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SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY

MAPPING AND COMPARING POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES,
MASCULINITY IDEOLOGIES, AND SHAME IDEOLOGIES

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF THE COLLEGES OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

BY

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BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS.

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Abstract

This study explored the relationships among political ideologies, masculinity ideologies, and shame ideologies within three online communities. Three different ideological communities, all on Reddit (a discussion-based social news website), were chosen based on previous research suggesting they differ in terms of their conceptualizations of gender and support for or rejection of feminism: *r/TheRedPill*, *r/MensRights*, and *r/MensLib*. This study uses a framework for understanding Ideologies as Complex Adaptive Systems (ICAS) as articulated by Thagard (2017), which uses Cognitive and Affective Maps (CAMs) as its primary tool of analysis. Using the postings on the Reddit sites as our raw data, we created CAMs to assist in comparing the conceptual and affective qualities of each community. We conducted the study in three phases: in Phase One, we used Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) methods and correlational analyses to create a set of general ideological CAMs for each community. We also constructed a set of CAMs depicting whom each group views as ingroups and outgroups in their creation of social identities. In Phase Two, we created a set of CAMs for each community's dominant conception of gender. In Phase Three, we constructed a set of CAMs depicting each community's relationship with the ideas of shame and injustice.

The discussion section is organized into five main chapters. The first chapter contains reflections on the process of using CAMs, the next chapter is on the study's limitations and future directions, and the final three are on the study findings' empirical, theoretical, and clinical implications. The empirical implications of the study contribute to the following areas of research: the role of shame in ideology, the political construction of victimhood, and Ambivalent Sexism. In the theoretical implications chapter, I discuss the study's potential contributions to theory development in the CAMs methodology. The final chapter offers reflections on the

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study's clinical implications, especially related to gender identity development, sexual violence, and the role of ideology in emotion regulation.

Keywords: political ideology, masculinity, gender ideologies, shame, resentment,
Complex Adaptive Systems

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Mapping and Comparing Political Ideologies, Masculinity Ideologies, and Shame Ideologies

Significance and Background

In the current political landscape, heightened divisiveness and hostility exist across dimensions of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and ethnicity (Boatright, 2016), along with starkly unequal material conditions (Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2017). The impact of the heightening of social divisions and increasing material inequalities are already essential issues that impact individuals' mental health and well-being, rendering them vital areas of concern for mental health practitioners. Additionally, as Solomonov and Barber (2019) identify, discussions about political topics have become increasingly prevalent within the context of psychotherapy. Taken together, the need to better understand and grapple with the forces shaping these political conditions, how they are impacting our clients, and thinking about how we navigate a multitude of often contentious topics are crucial tasks for clinical psychologists.

Wodak and Krzyżanowski (2017) argue there is an upswing in support for right-wing populism across the United States and Europe. To support this, they point to the recent success of right-wing populist leaders like Donald Trump, as well as common “discursive shifts” in the broader dynamics of media and public discourse. Along with these shifts in discourses, several statistics reflect the increasing empowerment and growth of extremist ideologies, such as the rise in hate crimes across the US since 2016 (Berman, 2018; Levin, 2016), the increase in the amount of uploaded extremist propaganda on the internet (Rieger, Frischlich, & Bente, 2017), and the documented growth in hate groups (Bobo, 2017).

A potentially central conflict in these heightened political animosities and divisions is the place of white masculinity (Kelly, 2017; Kimmel, 2017; Mellström, 2017). Most notably, white

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masculinity plays a prominent role in the emerging “alternative right” (or “Alt Right”) movement in the United States. Drawing from her work doing digital ethnographies of the Alt Right, Kelly (2017) argues that “the Alt Right is both inspired and defined by a discourse of anxiety about traditional white masculinity, which is seen as being artificially but powerfully ‘degenerated,’ with catastrophic consequences for the nation. (pg. 69)” Citing Kimmel’s (2017) research into white masculinity, Mellström (2017) argues that there is a global “masculinist political revival” as a backlash against what various ideological groups identify as a devaluation of traditional masculine values, as they believe that society has become too feminized, often at the hands of hyper-aggressive feminists. Kelly posits that a central goal of the Alt Right is the reassertion of white masculinity as the dominant identity in the US social order, or what Mellström identifies as the “restoration of classic patriarchy.”

Links exist between the rise in radical right-wing populism and changes in material structures, especially with the rise of globalization and economic deregulation; however, as Salmela and von Scheve (2017) argue, socioeconomic factors cannot account for all the increase in support for right-wing populism. They argue that shame and resentment represent driving forces for ideologies with roots in domination and exclusion. Previous research on shame sheds insight into the deleterious effects it has on individual mental health; however, there is a critical need to understand better the collective psychosocial processes involved in how shame shapes individuals and vice versa. Research reveals connections with shame, alienation, and violence often present within authoritarian belief systems and social domination orientations (Scheff, 2011a). Shame very well may be a driving factor in fueling large-scale political conflicts and violence (Scheff, 2011b). However, despite the abundant evidence that unresolved shame

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contributes to violence, evidence also suggests that a lack of shame is also indicative of significant moral and social dangers (Farmer & Andrews, 2009; Mason, 2010).

Understanding these political divisions and social hierarchies requires investigation into numerous complex social phenomena, and their complexity makes them especially difficult to understand. Much of the research conducted on the roots of ideology is fragmented and riddled with theoretical and conceptual conflicts (Homer-Dixon et al., 2013). The emerging field of complexity science offers a powerful lens for examining how these psychosocial phenomena interact to influence the spread of ideologies. Based on the work of Paul Thagard (2017), a new framework examining Ideologies as Complex Adaptive Systems integrates key constructs from cognitive science into a theory that allows for analyses on psychosocial (individual and interpersonal interactions and the thoughts and feelings that arise from there) and sociopolitical levels (societal or collective responses) (Homer-Dixon et al., 2013; Mock & Homer-Dixon, 2015). Still, this framework is relatively new, with little supporting empirical research.

