few programs (e.g. business or engineering). Tactics vary somewhat depending on the arm of media. Hollywood, both silver screen and television, is often cited as either good or poor examples of Red Pill or MGTOW philosophies. This should drive more traffic to Red Pilled entertainment and, ostensibly, away from movies and shows that espouse equality and diversity. However, criticisms were levied at only the wildly popular and, from what I could tell, the vast majority of those in the discussion threads had not only watched these shows, but watched in such detail that they could reference seemingly innocuous moments. In the discussion on a *Return of Kings* article about how *Game of Thrones* only showed beta men and alpha women, WHECMs went on for pages complaining about seemingly everything *Game of Thrones*.

While the nature of my research prevents me from confirming, based on the eagerness and energy that circulated around discussions of movies and television shows, I would hypothesize that the criticisms levied actually increased viewership from WHECMs. I would further hypothesize that WHECMs on the manosphere find energy for their cause through the impressions created by doing border work. Recall that in the previous chapter I discuss border work as the cultural politics of securing masculine spaces by keeping the other out and keeping WHECMs in. So, WHECMs flock to watch (and re-watch) *Game of Thrones* because doing so creates an impression they can push back against and because it allows them to bond with other WHECMs as they circulate the negative emotions of that impression.

Television also gives space for the economic democracy strategy to be levied towards companies who produce adverts that promote blue pill<sup>16</sup> ideologies. While there have been random comments and brief discussions about some ads while I was in the field, it appears as though this tactic is gaining steam with vigorous calls to boycott Gillette because one of their adverts showed a transgender man shaving for the first time or Nike for their support of Colin Kaepernick.

Where WHECMs on the manosphere call to boycott films, television shows, and companies whose adverts promote messages anathema to red pill philosophies, they criticize and boycott companies in the tech sector for impeding the virtual gathering and organizing of WHECMs and obstructing the diffusion of their reactionary right-winged,

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<sup>16</sup> The manosphere uses the term red pill to signify wokedness amongst their community. This term is borrowed from the 1999 movie *The Matrix*, in which the lead character is awoken from his deception by choosing to swallow a red pill. The character is given the choice to return to his slumber by, instead taking a blue pill. Blue pill, then, is used on the manosphere to signify beta behavior, culture that is counter to the red pill, and blindness to the machinations of this counter-culture.

white nationalist, cis-homophobic, misogynistic agitprop. In an effort to escape the threat of deplatforming<sup>17</sup> (or in some cases as a result of being deplatformed), the more extreme WHECMs are finding alternative venues. Examples of this include the search engine Duckduckgo to replace Google and Gab in place of Twitter.

My reading of this boycott strategy is that it is an attempt to reterritorialize colonial-capitalism's line of force so that the assemblage that is WHECMs' identity might find formerly familiar molarizations. Obviously there is the explicit purpose of trying to promote the ideologies that have provided dividends to WHECMs, but there is also a need to restore familiar aspects of their identities that give them confidence in holding themselves in higher esteem than others. This is why Heartiste also encourages offering supply alternatives to the economic democracy. At the end of the quote above, Heartiste begins discussing Alt-Tech, linking to a 29-slide PowerPoint deck that Pax Dickinson has created outlining his Alt-Tech dream.

This vision is one that wishes to move “American engineers and developers” out of big cities to disconnect these men—for these WHECMs, engineers and developers are always men—from liberalism and to help “rejuvenate flyover country and help. Make (Middle) America Great Again.” The intention of this strategy is to ensure the continued

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<sup>17</sup> Paul Elam, host of the men's right activist website *A Voice for Men*, complains in his article “18 truths about #Charlottesville”:

Google, with its search engine delisting of speech it does not approve of, is now leading the way. And Google is not alone. *A Voice for Men*, the site that rejected Christopher Cantwell's violent rhetoric, is blocked by Norton's safe search so that many people in public hotspots can't see the site.

supply of patriarchal dividends—of power, finances, and resources—to white, heterosexual, American, libertarian men.

### **Meme Warfare: More than lulz**

WHECMs leave the confines of the manosphere and travel the Internet with memes with an aim to incite without putting themselves at risk of physical attack. These WHECMs aim to: belittle and silence women, Jews, people of colour, and members of the LGBTQ++ community; incite and troll liberals; and to create an emotional contagion that stirs movements in WHECMs who sit on the sidelines. After Charlottesville, Heartiste made this strategy explicit as he pushed this as a way to upset left-leaning power structures, writing:

Given the massively coordinated gaystream media anti-White narrative boosterism following the police-antifa pincer movement in Charlottesville to disrupt an alt-right rally, it makes sense (for now) to abide some ancient warrior wisdom when confronting a much larger and stronger enemy: don't present an easy target, move like water through the channels of power, subvert the power structure from within.

“Goy, Bye!” <== YOU ARE HERE does this effectively. Mockery, mockery, mockery. This is how the anti-White Left will be mortally wounded, if not outright defeated. So put down your spaztikas and start using your head before

storming into battle with your flanks exposed. The enemy is clever; you must be cleverer.

Heartiste uses “Goy, Bye!”<sup>18</sup> as an example in this quote. Here he advocates for using a reply that points to the race war white nationalists feel (or claim to feel) embattled in no matter the context. So, though this meme might be employed as a Twitter or forum troll aimed at feminists, the reply is both dismissive (e.g. “Good bye!”) while implying a collusion or conflation of feminism with Semitism.

Meme messaging aims to go viral. White nationalist WHECM culture recognizes that it has far less than majority support. A viral meme, however, can overcome the quantitative lack of support through memetic circulation. At the same time, a viral meme has the ability to recruit new members, thereby increasing support long-term. On the forums, savantissimo attempts to explain the rationality behind an effective meme, and champions Google manifesto author Steve Danmore as exemplar of such an effort.

It’s even more than that, because the probability of victory or defeat by attrition in an encounter between units is proportional to the difference of the squares of the numbers on each side. (At least in modern combat with aimed fire. According to “Lanchester’s laws”, derived during WWI by Frederick Lanchester, in ancient phalanx formations and unaimed [sic] projectile war, it is just a straight linear difference of forces. In the internet battlefield, a higher power law may be appropriate, given infinite range and potentially perfect aiming of words.) That’s

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<sup>18</sup> Goy is an informal, derogatory term for a non-Jew, akin to “heathen.”

assuming units of equal capability. You can just plug in the numbers for unequal capacity, so if one side's units are 50% more capable than the other, in a 1-on-1 encounter, the underdog has a  $1/(1+ 1.5) = 40\%$  chance of winning. So having more, inferior units is generally a better strategy in the modern and internet age, on the other hand, one brilliant meme can be reproduced indefinitely for virtually no additional cost, so getting one Damore [sic] who makes the enemy expose themselves as vicious anti-truth incompetents can be worth thousands of base-model shitpoasters [sic].

In my travels throughout the manosphere, I have seen memes that invoke anti-Semitic sentiments both as mockery and as a way of imbricating various intersections of identity politics. These memes have ranged from aggressively hate-filled, such as an image of a concentration camp crematoriums and Jewish symbols, to more innocuous images, such as Pepe the Frog, a cartoon that has been appropriated by white nationalists. While memes that fall into the former category are vile and I would not wish anyone to be exposed to this hatred, memes of the latter classification worry me.

Able to circulate in the mainstream because they appear innocuous to the uninitiated, memes like Pepe are anything but. For those fully immersed in white nationalist WHECM masculinity, these memes circulate as triumphant messaging. For those on the perimeter, these memes are recognized as racist, anti-Semitic, and misogynistic. So, for example, someone who has spent time on Dalrock's Christian masculinity website may very well see this, recognize the progress being made by white nationalist WHECMs, and feel emboldened in the heralding and superordination of

WHECMs that is in harmony with the Christian patriarchal masculinity they practice. Pepe has yet to reach quite the heights of mainstream innocuousness and WHECM recognition but let us be cognizant that there are some terms and memes that have. “Red Pill” is one such example. This is a term appropriated by the manosphere community. My investigation has been limited to the manosphere, but Reddit has a massively popular manosphere community, called “The Red Pill,” with myriad sub-forums.<sup>19</sup>

Red pill alludes to the movie *The Matrix*, where the main character is given the choice between taking a red pill that will illuminate to him the realities of the world and a blue pill that will allow him to continue living ignorantly. The red pill is a term from misogynists akin to “woke,” which alludes to an awareness of the repression of men and the masculine. Because this term is innocuous, it can circulate in plain sight, while its recognition amongst misogynist WHECMs allows it to signal an in-group acceptance.

There is some harm that can come from this though. And this meme strategy in which WHECMs create messages that appear as harmless, can be defended as harmless, or both, while still being able to provoke a strong reaction is does not take place exclusively online. Take for instance the messages that were found posted on the University of Manitoba campus that read “IT’S OKAY TO BE WHITE” (see Scarpelli 2018). For those lacking the context under which these messaging were created, these messages may not stir outrage. But, as Dr. Lori Wilkinson from the University of Manitoba explains to CBC news (Markusa 2018), these posters were hung in areas to target women, Indigenous people, and international students. The intention is to incite

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<sup>19</sup> In designing this very research project, I debated between “the manosphere” (beginning with [manosphere.com](http://manosphere.com)) and “The Red Pill” ([reddit.com/redpill](http://reddit.com/redpill)). Ultimately I decided on the manosphere because it was easier to navigate from a research perspective—it was easier to bracket off smaller units of investigation—though it was likely smaller in content creation and web traffic.

outrage and hurt against those WHECMs troll, while generating sympathy from those who not think through the messaging critically and motivating WHECMs on the sidelines to action.

### **Violence and RAHOWA**

For years, there has been a conception that aggressiveness and violence is a characteristic natural to men. One of Brannon's (1976) four dimensions of the male role was "Give 'Em Hell." Similar ideas of men and masculinity help form the identity of the WHECMs on the manosphere. They view malignant actions and attitudes as natural to men and act this out in an attempt to reassert their notions of masculinity. On the manosphere the performance of and allusion towards violence is often directed towards those who they feel deplete their masculinity. Take, for example, SnapperTrx's musings in reply to an article on Men, Women, and Society, in which he offers potential retributions that are focused on reasserting power and force.

I have said, and so have many others, that the freedom and "power" of women exist only at the hands of lazy or graceful men. If we really wanted to men could take that power back in the blink of an eye and women would be totally powerless to stop us. Stuff like this proves us right. The typical woman would be down in a single punch to the face. Unfortunately for them the pendulum will swing the other way some day, and woe to smart ass women when it does.

And while SnapperTrx's comments allude simply to a longing for a return to power, others on the manosphere are more explicit.

There have been articles and exchanges on *Return of Kings* that illustrate how this violence is escalating from a performative longing to extreme calls to action. In reply to one of William Adams' articles on *Return of Kings*, one user, Hunn, vehemently advocates violence:

Non-violence? Fuck that! Feminists are the ENEMY of men, so men also should treat them as enemies. And what do men do with enemies? Bingo! I noticed this kind of behaviour of women quickly stops when you threaten them with real violence. They must see it in your eyes, that you are committed, and she is not in her safe space anymore. Women think they are safe, whatever they say, whatever they do. That they will suffer no consequences. She does it, because no man put her to her place yet, and she will continue to do it until that happens. If she does not back down, first threaten her with violence. If she still does not back down, hit her hard, with a fist, into the face. Then will she learn, and not before. I did this a few times, and it works. Most times you do not have to hit, only threaten. When they realise they are in danger they will back down ASAP. When the real fear appears in their eyes, that moment is PRICELESS!

When another user challenges this by pointing out that this would result in in his incarceration, Hunn replies, "In my practice, it never comes to blows. When strange women started barking, the threat of violence was always enough, although it has to be

convincing.” Hunn reiterates the effectiveness of the *puissance*—power as a capacity to act—of threatened violence in another comment, and this gets some purchase, including with customer, Stenka Razin, who says:

I never engage in a discussion with this type. They are insane and make no sense. My old man was a bookie in Queens, NY, many moons ago and I simply give this type the threatening stare that I used to see given to the gamblers who hadn't paid up on their losses in quite awhile. You would be surprised at how quickly they begin to understand the picture and “when they realize that they are in danger they will back down ASAP. When the real fear appears in their eyes, that moment is PRICELESS!”. I could not agree more.

In a comment to Jon Anthony's article “4 COMMON ITEMS THAT ARE DESTROYING YOUR TESTOSTERONE LEVELS,” Samantha Stephens, who you may remember from the epigraph to the chapter “Paranoia–Border Work–Discomfort,” muses about an ultimate violence and paints the differences between WHECMs and the progressive left as a war. She implores the men to “Hunt and kill – well hunt and eliminate maybe – feminists, SJW's, white knights, Democrats, Antifa, BLM. A war against these should significantly spike testosterone Well, actually kill might not be such a bad idea after all.” In Samantha's call to action, she genders violence as masculine, removes any limitations on masculine violence, and imposes the threat of violence towards feminism and the left.

And Samantha is not unique in thinking that WHECMs are at war. On Dalrock's website, this gets positioned as a holy war for his followers of his. After drawing distinctions between the sides and equating the right with holiness, one member, glosoli, rallies the readers to fight:

Left = satan (evil, death, chaos, lies) Right= Jehovah (good, life, order, truth).

IMHO.