Considering the magnitude of the stakes and the complexity of these large-scale social conflicts, understanding the contours of these psychosocial processes across multiple levels of social organization is vital. I contend that it is crucial for research from a clinical psychological perspective (especially regarding the function and effects of shame) to be engaged in conversation with other social sciences to seek an interdisciplinary understanding of how these large-scale psychosocial processes unfold.

Overview of the Study

This study explores the relationships between shame, masculinity, and political ideologies within the context of three online communities centered around the discussion of men's issues: r/TheRedPill (r/TRP), r/MensRights (r/MR), and r/MensLib (r/ML). It can best be understood as

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an investigation into the cognitive and affective topography of their discourses (specifically looking at data from the years 2016-2019), which can hopefully serve as a foundation for further investigation into the underlying mechanisms of these psychosocial processes.

A secondary goal of this study was to explore the utility of using novel approaches of a Complex Adaptive Systems framework and methodology, Cognitive Affective Maps (CAMs), for understanding ideological communities and collective identities (Thagard, 2017). CAMs are used to create models of networks of constructs and their related affective qualities; they are made up of key constructs to an ideology, and those constructs are mapped according to how they relate to each other and how ideological adherents feel toward them (i.e., positive, negatively, or ambivalently). (A fuller description of the theoretical support for CAMs will be provided in the *Political Ideology and the Human Mind* subsection of the literature review, and a key will be provided in the Method section.)

To examine these constructs and their relationships, we used Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) methods (Hill et al., 2005) to construct CAMs of each group's political ideologies, gender ideologies, and shame ideologies. At each stage of CAMs construction, I compared the findings across the groups to explore how their discourses differed across a few dimensions that emerged from the data. I chose to study these particular communities based the Reddit platform's ability to organize content, my personal experience with these groups, and previous research investigating their embrace or rejection of traditional masculinity ideologies (which I identified as a significant factor in their potential relationships with shame).

Overview of the Literature Review

The following literature review provides a more in-depth look at some of these phenomena, emphasizing power dynamics and social identity. The subsequent background

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sections are organized into three main parts: 1) political and sociological literature related to collective identity and oppression, 2) political ideology and the human mind, and 3) a relevant review of the current literature on shame and a few related constructs. Because our identities, political ideologies, and experiences of shame are interactively shaped by and contribute to larger social processes, I start with a zoomed-out picture of the numerous social forces in conflict, with a particular focus on sociopolitical power dynamics within the US. With the second section reviewing ideology, I highlight the models and theories I found most useful for understanding the complex, interactive psychosocial processes through which identities and ideologies are forged. Lastly, in the review of shame, I cover some of the relevant theories on emotions and shame that highlight a potential link between shame and political ideology.

The Social Dynamics of Oppression and Resistance

Struggles over social and political power reoccur throughout our history; new ways of reasserting social hierarchies often emerge in response to challenges to the status quo. Alexander (2012) provides a powerful example of how these dynamics played out in the United States in her examination of race relations following the abolition of slavery after the Civil War. In the aftermath of the Civil War, black Americans made economic and political gains, but the US government established new policies and institutions of oppression and subjugation to reassert hierarchical racial relationships in the form of Jim Crow policies. Subsequently, after abolishing Jim Crow-era laws, systems of mass incarceration effectively took over to continue oppressive and exploitative racial relations, in what Alexander coined “The New Jim Crow.” Over the past few decades, while racial animosity and structural inequalities have intensified, racial discrimination strategies transformed. Sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2017) articulated the phenomenon of “racism without racists,” where racist systems perpetuate under the guise of

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existing in a “post-racial era,” where the civil rights movement had “achieved its goals.”

Common examples of coded racist language include using the term “thug” to describe young black men, using the “welfare queen” stereotype, or referring to neighborhoods with high populations of people of color as the “bad parts of town.” In this way, social norms and taboos against racism obscure white supremacist attitudes and beliefs, as these new forms of racist language are more subtle and make room for plausible deniability.

Paralleling the backlash against economic and social gains made by people of color is the backlash against women and feminism (Anderson, 2014). Participants in this backlash claim that the feminist movement is no longer necessary as women have already achieved equality. Anti-feminist groups such as Men’s Rights Activists (MRAs) take those claims further, arguing that feminism is dangerous, posing an existential threat to men and boys (Lilly, 2016). In this way, Anti-feminist movements position themselves as victims of feminism to regain rhetorical and social power.

These updated strategies for reproducing racist and sexist sentiments make addressing them more nuanced and complicated. While it is still generally taboo to be overtly racist or sexist (though one could argue that those taboos are eroding), much of the discourse in the US instead involves these coded and obscured racist and sexist beliefs and attitudes. For example, a high-profile incident of coded sexism occurred during the 2016 US election debates; when in response to the Fox News hosts, Megyn Kelly, asking Donald Trump about his history of calling women “fat pigs,” “dogs,” “slobs” and “disgusting animals,” Trump suggested that she was hostile toward him because she was menstruating (Smith, 2016). His sexist rhetoric insinuating that she was irrational served to dismiss and minimize the underlying criticism of his behavior.

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While the obscuring and coding of racism and sexism have parallels, they are inherently intertwined. Kimmel (2017) highlights the relationship between sexism and racism in a sociological investigation of how masculinities and globalization are “embedded in the emergence of extremist groups on the far right” (pg. 603). Using his extensive sociological research, Kimmel asserts that neoliberal policies leading to global economic systems of disenfranchisement fueled this form of “global hegemonic masculinity,” frequently intensifying and further polarizing gendered power relations. Another way that gender and racial oppression intersect is how the conceit of opposing oppressive gendered power relations can be co-opted and used to contribute to racial oppression. A prominent example of this is the symbolic use of Afghan women’s oppression to justify the US imperialist war (Berry, 2003). The framing of the Afghanistan war as a liberation project obscured the profound damage to Afghani women’s lives wrought by the military occupation.