The alt-right needs to become the True Right and win another Holy War. But we win another way if we fail, as Jehovah will step in again, as in Noah's time. Be strong brothers, spread the news amongst our men

On *Return of Kings*, Roosh Valizadeth, in his article "CHARLOTTESVILLE WAS A DISASTER FOR THE DISSIDENT RIGHT," employs some subterfuge—saying one thing with the aim of the opposite. He writes:

This isn't a game, this is war. You may scoff at that comment, but if you're going to a rally without the expectation that someone there will try to maim or kill you, you run a high risk of being maimed or killed. We have broken the seal of death, and people will start dying at increasing rates. Antifa will want payback for the death of one of their communist allies, so you should not attend any rally unless you're able to defend your life. Big boobed e-thots should stay home. I repeat,

this is not a game, and there is zero excuse for you to be blindsided from this point on...

If you insist on facing off with antifa, it's going to be a fight that will likely lead to injury or imprisonment for you, but not imprisonment for them, and with the My Paycheck Matters police on the side of the state, it's a hill you don't want to die on until we enter a hot Civil War scenario. If you can't become as competent on the field as a genuine Army Major, do not lead people into what will be sure ruin...

It should be clear that we have no allies in existing state and cultural institutions. They hate you and wish you would disappear, because you're the one remaining obstacle to allowing them to permanently rule and usher in their "end of history."

As the publisher and editor of *Return of Kings*, Roosh not only knows about the ideology of violence that gets peddled on his website, he helps shape it. As the website host, Roosh has all of the webpage analytics and can accurately gauge the climate of his visitors and could be expected to be aware of their hostility. In this article, Roosh states a concern for the well-being of the men that come to *Return of Kings* who enact Nazi, misogynistic masculinities. Roosh states this concern in such a way that challenges the hyper-aggressive ways they perform their masculinities. In the article above, Roosh espouses a care for these men, warning them that they "run a high risk of being maimed or killed," while simultaneously effeminizing them as "Big boobed e-thots," and stirring notions of

being at war as he calls for the competencies of “a genuine Army Major” and promises a looming “Civil War.”

And the strategy of violence and war is certainly encouraged by Heartiste. In one of his blog posts discussing the “Google Manifesto”, written by Google’s now terminated employee Danmore, Heartiste stirs up resentment by asserting that WHECMs are silenced and oppressed. Heartiste then speaks of retribution and warns of a looming backlash.

In sum, he reminded the fungibility cultists that women are different than men, and that this immutable fact of humanity has implications for representation in fields like computer programming that cater to the inborn talents and preferences of men. He said Goolag’s fevered efforts to achieve employee sex and race ratios that spergily align with their ratios in the total US population is a fool’s errand that will inevitably heap miseries and injustices on those who are genuinely good at their jobs and uninterested in helping push the Diversitopia Propaganda and Anti-White Humiliation Protocol.

[...]

But as the souls of the Damores of the West are piled high in the purgatory of shitlib animus, stripped of their jobs and voices and made persona non grata to future employers, the hunger for righteous retribution grows stronger among those remaining who are next in line as sacrificial Whites bilked and discarded to placate the shrieking circus freaks demanding surrender to the Lords of Lies and their vision of a deracinated Globohomo Slurry ruled by a rootless disconnected

credentialati and merchant class who buy their way out of the consequences of their societally destructive policies.

The Day of Fire and Fury nears.

There's a disturbance in the farce. It's White men finding their light sabers again.

This strategy of violence and warfare is worth describing not only because it illustrates the violence to which some of these men feel inclined, it also demonstrates how some men are stirred to these actions. The manosphere is not just a homosocial clubhouse where men gather virtually. These are recruitment grounds where WHECMs are groomed and radicalized into identifying those who are feminist, racialized, queer, and Semitic as enemies. Across the manosphere, WHECMs are taught that there is a cultural war being waged on the white man by Jewish elite who mobilize feminism, race, sexuality, and identity politics to Other the white man and make the white race extinct. Amidst a culture war these WHECMs prepare for warfare.

On Château Heartiste, WHECMs prepare for a “racial holy war” (RAHOWA). In the following conversation between Maus, Publius, skorzecin150, and Captain Obvious, we witness the conspiracy theory of a cultural war, the need to put aside the pick-up artistry “game” that Heartiste uses to attract men to his site and move towards a violent combat.

**Maus:** Agreed. That time is now. RAHOWA has begun, and the hatred of white men is undeniably manifest. Discussions of game and the parsing of HB10s versus thots versus landwhales are now a distraction. Time to set aside Athens and put on Sparta.

**Publius:** But don't be there infiltrating ANTIFA when one of the good guys sprays 40 rounds of 55g justice. Can't believe one of the angry childless gen z men didn't do that. Not advocating it, mind you.

**skorzecin150:** I'll credit this to the solid fire discipline and innate goodness of the white man.

**Captain Obvious:** No, it's so much more than that.

The Frankfurt School psychiatrists are trying to snuff out every last bit of hope, every last bit of courage, every last bit of resolve in the White Race.

Their Societal Demoralization is designed to induce Racial Extinction. As CH always says, the biology induces the culture, and cultural war is just another euphemism for biology war.

We are in a great Darwinian struggle to the Death with the Jewish Race. As long as there are Jews, and Whites to be attacked, the Jews will attack us.

Elsewhere, Captain Obvious stirs resentment as he lays claim not only to the persecution of WHECMs, but to the disparity in how those persecuted have liberals come to their defense but WHECMs do not.

‘Somebody needs to ask why you’re allowed to celebrate being “born that way” if you’re gay but not if you’re white.’ DoBA, the era of any possible hope for success with Narrativel horseshit ended circa 1960. The biology is the culture, and (((Cultural Wars))) are Biological Wars. This is all about (((the Extinction))) of the White Race. You aim for the gut now. Figuratively, in your propaganda, and physically, with your w3apon, when the Antifa puppets throw acid in your face. We move forward with only visceral, instinctual, hindbrain propaganda & f0rce.

We can see the resentment in this statement, created from an achieved ascribed status of persecution. We also see how Captain Obvious stirs emotions in those within the forum and then instructs violence, telling those whom he stirs to “aim for the gut” both with their propaganda and force.

It is easy and comfortable to be dismissive of the anti-Semitic RAHOWA as nothing more than a conspiracy theory thrown around by a small faction. It is equally as comforting to dismiss the violence visions that paint the text on these forums non-threatening comments by a few who will not take action. But those who may not take action appear to be attempting to stir others to do so. The comments in this section by Captain Obvious, a regular contributor on this site appear to me to pointedly attempt to stir others to action while he sits on the sidelines. Captain Obvious’ comments invoke

affects and circulate to move others to action. For instance, though he is inclusive of himself when discussing who is under attack, he abdicates the first person when discussing potential action, such as when he instructs others (“You”) to aim for the gut and “somebody needs to ask...” regarding persecution.

There are those, however, that appear willing to take action. One forum poster, The STUCK IN MOD HELL Aurian, advocates for increasing the frequency and intensity of attacks and includes an email so others who would join him can make contact:

Accelerate the enemy’s timeline out of his control this strategy is exactly what I believe in apart from adding more attacks on the people who are too asleep, instigate and increase the severity of attacks, accelerate the timeline beyond control of the vile. They want to start a war tomorrow, start it today. When lib kids get killed and then they themselves get killed at their hugs and peace condolence jerkfest they will come to the correct side real fast. We don’t even need to do this, just encourage the savages that the Jews have flooded us with to amplify and accelerate the plan. Have an email I cou,d [sic] get in touch with. I’m at [thefirstAuarian@yandex.com](mailto:thefirstAuarian@yandex.com)

Regardless of whether the commenter is one who is willing to take the action or groom others to do so, there is a celebration of praxis of the WHECM movement through violence. To conclude this section, allow me to do so using the words of Château

commenter, Johnny Redux, who proclaims that violence and war is a praxis to WHECMs as a movement:

The movement is propelled by the actors, not by the “normies”. Fuck them. If we waited for the normies to come along, you would have never had the American Revolution. Movements, and revolutions, are run by 15% of the population – tops. The normies think that they can just sit back and keep voting their way out of this mess. Only action will bring about positive change. Nothing else. The Jews count on inactivity. One more thing – if a White person is still a “normie” at this stage in the game, they are fucking retarded, in which case they are just dead weight and cannon fodder for the dindus and Left do eat alive.

### Ghosting Their Own Way

Faced with what they perceive as: masculinity in crisis; a sense that men are unwanted in a gynocentric society; women as hypergamous; and women as lying to and manipulating the courts to procure men’s resources, MGTOWs backlash by withdrawing. They are tapping out, ghosting women and exiting society. To illustrate the withdrawal at the individual level consider the following instructions from Untamed and Red Knight on two different boards:

**Untamed:** And what is the response from Men? Avoid any close contact with female coworkers, even a handshake. Always use a chaperone in a meeting with a woeman. Don’t invite weemin coworkers on company trips or dinners. And on

and on the “male backlash” is being felt like the kinetic energy of an erupting volcano!

**Red Knight:** ...recognize the consequences of your actions. If you do not screw her, then you have no problems. You win. But if you do, you open yourself to many possibilities. Rape accusations, STD's, drama with her other boyfriends/husband, losing your job, sloppy seconds, etc...all this to satisfy an urge that could be solved through masturbation or a professional escort, both of which are much safer. Having sex with a random female strongly fails a risk/benefit analysis.

Just as they ghost women and relationships, MGTOWs also withdraw from society in order to avoid being taken advantage of by a progressive, feminist culture. Extrapolating their view of women to feminism, the tactic of withdrawal also gets expanded to a cultural and political level. MGTOWs seek to avoid a feminized society by actively withdrawing from society. As one post on the forum explained:

**Anonymous:** The more feminism they [celebrate] the more men will walk away as we have for decades. Many of us did it spontaneously, without guidance, just our gut instinct telling us to get away, avoid the misery, avoid the manipulation, avoid the head games! Then low and behold gynocentric vision developed, we started seeing and feeling all the foul bulls~~~ and misandry laden insults all over the place! It got to the point that just about everything TV had to offer was

tailored to the female mind! I'm talking back in the 70's all the way up to 2005 when I rid myself of satellite TV. Society will never return to normal! Mousetopia is already in motion with planet earth being the cage and feminism being the "experiment". I like being a field mouse instead of a mouse in the city! Too many Cats looking to EAT YOU!

But withdrawal is not a strategy reserved for a novel, obscure group like MGTOWs. Rather it is a prominent action by men and masculinities across the manosphere and beyond red pill communities. On the website *Men, Women, and Society*, James explains how the rise of feminism harms men and society:

You've got to realize this the primary point Sleaze tries to make is that Western women have devolved so much that a lot of them do not fit to be good wives and good mothers anymore. So, Western guys who have choices, facing with the prospect of having no suitable options, turn to Asia to find great long-term companions. Because many East Asian societies so far have shown a capability of resisting against Western corrosive and self-destructive culture, it is expected that high-valued Western guys will be able to find reliable partners there.

And James' advice is not a one off. One site that I considered studying was *Matt Forney*, who promotes a homophobic, racist nationalism. Forney has a history of withdrawing. According to his website his turning point moment was a six-month hitchhiking trip. He is currently based in Europe, despite being from New York state. He has advocated for

escaping to Europe, especially Eastern Europe, for vacation and (free) sex tourism. He has given the advice that it is morally advisable for people to withdraw from politics and political groups. *Return of Kings* has many contributors who advocate travel as a means of escaping a feminist, progressive society. Relampago Furiso pitches living abroad, generally. William Adams suggests Sweden is the place to move to, while Makoto Fujiwara argues for Japan. David G. Brown wants you to consider becoming a nomad. Roosh V has a series of ten travel books that “teach men how to meet the most beautiful and feminine women in the world.”

Travel is a growing industry for the antifeminist man. These locations are being pitched because they allege to be less influenced by feminism. For the men that visit the manosphere enacting myriad masculinities and the WHECMs who boldly claim the praxis of having built society, it appears that they are seeking asylum. For many WHECMs, their solution to the crisis of masculinity is to withdraw and head to other cultures where they might exert their power. In this way, their exit reflects a colonialism, which has always been intertwined with capitalism and WHECM masculinities.

Exit, as a strategy, is also an act of *puissance*. Ghosting, exit, withdrawal, and “men going their own way” is an affective action of exerting potential power.

iMickey503’s contribution to a MGTOW group conversation captures this:

We all know women are bulls~~~. And the only step is to bring that suffering right to their bedrooms, and lives.

When the jobs dry up. When women are no longer confident that the government is going to save them. That all men have turned their backs on them. When women are treated & ignored like the lowest casts in the society, only then will they SUBMIT to change. But until then. FEAR is the only thing we can use to make our lives better. And a woman's greatest fear is that she will have to look at herself in the mirror and see herself for what she has become.

Only when she knows that no one ever looks at her, or pays attention to her. Even if she cries about a crime being committed.

Only then will women see this and change.

Exit as a strategy—men going their own way—is an emotional backlash that intends to remind women, feminists, and society of the immanence of men's power. With the reactionary and potential power of MGTOWs' emotions in mind, exit, *at first glance*, appears to be a retreatism that rejects the goals and means of a feminized, liberal society. At the same time, exit seeks to enact an affective power—as *puissance*—to force women, feminists, and progressives to conform to former patriarchal goals via the means of an orthodox hegemonic masculinity. But, while WHECMs retreat from progressive goals and means, they also cling to former goals and means. Exit is as much retreatism as it is an entrenched conformity to a historical antecedent. A post by Coach Beef on a MGTOW forum illuminates the knot of retreatism and conformity within withdrawal.