The above is just one of many examples of the interrelationships between racism and sexism and how projects of imperialism and domination can co-opt language that historically emerged to challenge social hierarchies. As will be explored in more detail, economic systems, especially those of colonialism and neoliberalism, are critical to understanding how gender and racial relations are shaped. One of the most useful ways of engaging in this type of analysis is through the idea of *hegemonic projects*.

Hegemonic Projects and White Masculinity.

Nayak and Suchland (2006) define hegemonic projects as “systematic power relationships that privilege certain ways of knowing, being and acting and that give voice to only particular people’s experiences and agendas in the realms of families, communities and political entities” (pg. 469). Our current political landscape can be viewed as a battlefield between various

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hegemonic projects. Among these various hegemonic projects, white masculinities are particularly salient. Ideals and practices of masculinity vary widely across levels of social organization and have shifted considerably over time. In any given context, there might be multiple competing conceptions of masculinity, known as masculinity ideologies, or the attitudes toward and assessments of men and masculine roles (Connell, 2016). The process by which these attitudes, values, and behaviors shape our views of gender roles is referred to as gender socialization.

As there is an indefinite number of ways this gender socialization process occurs, numerous theories and models attempt to describe these processes. What follows is a brief look at broad overviews of current sociological and social psychological perspectives. First, in a review of different socialization theories, Carter (2014) gives an overview of the sociological perspective on the gender socialization process throughout the trajectory of a child's life:

The socialization process begins at birth; families usually treat newborns differently according to their sex [12,16–19]. Indeed, families begin to socialize gender roles even in delivery rooms—boys are dressed in blue while girls are dressed in pink (or other colors that are symbolically attached to gender). From the moment that a baby enters the world it is inundated with symbols and language that shapes its conception of gender roles and gender stereotypes [20]. Language used by families to describe boys is often centered on physical characteristics and such themes as strength and agility, while language appropriated to girls by families might address affection, expressivity, daintiness, or fragility. These different approaches and treatment of babies by the family serve to shape behavior patterns and define boundaries. These boundaries are eventually internalized and become identity standards—the references in which interactions, settings, and contexts are used to compare the self to others [8,21–24]. (pg. 244)

Carter argues that the ubiquity of the messages that we receive from our families, wider social circles, and society more generally, is part of what makes gender identity one of our deepest and more pervasive social identities.

Second, in addition to the systems of messages that we receive about ourselves and how members of our gender are conceptualized, we are given cues and opportunities that differently

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shape our behaviors. In an overview of the research on gender socialization, Kretchmar (2011) describes how gender influences behaviors and the activities in which children are encouraged to participate:

Research demonstrates that when given a choice, parents tend to offer different toys to boys and girls (Stockard, 1999, Wharton, 2005). They are more likely to choose a football for a boy, for example, and a doll for a girl. In addition, the choice of toy influences the types of activities parents engage in with their children; parents' play with boys – and especially the play of fathers – tends to be more physical, rough-house play (Wharton, 2005). Research also shows that parents have different attitudes toward cross-gender play for boys and girls. As Freeman (2007) notes, “researchers who describe adults’...responses to cross-gender play consistently report that boys who engage in ‘girls’ games’ are more likely to be criticized by parents [and] teachers...than are girls who enjoy activities and materials labeled as ‘for boys’” (p. 58). Additionally, it appears that fathers react most negatively to cross-gender play, especially when engaged in by their sons. Such evidence supports the notion that gender roles for girls and women are expanding, while those for boys and men are narrowing (Freeman, 2007). (pg. 4)

With these two overviews of research on gender socialization, we can see how these processes range from passive and pervasive observational learning to overt direction and correction.

Research on masculinity ideologies has found significant variation in norms and beliefs across life stages, cultures, racial and ethnic groups, socioeconomic classes, sexual orientation, and historical eras (Levant, 2011). Ethnographic studies of masculinity across cultures suggest there are common patterns within masculinity ideologies, but importantly, these patterns are not universal (Gilmore, 1990). These patterns vary across many cultural settings. Most, but not all, are derived from the set of roles that men play in procreation (father), provision (worker), and protection (soldier) (Levant, 2011).

Within this tapestry of gender ideologies, there are complex power relationships, resulting in various hierarchies among individuals, groups, and even among masculinity and femininity narratives. Hegemonic masculinity, then, rather than suggesting a singular, unified, and unchanging version of masculinity, is the dominant masculinity narrative in a particular

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historical context (Raewyn Connell, 2016). In fact, behaviors consistent with hegemonic masculinity are not necessarily the statistical norm for men; they diverge in multiple ways from these standards. Even so, the abstract ideals in hegemonic masculinity often provide the background by which behaviors are judged. Depending on the context, the hegemonic masculine ideals might be more or less salient, and the pressure to conform may be more or less weighty. Hegemonic masculinity is not a comprehensive or monolithic concept of masculinity, nor is it a prime cause or exclusive shaping force in men's lives. It is, instead, a means of grasping a certain dynamic within social processes that are deeply embedded in the history of institutions and economic structures.