One key to total freedom is to design spaces for 100% man s~~~. I have two caves – live in a new 40 foot luxury RV and also have a warehouse for live video production with lots of screens, couches, weights, motorcycles, tools, guns, and computers. The raw independence attracts some women because I do what I want every minute of every day, but then they sour when they realize they cant change me. I let em go without a regret. Women think they are naturally owed service and attention by men. Truth is, they owe US. We built the world to be safe and warm for them, but then they invented welfare and no fault divorce and lifetime alimony and decided that we owe them food/shelter by nature. Well that fantasy is ending quickly. Men are not so dumb now. The deal now is, pussy first, then we'll think about letting you in the cave occasionally to f~~~, not to co-habitate, no ring, no promises, and the minute you stop f~~~in you're froze out. Let's see if "independent" women can figure out how to maintain a working house. Good f~~~in luck. The only way men in the current legal climate can safely co-habitate with a woman is for a SHORT time, or else a "palimony" suit is a threat. Women would say we need to trust them. Too late for that. 50% of marriages end in divorce and in about 75% of the ones who stay together, the woman takes over the house and doesnt f~~~. Them odds are no f~~~in good. Long term trust is obsolete in relationships. Only a war that devastates the govt's ability to enforce divorce law will bring long term relationships back to the correct balance: women f~~~ for food and shelter, no entitlement if they quit f~~~in or the man gets tired of her. That is the correct deal. Men have the strength and ingenuity to build and protect, women don't. "Civilization" turned out to be a s~~~ deal for men. So we

are dismantling it since women proved to be ungrateful. The Reckoning has been a long time coming, but it's here now. The economy is unstable as hell. Half the people on the planet are vocationally useless. Women have no idea what the f~~~ is about to happen to them. The Kings Are Returning.

Beginning with claims of freedom from his exits, a bitterness, directed towards women, arises as Coach Beef recounts tales of masculine production, feminine counter-production of welfare and family court outcomes, and longing for (a reinstatement of) feminine reproduction as trade for masculine productive mastery. While this employs a familiar men rights activist rhetoric, Coach Beef's yarn displays notions of freedom inherent in retreatism being tied to conforming to separation of productive and reproductive spheres that arose as society shifted from an agrarian to capitalistic society, the gender roles assigned to each sphere, and the subsequent idealization of masculinity. As they retreat from society that rebels against conservative, patriarchal means and goals, WHECMs see their exit as a withholding of the (former/conservative) institutional means they provide, which they view as a strategy to undermining the radical changes feminism has put afoot.

The strategy and tactics of exit and withdrawal are just as present within complicit masculinities as they are within explicitly racist, misogynistic, and homophobic conservative WHECMs. I contend that efforts to create mosaic identities by patching together appropriations of marginalized and subordinated others, what masculinities scholars have captured as pastiche (Atkinson 2011) or hybrid (Bridges and Pascoe 2014; Demetriou 2001) masculinities, is often a concerted effort to distance oneself from toxic, oppressive, and dominating forms of masculinities. This distancing not only obscures

complicity in the WHECM project and the dividends that circulate to those who can appropriate cultural aspects of Others' identity. This distancing is a tactic that allows people who occupy positions of power and privilege to abdicate ethical obligations; hybrid masculinities are the practice of ghosting those with whom we claim allyship. The exit of "ally" hybrid masculinity creates a tension in which people wrestle with their privilege and dividends. This was true on The Goodmen Project and perhaps best exemplified in an article entitled "But What Can I Do?" But the punchline always seems to be that we are not willing to make radical change.

I would suggest that the complicity of hybrid identities is bound to the fusion of the pastiche components with capitalism and patriarchy. Capitalism helps nurture muted feelings and a blasé attitude (Simmel 1903) which numbs "ally" masculinities to the point where they cannot find the drive to initiate change (never mind radical change). Patriarchy, concurrently, maintains a hold on the use of withdrawal as a strategy. As Sharma (2017: par. 4) explains, "Exit is an exercise of patriarchal power, a privilege that occurs at the expense of cultivating and sustaining conditions of collective autonomy. It stands in direct contradistinction to care." Without owning and actively trying to dismantle the racism, sexism, misogyny, and classism of their WHECMness, the men who perform hybrid masculinities are only finding ways to distance themselves from their culpability and complicity. Sitting on the sidelines, hybrid WHECMs happily reap the benefits of racist, sexist, misogynistic systems while chastising the WHECMs who champion these systems. Their inactivity in the dismantling of these systems is a strategy that allows WHECM masculinities to grow while abdicating their responsibility. It is a subtle but nefarious strategy that advances WHECM as a movement.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

### Violent Congregations

Stages of this dissertation have been marked with drastic and violent manifestations of the cultural politics of whiteness, masculinity, homophobia, and conservatism. While I was doing pre-field work, Donald Trump was elected despite—or perhaps because of—his racist and misogynistic comments and his homophobic running partner. As I was collecting data, a “Unite the Right” white nationalist rally took place in Charlottesville. As I was analyzing data and writing drafts of chapters, there were several mass killings by white men that have targeted women, Jewish people, and people of colour. As I have come to the final stages of preparing this dissertation, carnage continues to be left by white men who have their views and beliefs shaped online. On August 3, 2019, Patrick Crusius killed 22 people and injured another 24 in an El Paso Walmart. Crusius has told investigators that his research and conversations with other white nationalists online formed his views (Ailworth, Wells, and Lovett 2019). Closer to home, two white men from British Columbia, Bryer Schmegelsky and Kam McLeod, suspected of killing three people have expressed far-right and Nazi ideologies online (Lamoureux 2019).

Misogynistic, racist, homophobic, transphobic, and anti-Semitic attacks are not always carried out with guns and vans. Women, people of colour, LGBTQ++ people, and Jewish people are frequently targets of online swarming attacks and “meme warfare.” These online attacks have material effects on their victims. While this is an important

motivation to attend to online spaces, it is also important to go to these online spaces because men are being radicalized there. As Solnit (2019) explains:

We think of armies as organized bodies with clear structures and centers. But the internet has created a guerrilla army of rightwing young white men infected by contagious and toxic ideas. The internet, as it was created by the hubristic white men of Silicon Valley, is an indoctrination, organizing tool, manifesto distribution means and shopping system (the Dayton killer bought his AR-15 style rifle online from Texas). It's also an amplifier of alienation and extremism. That many of these young men are lonely and miserable and isolated, and that there is no clear border between white supremacists and incel misogynists, two groups linked to mass shootings, speaks to how the internet works.

If white men are congregating in particular online spaces where they develop and aggravate misogynistic, racist, homophobic, transphobic, and anti-Semitic views, and these views lead a significant number of these men to aggressive, violent, and oppressive behaviour, at what point should the lack of investigation—especially by white men—of the men on these sites be considered willful blindness?