In a recent review of hegemonic masculinity's utility as a concept, Connell (2016) notes that much of the research on gender using this construct has been conducted through the lens of the global North, carrying with it common assumptions of gender as a self-reproducing social system of dominance and hierarchy. However, a review of research from the global South challenges assumptions of "traditional" masculinities as inherently dominating. Connell argues that understanding the ways that gender has been shaped and lived requires understanding the changing structures of imperialism and neoliberal global power. She writes:

To discard global-North assumptions about social reproduction does not imply that gender concepts such as hegemonic masculinity must be abandoned. Rather, it requires that gender concepts should always be understood historically, as concepts that concern the making and transformation of gender orders through time. Hegemony is a historical possibility, a state of gender relations being struggled for, and struggled against, by different social forces. Since the accomplishment of hegemony is never guaranteed, the most useful way to conceptualize hegemonic masculinity is to treat it as a collective project for realizing gender hierarchy. (pg. 4)

Connell goes on to review important areas of research into the relationship between imperialism and gender, highlighting ways in which the violent systems of imperial domination have disrupted and reshaped gender relations all over the world:

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The dis-ordering of gender relations occurred in multiple ways, including rape, which was endemic in conquest and disrupted indigenous kinship and communal relations with the land; forced migrations, up to the huge scale of the Atlantic slave trade; the loss of women's land rights, a feature of colonialism in the Pacific (Stauffer 2004); and the suppression of gender groupings such as the two-souled people of indigenous North America (Williams 1986). Imperial expansion also disrupted gender relations among the colonizers. The early history of the British settlements in Australia is full of debate about sexual anarchy and gender imbalance (Reid, 2007). In the 1840s and 1850s there was a celebrated attempt to import a supply of women from England—a distance of twenty-thousand kilometres—to become respectable servants and wives (Kiddle 1992). (pg. 5)

Connell argues that to better understand how the forces of colonialism, and later neoliberalism, disrupted and continue to influence gender orders all over the world, we must understand the “metropole-apparatus.” This is the locus of colonial and neoliberal power made up of “the complex of institutions and cultural patterns and practices that enabled metropolitan societies to sustain empire” (2016, pg. 9). She writes:

The growth of European empire in past centuries depended on certain social conditions in the metropole: strong states organized for sustained warfare; ideologies of supremacy, first religious and then racial; population growth able to sustain a flow of bodies to the colonies; and a mercantile capitalism searching for unlimited profits ... The historical continuity of the metropole-apparatus underlies the coloniality of power and its persistence in the postcolonial world. (pg. 9)

Connell concludes her review on the utility of the concept of hegemonic masculinity by suggesting its greatest utility is in “analyzing masculinities in terms of collective hegemonic projects, local, societal, and global” (2016, pg. 12) in ways that can best serve to illuminate problems of strategy. She concludes that hegemony “is constantly under construction, renovation, and contestation” (pg. 12). It is through this lens of hegemonic projects that form the assumptive bases of how I approached the analysis of data related to political ideologies in this study, especially those of the “Manosphere” and their relationship with the “Alternative Right” or the “Alt Right.”

White masculinity, the Manosphere, and the Alt Right

The “Manosphere” is a loosely organized network of men’s interest groups united by the belief that feminism is a culturally destructive force, and particularly for men and boys (Ging, 2017). Ging provides a brief overview of the historical trajectory of men’s interests groups over the past few decades:

The contemporary men’s movement has long been a conglomeration of different groups with divergent ideological positions. Inspired by second-wave feminism in the 1970s, the “men’s liberation” movement was committed to critiquing conventional understandings of masculinity (Carrigan, Connell, and Lee 1985) but soon split into pro- and antifeminist factions (Messner 2016), due largely to disagreements over the claim that male privilege adversely affects women (Messner 2016). According to Messner (1997, 1998), the antifeminist factions continued to deploy a narrowly conservative language of sex roles, while the profeminist movement adopted instead a radical discourse of gender relations aimed at ending men’s institutional privileges and violence against women. (pg. 2)

Ging emphasizes that these groups in the Manosphere, while tending to defend more traditional gender role expectations and ideology, also incorporate tropes of victimhood into their ideologies. She argues that this rhetorical shift functions to position these groups in ways that maintain social and political dominance.

Overlapping with the Manosphere in their general disdain toward feminism, the Alt Right is similarly a loosely organized collection of right-wing groups, united in their hostility toward multicultural values more generally. The Alt Right gained notoriety during Trump’s campaign but had been operating long before (Lyons, 2017). Lyons describes the Alt Right below:

The Alt Right, short for “alternative right,” is a loosely organized far-right movement that shares a contempt for both liberal multiculturalism and mainstream conservatism; a belief that some people are inherently superior to others; a strong internet presence and embrace of specific elements of online culture; and a self-presentation as being new, hip, and irreverent. Based primarily in the United States, Alt Right ideology combines White nationalism, misogyny, antisemitism, and authoritarianism in various forms and in political styles ranging from intellectual argument to violent invective. (pg. 2)

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Just as there are differing degrees and targets of bigotry among Alt Right groups, there also seem to be differing attitudes and strains of sexism among the Alt Right. Lyons points out that while antifeminism is a prominent attitude within the Alt Right, there are varying degrees of support for the inclusion of women in their movements and different conceptualizations of the role that women can and should play in their hegemonic projects.

Highlighting another area of the relationship between sexism and racism, Reporter Aja Romano (2017) argues that the misogyny of Alt Right online communities served as a gateway for white supremacist ideology. Romano elucidates the indoctrination process that “starts out looking like a healthy way for men to socialize.” She goes on to describe these online spaces:

These spaces foster the kind of male friendship whose importance doesn’t get a lot of attention in the real world. But the benefits of their existence are often accompanied (and sometimes negated) by their tendency to instill in their members a newfound articulation of fundamental anxiety over their position as men in a society where women are actively seeking empowerment. (2017)

The anxieties over the challenged place of white men that Romano speaks of are echoed by masculinity researcher Ulf Mellström (2016), who argues that we are experiencing a “masculinist political revival.” He explains that for these masculinist groups, a fundamental problem is “that the world has become feminised to a degree that ‘true masculinity’ is no longer valued and honoured” (pg. 136).

Through her analysis of public discourse, sociologist C.J. Pascoe (2017) also makes a compelling argument that “[d]ifferent modes of manhood, masculinity, and misogyny have been at the heart of [Trump’s] rise to power” and that “the election of President Trump is, in many ways, the story of American white, heterosexual masculinity, of a particularly noxious combination of racism, sexism and nationalism” (pg. 124). Supporting these claims, among numerous other examples, Pascoe invokes the notorious tape leaked before the election in which

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President Trump brags about how being rich and famous entitles him to do whatever he wants to women, including sexually assaulting women, claiming he would “grab them by the pussy.”

When this tape was released to the public, it prompted a strong public outcry, yet this was not enough to cost him the election. Responses to the leaked tape of President Trump bragging about sexually assaulting women ranged from outrage, condemnation, distancing, and disbelief to dismissal, minimization, and even active embrace (Regehr & Ringrose, 2018). The different reactions to Trump’s words revealed deeply rooted ideological beliefs about gender roles and the varying degrees of acceptance and tolerance of sexual violence.

Indeed, responses to sexual violence vary by time and individual, reflecting broader social dynamics and gender relations. Dominant masculinity ideologies in the US have changed in response to re-orderings of economic and social structures over the past few decades (Carlson, 2015). This has significant implications, particularly for white men, some of whom experience this re-ordering as “a loss of American values, a loss of masculine dignity, and a loss of confidence in the state” (p. 11). An increasingly unstable and unequal socioeconomic order fuels anxieties and insecurities, setting the stage for power struggles over increasingly inaccessible material, psychological, and social resources. While previously more secure in the belief that hard work guarantees success, it seems that white masculinity is facing an existential crisis. This dynamic, involving the cultural challenge to an oppressive status quo followed by backlash and updated strategies for re-establishing previous power relations, is prevalent across multiple intersections of identity.

This study focuses specifically on the relationship between reactionary political ideologies and the psychology and sociology of white masculinity. As economic relationships and political institutions continue to be primarily dominated and shaped by men (Connell, 2016),

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it is critical to better understand the social mechanisms driving various hegemonic projects relating to masculinity. To combat these hegemonic projects and their harm to marginalized groups, it is necessary to explore the social mechanisms through which they are enacted. The profound complexity of our social arrangements requires a lens that can facilitate examining multiple levels of social organization, from individual to macro levels. I will use a Complex Adaptive Systems framework to examine the role that ideas, emotions, and identities play in expressing and developing political and masculinity ideologies. As social relations and power dynamics continue to evolve and change, understanding the psychosocial mechanisms that shape these ideological landscapes is crucial for identifying important areas for further study or potential leverage points for intervention.

Political Ideology and the Human Mind

The Challenges of Studying Political Ideology

Historically, the study of ideology has a long, intricate, and fragmented history. Surveying the wide range of meanings and uses of the concept of “ideology,” Eagleton (2007) notes that the various conceptual strands have their unique uses and limitations and are sometimes in conflict with each other. Because the various meanings of “ideology” have often been used in dramatically different ways, the findings and theorizing on ideology are fragmented and incoherent. These difficulties have plagued the study of ideology, impeding knowledge accumulation, and at times have undermined its status as an important research focus (Homer-Dixon et al., 2013).

Reviewing some of the historical rifts in the study of ideology, Mock and Homer-Dixon (2015) identify a main conceptual rift in the role of ideas in conflict. They argue that the realist-materialists “tend to frame conflict in purely material terms, with conflict management policy

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focused on manipulation of material incentives” (pg. 6). They argue that realism “largely neglects the importance of ideas, beliefs, values and norms because actors’ interests are assumed to be exogenous and fixed over time” (pg. 6). This focus on external forces that shape ideology is critical, such as economic and political structures. However, if these are prioritized to the exclusion of the interaction between the large-scale factors and individuals, they can be overly deterministic. On the other hand, Mock and Homer-Dixon contrast the realist-materialists with social constructivists, who swing in the other direction on the importance of ideas. They identify the risk from the social constructivist framework, noting that “an excessive and exclusive focus on ideas can lead to overemphasizing their causal significance over the material realities to which they refer and with which they must interact” (pg. 7). They sensibly conclude that, yes, ideas do matter; however, they highlight that “specific theories as to how they matter –how exactly inter-subjective constructs form, change and impact collective behaviour are notoriously difficult to verify or falsify” (pg. 7).

Homer-Dixon et al. (2013) identify two other conceptual rifts in the study of ideology: first, whether ideologies are spatial vs. non-spatial constructs; second, they distinguish between individual-level attributes vs. societal-level and institutional factors. In spatial accounts, scholars have debated the appropriate numbers of dimensions across which ideologies should be measured, with the simplest accounts being just one (like the binary we see in popular notions of right vs. left). Reifying this simplistic concept, many political attitudes in the US can generally be mapped along the lines of the US two-party system of Republican vs. Democrats. Numerous models that include additional dimensions have competed to supplant the simplistic unidimensional spatial conception of ideology, with subtly different domains such as “risk

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worldviews vs. moral foundations vs. personality dispositions vs. national value systems” (pg. 339).

Contrasted with spatial approaches to understanding ideology, Homer-Dixon et al. (2013) describe non-spatial approaches as advancing the position that “ideological positions are better understood as systems of beliefs that are not inherently opposite, but meaningful in light of the distinctive combinations of symbols or ideas they integrate” (pg. 339-340). Non-spatial approaches assume that the varying conceptual configurations, historical significations, and idiosyncratic rhetorical devices of various ideologies render them too complex to reduce them to spectrums of attitudinal positions. These approaches argue that attempting to chart ideologies spatially flatten the meaningful differences and risk reifying the simplistic two-party system dominant in the US.

Examining the individual factors vs societal factors divide, Homer-Dixon et al. (2013) argue the divisions can be crudely mapped across disciplines. They identify that for political psychologists, “ideological thinking is driven by a spectrum of psychological needs basic to individuals” whereas for sociologists and many political scientists, the dynamics of ideology are “driven by discursive interactions and power relations within societies” (pg. 340). Individual accounts of ideology have spanned genetic, physiological, and psychological levels. Conversely, social approaches tend to examine the interactive social dynamics by which ideologies are created, altered, and propagated. Social approaches put a strong emphasis on the role of discourse, and especially the exertion of or resistance to power. Access to material control over communication technologies or institutional control over political parties, news networks, or educational establishments is integrated into the background of social analyses.