### **Research Aims and Design**

This dissertation project sought to centre white men as objects of analysis by going online into some of the Internet hangouts where misogynistic, racist, homophobic, transphobic, and anti-Semitic views are espoused. As one of the first research projects

into these spaces, one intention of this dissertation was to provide a description of the men and masculinities in these spaces. My hope is that this ethnographic account might generate ideas in other scholars who would then conduct further, much needed research. My analytic purpose was to contribute to an understanding of three research questions. First, who these men are becoming as they identify with constructions of masculinities. If masculine identities are a process of continual construction and sunder, what elements are consistently present despite their ebb and flow? Second, what is the cultural politics of the backlash these men exercise? Is there a way that beliefs, ideologies, views, and emotions come together that explain men's vitriol and violent reactions? Finally, in what ways is the congregation of these men leading to some form of organization? What actions, strategies, and tactics are espoused and employed as approved forms of backlash?

To research these questions, I conducted a netnography of three fieldsites: "The Manosphere," a website that seeks to aggregate content that instructs an anti-feminist alpha male masculinity; "Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW)," which promotes a sovereign masculinity in which men live according to their own best interests, opting out of "traditional" roles in romance, family, and society; and "The Good Men Project," an ostensibly progressive website that claims to offer a cultural conversation about enlightened masculinity and what it means to be a "good man." These three fieldsites led me to perform a qualitative content analysis on 1.32 gigabytes of data that included 459 forum pages and articles, some with over fifty pages of comments from readers, drawn from eight websites: [avoiceformen.com](http://avoiceformen.com), [heartiste.wordpress.com](http://heartiste.wordpress.com), [dalrock.wordpress.com](http://dalrock.wordpress.com), [blog.aaronsleezy.com](http://blog.aaronsleezy.com), [returnofkings.com](http://returnofkings.com), [therationalmale.com](http://therationalmale.com),

goodmenproject.com, and mgtow.com. From this research, I establish that the masculine identities across these websites cling to patriarchal, racial, and heterosexual supremacy through an emotional border work that is leading to violent praxis.

### Summary of Findings

Though antifeminism was explicitly espoused as an aim of seven of the eight fieldsites I investigated, I found that the power the men on these websites clung to was not just gendered, patriarchal power. Rather, the hegemonic ideal was white, heterosexual men—what I called WHECMs—assembled together with colonial-capitalist lines of force that leverage eugenics’ notions of family. These WHECMs often expressed their masculinity in sexist and misogynistic ways, their sexuality in homophobic and transphobic ways, and their whiteness in racist and anti-Semitic ways. Further, WHECMs anointed themselves as supreme by thinking that their race, gender, and sexuality reflect the sacrifice and sacredness of Christ, situating themselves as purveyors of Truth, or both.

Viewing themselves as anointed, WHECMs view any loss of power and privilege as attacks on their sanctity and on the sacred. Disagreements with WHECMs, encroachments on their power, and any actions that might reduce their dividends become loci of focus and paranoia. WHECMs anxiously attend to their loss of sanctity and conject delusional explanations as extreme as women and Jews weaponizing identity politics to attack WHECMs and their sovereignty. Under a perceived attack, WHECMs backlash through an emotional border work that reinforces borders by segregating WHECMs via emotional exclusion of Others and emotionally incarcerating men within racist, misogynistic, and homophobic walls. The emotional erection and reinforcement of

borders makes the Other proximate and causes reactions of discomfort for WHECMs. This discomfort is read as an attack on WHECMs, which in turn increases their paranoia, which encourages the repetition of the paranoia–border work–discomfort emotional system.

Perceiving that they are under attack, WHECMs have adopted five strategies of praxis to protect WHECM supremacy and advance their cause. First, WHECMs encourage propagating the white race with pliant white women who hold the white man in esteem. Second, WHECMs encourage a democratic consumption that includes boycotting companies and culture that champion progressive ideals. For some WHECMs, the repetition of their emotional backlash has ramped up their paranoid delusions of being in the midst of a racial holy war. This, in turn, ramps up their third and fourth strategies. A third strategy is employing a sort of meme warfare, in which men go out to Internet spaces and troll marginalized people and use racist, anti-Semitic, and misogynist memes. A fourth strategy is physical violence, killing, and warfare. The fifth and final strategy is withdrawal, which takes forms ranging from abandonment (i.e., men going their own way) to distancing (i.e., hybrid masculinities' dissociation from dominating, hegemonic masculinities to assuage the guilt from complicity).

In summary, the men I analyzed on the manosphere form their identity through a process of construction and sunder in which maleness, whiteness, and heterosexuality are assembled and anointed through Christian, colonial-capitalism and eugenic notions of family. These men are highly emotional, and their feelings spur frenzied paranoias that drive them to misogyny, racism, anti-Semitism, and homophobia to protect the fusion of maleness, whiteness, and heterosexuality that has afforded them power, resources, and

esteem. As they congregate on the manosphere, many WHECMs are turning the intense and fleeting flames of emotional backlash against women, people of colour, and those who are not cis-heterosexual into embers of sentiments and moods that can be stoked in varying capacities of misogynistic, racist, anti-Semitic, and homophobic actions. My investigation found that these men's identity, emotional reactions, and deliberate actions are each an assemblage of whiteness, heterosexuality, and masculinity that holds themselves, and only themselves, as esteemed. Because my investigation examined identity, emotional reactions, and espoused actions, there may be some limitations to the study I conducted.

### Limitations

I would like to address and respond to four potential limitations of this study, two pertaining to internal validity and two pertaining to external validity, or generalizability. People interpret language based on personal context, knowledge, and experience (Van den Hoonaard 2012:77). As such, it is possible that my context, knowledge, and experience led me to assume validity across the social context of the WHECMs on the manosphere and myself. I argue that as a white, cis-heterosexual man, I share many contexts with the objects of my study. Consider, for example the similarities I share with Eusebius Erasmus, which I discuss in the section "WHECM Supremacy as Sacredness." There were times where I could not be certain of some of the language being used. Heartiste, for example, often coined his own words to insult and describe (e.g. globohomo, shitlib, etc.). There was, too, rhetorical tactics used by those on the manosphere to avoid deplatforming. These tactics include typed character substitution

(e.g. the letter “a” in a word is replaced with “@”), so that the word father becomes f@ther, and the use of seemingly benign words as pejoratives (e.g. “Googles” to articulate Asian people). When these situations occurred, even when these neologisms seemed obvious in their meaning, I employed diligent research to confirm the meaning.