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Homer-Dixon et al. (2013) succinctly summarize the problem of these historical divisions in ideological research:

No explanatory level is independent and the true determinants of ideology bridge all of these levels of analysis through complex cross-scale interactions. Uncovering such cross-scale linkages for genetic, physiological, and psychological determinants of ideology is increasingly a focus of political psychology. However, social, political, and institutional factors remain more marginal to these research efforts and need to be brought into cross-scale accounts of ideological positioning. (pg. 341)

The authors also recognize the problem that while ideology emerges as a collective belief system, ideologies are still harbored in individual mind-systems. The authors convincingly argue that ideology serves as a bridge between individual minds and collective behavior, and so any explanation of ideology must be able to integrate the individual and group level dynamics of how these beliefs emerge and are maintained.

Mock and Homer-Dixon (2015) contend that to achieve this, specific attention to the human mind must be considered. They highlight the special challenges involved in accommodating what is known about the human mind:

What makes social phenomena different from physical and non-human biological systems is the involvement of a peculiar sort of complex system: the human mind, with its unique capacity for abstract representational thought and consequent properties of consciousness, identity and agency. (pg. 13-14)

They further argue that any useful model of ideology must incorporate knowledge of how the human mind works, directly incorporating research from cognitive science.

By better understanding the underlying psychosocial mechanisms through which ideologies are developed and upheld, especially those related to gender and race, we can gain insight into how we might be able to better facilitate communication across ideological divides and foster more harmonious social arrangements. In my view, the Ideologies as Complex Adaptive Systems (ICAS) framework (to be described in more depth in a subsequent subsection)

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is particularly suited for this task; it facilitates analyses of information on various levels of social organization using principles grounded in cognitive science.

The Role of Emotions in Ideology

Similar to the role of ideas described above, the role of emotion within the study of ideology and politics has at times been marginalized, especially in previously described realist-materialists' analyses or more economics-based accounts that consider humans to be "rational actors" (Foley, 2004). However, Fine and Sandstrom (1993) argue that ideology is recursively linked with emotion – with emotion causing ideology and being caused by it. They explain:

People understand ideology through emotional experiences that help them make sense of the world. Through ideology emotional reactions are generalized beyond their situated contexts. This statement does not deny the analytical component of ideology, but only emphasizes that emotions are central. (pg. 29)

Outlining a practical account of ideology that links symbolic language and metaphor, emotions, and social function, Fine and Sandstrom emphasize that ideologies are shaped by and shape lived experiences and social interactions. They argue that these psychosocial aspects of ideology are critical in combination with the large-scale economic and state social structures typically focused on in traditional explorations of ideology.

Some of the most powerful explorations of the role that emotions play in ideology come from extreme displays of behavior. For example, highlighting the capacity of ideology to motivate humans to engage in extreme acts such as committing genocide or sacrificing themselves for the sake of their abstract belief systems, Jost and Amodio (2012) advance the position that ideology meets underlying epistemic, existential, and relational needs. They specifically highlight the role of feelings of certainty, security, and solidarity. In another example of extreme displays, an ethnographic study of the far-right movement in Germany (Virchow, 2007) examined the role of demonstrations and marches as political-emotional events. Virchow

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identified that these were critical for bringing together otherwise loosely organized small groups in public to disseminate their political messages, to form and further solidify relational bonds, and to further entrench ideology. Virchow argues that understanding why people join and stay in political movements cannot be explained by cognitive processes alone, but that “emotional and practical dimensions also are relevant to political recruitment and socialization” (pg. 160).

Along with economic, political, and social forces, it seems clear that emotions play a critical role in developing our identities and political ideologies. Nuanced examination of the role that emotions play in constructing identities and ideologies grounded in cognitive science principles may provide insight into how we can foster healthier racial and gender relations.

Language and Emotion

The way various specific emotions manifest, develop, and function in different communities is one of many important investigation topics that will help us understand how social change occurs. Of particular relevance to this study is Sara Ahmed’s (2004) research on what she calls Affective Economies. In her powerful exploration of how the emotions of fear and hatred operate in the United States after 9/11, Ahmed describes how emotions flow and shape our political landscape:

How do emotions move between bodies? In this essay, I argue that emotions play a crucial role in the “surfacing” of individual and collective bodies through the way in which emotions circulate between bodies and signs. Such an argument clearly challenges any assumption that emotions are a private matter, that they simply belong to individuals, or even that they come from within and then move outward toward others. It suggests that emotions are not simply “within” or “without” but that they create the very effect of the surfaces or boundaries of bodies and worlds. (pg. 117)

Ahmed’s investigation of the social processes that animate white supremacy and bigotry highlight the role of language to evoke emotion, which then has profound influences on individuals. She argues, “rather than seeing emotions as psychological dispositions, we need to

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consider how they work, in concrete and particular ways, to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective” (pg. 119).

Ahmed’s call to understand the relationship between how individual and collective affective processes operate are reflected in the model of ideologies as complex adaptive systems:

At the individual level, the elements are ideas, beliefs, and values, whose interactions give rise to a person’s understanding of society, which in turn guides individual political behavior. At the group level, the elements are individual minds whose interactions give rise to discourses and power dynamics, which in turn guide collective action and societal change. We thus conceive of an ideological system as a network of minds, where minds are networks of concepts. (Homer-Dixon et al., 2013, pg. 343)

The novelty of this model is in its ability to navigate the *emergent* nature of emotions as a social process.

Ideologies as Complex Adaptive Systems

With the complexity of the human mind, human societies, and their interactions, to adequately study these phenomena on and across the various levels of organizations thus requires a framework that can facilitate navigation. The study of Ideologies as Complex Adaptive Systems (ICAS) framework (Thagard, 2017; Homer-Dixon et al., 2013; Mock & Homer-Dixon, 2015) is an attempt to address this problem. The attempt to understand ideology through a complex systems lens aims to integrate interdisciplinary approaches to examine the mechanics of how ideologies come into being and how they shape social and political behavior. Mock and Homer-Dixon (2015) argue that complexity theory “describes a body of concepts suited to explaining how interaction between densely connected systems, often operating at different levels of analysis, can generate emergent properties and behaviours” (pg. 12).

Mock and Homer-Dixon (2015) highlights four specific concepts from cognitive science to address these challenges: *mental representation*, *coherence*, *motivated inference*, and *neuroplasticity* (pg. 14). Grounding ideas and emotions in the physical world, as a product of

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brain processes, *mental representation* is the unique ability of humans “to create and manipulate images in our minds that stand for objects in the external world, whether we are immediately perceiving these objects or not” (pg. 14). *Coherence* is the principle that “each mental representation leads to the activation others that are logically and/or emotionally related according to a stable overall pattern” (pg. 15). *Motivated inference* is the process by which reasoning in favor of maintaining cognitive and emotional coherence is distorted. Because this profound need for maintaining cognitive and emotional coherence is so integral to the stability of belief systems, mental representations can be conflated with external facts. Finally, *neuroplasticity* describes the process by which “inputs from the social environment that alter coherent patterns of thought must be understood as physical changes to the architecture of the brain” (pg. 15).

The concept of *emotional coherence* has special significance to this study as I argue that some of the findings (explored in more depth in the discussion section) can be understood best through its application. Thagard (2017) articulates three main principles of emotional coherence:

1. Representations have positive or negative emotional values.
2. Representations can have positive or negative emotional connections to other representations.
3. The emotional value of a representation is determined by the values and acceptability of all the representations to which it is connected. (pg. 213)

While there are clear patterns of affect and shared belief systems, it is difficult to account for how those are generated, maintained, and changed on a large scale, considering that these processes are all occurring within individual minds. Language and signifiers serve as the vehicles by which these processes are facilitated within individuals, but they are felt and lived by individuals. Succinctly describing this problem, Thagard’s (2010) explanation of *collective*

mental representation is a key area for understanding the interaction between individuals and collectives:

Given that groups do not have brains, and collective mental representations are therefore not properly construed as real entities, we argue, following Thagard, that the individual-group problem can also be conceptualized in terms of multilevel interacting mechanisms: the interaction between individual-level mechanisms (molecular, neural, and psychological processes) and group-level mechanisms (communication, sensory interaction) creates the bonds that hold a group together. The key to collective cognition is the individual who thinks about himself as a member of the group (Thagard, 2010a, p. 274). Concepts that represent the self, the group, and core values relevant to the group become thus part of the conceptual network constituting an individual's belief system. (Homer-Dixon et al., 2013, pg. 344)

As this passage describes, identifying patterns in mental representations about the individual, group, and core values across various political ideologies is then critical for understanding the social mechanisms that facilitate social change.

To further make sense of ideology, Mock and Homer-Dixon invoke four concepts useful for understanding ideologies as complex representational adaptive systems: *networks*, *state space*, *attractors*, and *threshold change* (2015, pg. 17). They highlight the concept of *networks* to describe ideologies as “the emergent products of multi-level interactions between the neural and conceptual networks that make up individual minds, and the networks of social communication that constitute political communities” (pg. 17). For *state space*, they argue that ideologies must take positions on some basic questions relevant to the political or economic order (this will be explored in more depth in the following section). They argue that *attractors* are relevant as not all ideological positions are equally probable or coherent and that ideologies tend to cluster in certain configurations across the ideological state space. Finally, *threshold change* describes changes in ideology and movement through state space; for whatever the cause of this change in ideology, it is rarely a gradual or incremental shift, and often appears as rapid or dramatic shifts as individuals transition from one attractor within the state space to another.

Cognitive Affective Maps (CAMs).

This study examines political belief systems as complex systems using CAMs, as created by Thagard (2017). Mock & Homer-Dixon (2015) define ideology as, “a system of ideas, beliefs and values used to understand, justify or challenge a particular political and/or economic order” (pg. 6). They posit that ideology is the shared beliefs and emotions that “give groups a sense of identity, specify targets of hostility, legitimize aggression, and enable coordinated action” (pg. 6). Cognitive Affective Maps (CAM)s are the main tool provided through the ICAS framework for identifying and tracking ideologies.

Based on his previous work on the theory of emotional coherence (Thagard & Nerb, 2002), Thagard created the complex-systems framework for understanding the development of ideology across individual cognitive and emotional systems and group-level systems. He conceptualizes different ideological positions as systems of beliefs with varying conceptual configurations, distinct sets of historically textured myths and signifiers, and idiosyncratic ways of deploying rhetorical devices.

CAMs are a method of visually depicting networks of concepts and affect in ways that reflect the functioning of neural networks. The concepts, belief structures, and goals mapped in CAMs all carry emotional valences that are as important to rational decision making as logic or computational reasoning (Mock & Homer-Dixon, 2015). Equally important as being inherent to the development of beliefs, emotions are also involved in the rejection or revision of beliefs, values, or goals. Tracking the emotional valence (positive, negative, neutral, or ambivalent) toward concepts and their relationships with each other is the central task of CAMs. As Mock and Homer-Dixon articulate, CAMs offer the ability to track “the precise why's and how's involved in the strengthening of identity, stoking of injustice, or empowering of agency – and

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how these changes trigger others until coherence is restored to the system and it settles in a new equilibrium” (2015, pg. 51-52).

Ideological State Space (ISS).