A second possible limitation that someone might direct towards my research is that the anonymity afforded to those who posted on the websites meant that these men were just playing along or joking. Indeed, Jane (2014a) has articulated that this is a tactic often employed that shifts the blame for any sensitivities back unto those who bring the complaint forward. I argue that the anonymity of the sites I investigated opens those posting content there to granting access to what Goffman (1959) would call their backstage. My contention is that these spaces are where these men reveal aspects of themselves that are not filtered through a presentation of self that they think those around wish to see. In many ways, my research may be more internally valid because it gained access to the thoughts, emotions, and identity making that was not as influenced by social norms, mores, and folkways. In addition to the two limitations of internal validity, there are also two possible limitations pertaining to external validity.

My sites of investigation were all online and most of those who submitted content, whether in the form of articles, comments to forums, or comments to articles appeared to be from the United States, Canada, and Nordic countries. Though, often, those who were living in Nordic countries were expat Americans. With this in mind, my investigation is not generalizable to the men and masculinities outside of the West. Because my research only investigated online sites, there may be some who say that my research is not generalizable past the online worlds. In response to these assertions, I

would counter that distinctions between online and offline worlds have become so muddled as to render them useless. Further, I would argue that men are forming identities on these websites that they carry with them offline. Finally, I would point to the strategies and tactics these men employ as praxis that can only occur offline as evidence of how the misogyny, homophobia, racism, and anti-Semitism is not contained to online spaces. Propagating the white race with deferent white women, marching with tiki torches to “Unite the Right,” and violent military tactics directed at women, immigrants, and Jews cannot occur online.

A final limitation of generalizability that might be levied at my research is the #NotAllMen argument that not all men (from North Western countries) are misogynistic, racist, homophobic, transphobic, and anti-Semitic WHECMs. Similarly, some may offer that men may react differently depending on the context and, therefore, many WHECMs may not even react with these forms of oppression in all situations. I have two responses to this line of critique. First, it is not necessary that *all* men are misogynistic, racist, homophobic, transphobic, and anti-Semitic WHECMs in *all* contexts for these men and masculinities to inflict harm on their targets and propel injustice in our society. It is not even necessary for there to be an overwhelming percentage of men to be like this—especially when there are so many who are wilfully blind, complicit, and unwilling to engage these forms of hate within their circles and in the moment.

My second response to those who would say that #NotAllMen are misogynistic, racist, homophobic, transphobic, and anti-Semitic would be to suggest that we should consider that we are all culpable in this assemblage. I have argued that each of these elements are co-constituted with and indivisible from the other elements. So, for

example, the subtlest form of sexism or misogyny does not just reinforce racism, it is implicated in racism, and vice versa. Further, I think it is paramount to begin to see the ways in which we are entangled with, complicit in, and benefitting from the misogynistic, racist, heteronormative, Christian, colonial-capitalist assemblage. Rather than trying to argue that there are moments when WHECMs and men might be blameless—or pure (Shotwell 2016)—we should strive to realize the complexity of oppression and our entanglements with it. I would further argue that trying to convince others (or ourselves) of our purity is an enactment of a Christ-like purity or the purity of Truth that is used to sanctify ourselves. The #NotAllMen critique and similar arguments that posit purity are complicit in reinforcing supremacy and the WHECM assemblage.

As a final comment on internal and external validity as limitations of my research, I would advocate that my research project had ecological validity. Ecological validity is a type of external validity that is representative in relation to the situation that the researcher is trying to generalize (Palys 2003). The stories, rants, and lamentations of the men on the eight websites I examined covered a breadth of topics from their everyday lives. There was situational saturation from the breadth of the content produced across the manosphere that makes this research representative of WHECMs and their reactions to women, feminism, and progressive policies. The ecological validity of this project means that my findings make a contribution towards the critical study of men and masculinities and implies important implications for policy and practice.

## Applications and Implications

This dissertation makes important contributions to the scholarly field of men and masculinities, particularly within the multiplying masculinities and navigating masculinities trajectories (Pascoe and Bridges 2016). Studies that fall within the multiplying trajectories bracket off particular times and contexts as best they can so as to describe and interpret the masculinity that arises in said context. I have contributed to this broad trajectory by “studying up” (Messner 1996) on the men and masculinities that congregate on self-avowed antifeminist websites. Sparse research has examined the men that congregate and the masculinities that form on the manosphere. As such, the research and ethnography—the analysis and the description—within this dissertation makes a unique and novel contribution to the multiplying masculinities trajectory within the field of men and masculinities. This dissertation also makes an important contribution to the navigating masculinities trajectory.

Navigating masculinities research considers more than one factor of power and inequality, such as gender, race, class, sexuality, age, and religion, to understand how these factors work together to compose masculinities in myriad ways and to understand the complexities of particular men and masculinities. Research that falls under the trajectory of navigating masculinities is intersectional and attempts to understand how those who might be subordinated by one factor while being privileged by their gender. My research makes a unique contribution to this trajectory in that it considers how factors of power and inequality assemble within the identities and actions of those who occupy

mostly privileged positions<sup>20</sup>. And while “the vast majority of research on men and masculinities has focused primarily on populations of male, cisgendered, white, heterosexual, middle-class, Western men” (Pascoe and Bridges 2016:223), this has been done while maintaining an opacity of the factors of power. Therefore, my research makes a novel contribution to the navigating masculinities trajectory in that I attend to whiteness, masculinity, heterosexuality, Christianity, and colonial capitalism to consider how these axes of power and inequality assemble and work together to superordinate. My research investigates power and inequality top-down. In doing so, I have described ways that these men’s identities, reactions, and actions are formed in a venerated WHECM assemblage. In my description and analysis, I have yet to make explicit the changes in practice my findings imply.

There are four changes to policy or practice that are an implication from my findings. First, we must attend to WHECMs as a threat. These men are preparing for RAHOWA, a racial holy war. They are becoming radicalized online. WHECMs are organizing group protests and mobs, opening fire in malls and synagogues, and plowing vans through people on the streets in the name of WHECM supremacy. WHECM organizations and websites must be approached with the same diligence and attention as directed towards other terrorist threats. In a Canadian context, it appears as though this is beginning to occur. In its most recent report, Canadian Security Intelligence Services (CSIS) (2019) discusses Right-Winged Extremism and mentions that issues of gender, race, religion, sexual orientation and immigration are subsumed by these groups. While

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<sup>20</sup> Some of the men may have been lower class, there was a limited amount of women and men of colour who came to these spaces. I also use “mostly” here because the whiteness and the masculine ideal is fluid and variable, so it is improbable one could occupy the WHECM ideal with any consistency.

CSIS begins to acknowledge the threat, there is a need to consider the threat beyond “extremism.” There is a need to consider the ways in which WHECMs can cause harm in domestic, public, and workplace spaces.

Second, there is a need to disrupt the blasé outlook that chains potential allies to the sidelines. We must interrupt complicity by challenging the justifications for it. We need to erase the distance we use to abdicate our implication in misogynistic, racist, anti-Semitic, and homophobic projects. This begins by taking accountability for our position in this project. Rather than pointing to acts of misogyny or white nationalism and patting ourselves on the backs for not being like that, we need to own our role and contributions to the WHECM assemblages. When we do this, we can see our relation to WHECMs and collect our people<sup>21</sup>. In moments of threat, we need to take action, step up, and step in between.

Third, we need to work on breaking down borders when there is no direct threat. If we are to collect our people, we need to bust in and bust out of the borders that are containing them and us. If discomfort is being caused by negative emotions, which is leading to paranoia and border reinforcement, there is a need for allies to engage with discomfort. This is work for allies who can get past the borders, who then can find ways to explore WHECMs’ feeling and to connect WHECMs’ personal experience with the issue.

We can also work on breaking down borders with the fourth implied application, which is to celebrate our discomfort and to openly trying to alleviate our own paranoias. Rather than turning inwards away from the shame and discomfort, we need to own *the*

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<sup>21</sup> I am drawing, here, on lessons I have learned from social media in which members of marginalized communities have asked those who occupy privileged positions to “collect their kin,” to handle those from the same positions who are sliding into mentions and trolling.

*object of* this discomfort. Rather than seeing our implication in racism, misogyny, and homophobia as an example of our lack of purity, we need to advertise (if you will) our lack of supremacy, and own the ways in which we are racist, misogynistic, and homophobic. There is likely more we can do, but much of that can only be determined as further research into WHECMS, the mansphere, and other spaces WHECMs congregate is conducted.

### Further Research

Scant research has been conducted on the mansphere or similar online communities with different names (e.g. Redpill, MRA/MRM), so I would encourage any research that adds to the understanding of the men and masculinities that promote their supremacy and backlashes against marginalized communities. With that in mind, I would suggest ten particular areas that need further research. First, there is a need to continue looking to online spaces. The men who frequented websites that have been shut down for their hate (e.g. *Château Heartiste*) migrate to new spaces. It is imperative that we find the sites where those who spread the most vile and violent ideas and continue to “study up.” One potential social media site that offers amnesty to white nationalists and misogynists is the microblog— a Twitter alternative—Gab. On the websites that promote the more extreme WHECM ideologies and tactics, there is an opportunity to investigate radicalization techniques employed by WHECMs to recruit and incite violence. New online research should not be limited to these spaces. The strategy of trolling and meme warfare encourages WHECMs to react and attack people in their everyday spaces. Online these include on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. In all of these cases attacks can be

public or private by direct messaging or emailing people. A comparison between the rhetoric and emotions expressed in these impromptu backlashes should be compared to the rhetoric and emotions expressed within the manosphere to see if it is possible to trace back where these men are being stirred to action.

Further research should also “study up” and investigate WHECMs in offline spaces. Further research needs to be critical and challenge the status quo. White, heterosexual men are already studied. They are rarely, however, studied in any way that centres them as the phenomenon of investigation that challenges their supremacy or calls into question their racism, homophobia, or misogyny. This centering of WHECMs in research of offline spaces could take many forms, but one example that interests me would be to venture into workspaces to investigate the ways that leadership gets coded and reinforced by WHECMs in positions of power as white, heterosexual, and masculine.

Research into offline spaces should also attempt to follow the men who congregate online to their offline meetups. Before I began my research, a group in Ottawa, the Canadian Association for Equality (CAFE), attempted to rent out the Mayfair Theatre to screen a documentary, *The Red Pill*, which promotes men’s rights activism. An event like this would have been an ideal opportunity to gain access to a group of MRAs to conduct an ethnography. There are some challenges, such as research ethics and board approval, and risks, such as infiltrating a group with potentially harassing and violent members, that would need to be worked through. But if the risks and challenges can be overcome, the insight that can be gained should not be understated.

There is also a need to investigate the backlash from WHECMs as a part of a social movement and to study WHECMs as activists. MRA and white nationalist

websites have been investigated, the latter considerably more than the former. But studies that would approach MRA and white nationalist websites from an intersectional standpoint that recognized the assemblage of myriad factors of oppression and included a social movement analysis would offer novel contributions to understandings of both MRA and white nationalist groups. Seeing how white nationalists have endured, this research might also contribute knowledge to effective strategies that are useful to other social movement groups. These same approaches could be employed to investigate groups that arise offline, such as men's rights groups that infiltrate campuses or the group that organized the Straight Pride Parade.

There is also a need for research into forms of intervention. How might allies intervene and victims protect themselves during online trolling and offline beratement? Are there warning signs that point to particularly toxic WHECMs and is it possible to intervene in ways that mitigate future toxicity? Earlier in this chapter, I suggested breaking down emotional borders and disrupting the blasé outlook as changes to practices. Future research should empirically investigate ways that each of these practices can be accomplished. The purpose of “studying up” is not to give voice to the paranoias, backlashes, and supremacies of WHECMs. Rather, the need is to determine ways to eliminate the harm to others and find paths towards socially just identities and practices.

Future research should investigate hegemonic masculinities in the global South and East. As stated in the limitations section of this chapter, the websites I investigated were visited mostly by men from the United States, Canada, and, to a lesser extent, Nordic countries. While all research into men outside of Canada and the United States is worthwhile, it would be interesting to see how whiteness, racism, and anti-Semitism

might still be a part of a hegemonic masculine assemblage. A comparative study that investigated similarities and differences between men and masculinities from different regions might also be fruitful.

Drawing inspiration from the gaps—what was not stated in the fields I investigated—there is a need to understand the forces of oppression that target Indigenous people. Despite how widespread racism was in the spaces I studied, there were only two occasions that I coded any mention of Indigeneity. It appears as though the colonial logic that erases Indigeneity and Indigenous people (Byrd 2011; Rowe and Tuck 2017) has successfully eliminated any acknowledgement of Indigeneity from WHECMs. An ethnography of WHECM spaces that allowed the researcher to explicitly address Indigenous oppression and WHECM reactions to Indigenous movements, such as Idle No More, is much needed. Rather than white scholars theorizing or explaining the impacts of colonialism on Indigenous people—who have done and continue to do this work—we should investigate settlers and how we are entangled with and enact racist, colonial oppression.

Finally, there is a need for more research to be conducted on complicity in the white heteropatriarchy, particularly by “progressives” and allies. My research has illustrated how some men use hybrid masculinity to distance themselves from a WHECM hegemony. These men will use their voice to announce the ways they do not harm or oppress others, while never scrutinizing how they benefit from those who do or the ways in which that they do oppress and subordinate others. Much of this section on future research has suggested research projects that analyze WHECMs that may be the most vile and violent, but the greatest need for research is likely in interrogating the subtle

everyday ways that misogyny, racism, anti-Semitism, and homophobia cause harm and in finding ways to get people to take accountability for the harm they cause.

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