Movement in ideological shifts in individuals and groups occur within ideological state spaces, and tracking those shifts is a fundamental objective for conducting CAMs. In determining the various political-ideological communities that I examined, I used the concept of the Ideological State Space (ISS) as articulated by Mock and Homer-Dixon (2015):

The [Ideological Conflict Project] has developed a set of methods for locating belief systems in relation to one another using the concept of state space: a hypothetical space defined by the fundamental dimensions according to which such systems might differ, so called because this space thus contains all varieties of states in which a system might possibly exist. (pg. 30)

In the ISS framework provided by Mock and Homer-Dixon, they offer 13 ideological dimensions across which various ideologies may fall but acknowledge an indefinite number of dimensions. The dimensions they outline provide two umbrella categories: Is and Ought. The “Is” category describes how different ideologies conceptualize the current sociopolitical landscape; the “Ought” category describes ideals or issues relating to broader questions of justice.

This study examined how the three online communities' dominant ideological structures aligned along the dimensions of social identity and power/inequality. Mock & Homer Dixon cite a previous study (2015) using an ISS analysis described identity and justice dimensions as follows:

Identity measures the degree to which an individual perceives himself a member of a group as distinguished from an out-group, and the degree to which that out-group is perceived negatively. It is measured on a scale with “inclusive/tolerant” at one end and “exclusive/antagonistic” on the other. Justice refers to the individual’s assessment of the justness of either the individual’s own situation, the situation of others in the population with whom the individual identifies, and/or the actions of others in the population towards the individual or towards people with whom the individual identifies. The scale varies between “just” and “unjust”. (pg. 37-38)

The decision to focus on social identity and power questions was to investigate the dynamics of domination and belief systems of supremacy.

Concluding their introduction of the ICAS framework, Mock and Homer-Dixon delineate some of the limitations and future directions for this research paradigm:

We have only mentioned in passing the need to integrate the ideological data-interpretation methods from disciplines like intellectual history and discourse analysis into a complex-systems approach to ideology. Establishing a fully fleshed-out account of how to rigorously translate interviews, surveys, texts, or other primary sources of ideological data into CAMs is therefore a task for future work. We have also not provided any comprehensive list of individual and social mechanisms of ideological change. Nor have we developed richer models of social communication and learning, incorporating an awareness of factors like personal relationships, epistemic authorities, or media-technology in enhancing ideological dissemination (Hardwig, 1985; Liebes, Katz, & Ribak, 1991; Rydgren, 2009; Simonds 1989). These all remain tasks for the future. (pg. 355)

Among the most salient tasks identified above, the suggestion to integrate data-interpretation methods is one of the challenges this study addressed through the use of Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) methods in the construction of the CAMs. Investigating individual and social mechanisms of ideology change was another goal of this study by targeting the specific emotion of shame and its related constructs. This brings us to the final background section, exploring previous research on a few salient psychosocial aspects of shame.

Shame as a Sociocultural Mechanism

The Role of Shame in Politics

In their recent theoretical paper, Salmela and von Scheve (2017) argue that an analysis of emotion, and especially shame, is critical for understanding the current increase in right-wing populism gripping Europe. Pointing to holes in purely socioeconomic explanations of this resurgence, they argue that fear and shame are critical to understanding our current political landscape. They highlight the link between fear and shame as “particularly salient in

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contemporary capitalist societies,” noting that “responsibility for success and failure is increasingly individualized, and failure is stigmatized through unemployment, receiving welfare benefits, or labor migration” (pg. 1).

After examining some of the theoretical gaps in the socioeconomic and large-scale material patterns that undergird these populist sentiments (both right and left-leaning), Salmela and von Scheve also review social psychological literature. They declare, “structural and attitudinal accounts both justify the conjecture that subjective and intersubjective perceptions of threat and vulnerability are critical for understanding the success of right-wing populist parties” (pg. 4). The theory they put forth, in combination with Ahmed’s (2004) theory on “affective economies,” once again highlights the interaction between broader social factors and individuals’ cognitive and affective meaning-making processes.

Salmela and von Scheve go on to articulate two distinct psychosocial mechanisms that give rise to increased support for right-wing populism: *ressentiment* and *emotional distancing*. In *ressentiment*, negative emotions (especially fear and insecurity) “transform through repressed shame into anger, resentment and hatred towards perceived ‘enemies’ of the self and associated social groups, such as refugees, immigrants, the long-term unemployed, political and cultural elites, and the ‘mainstream’ media” (pg. 1). They describe emotional distancing as the movement away from social identities that inflict shame and other painful emotions and toward more stable identities that promote self-esteem, especially “aspects of identity perceived to be stable and to some extent exclusive, such as nationality, ethnicity, religion, language and traditional gender roles” (pg. 1). These concepts of *ressentiment* and *emotional distancing* are central for this study, as they served as a foundational theoretical argument guiding this project; they will be explicitly incorporated into the analysis of the results in the discussion section.

The Role of Shame in Aggression

The theory that Salmela and von Scheve put forward that highlights shame as a potential crucial mechanism aligns with findings from research on shame, especially that of Scheff (2000), who identifies shame as “the premier social emotion.” In his review of literature that examines shame, Scheff argues that shame is one of the most salient and ubiquitous emotions that determines our behavior. He also argues that shame is especially difficult to navigate due to the taboo around acknowledging and talking about it directly. In articulating how shame operates, Scheff (2011c) posits that the ubiquity of shame comes from the alienating structure of modern society. He writes the following:

Modern societies are built on a base of individualism, the encouragement to go it alone, no matter the cost to relationships. Persons learn to act as if they were complete in themselves and independent of others. This feature has constructive sides, but it has at least two destructive ones: alienation and the hiding of shame. (pg. 3)

The impact of modernization on shame highlighted in Scheff’s work is mirrored in the claims made by Salmela and von Scheve’s argument that alienation and other negative emotions are heightened by the neoliberal policies that emphasize competition. Scheff (2011c) further posits that two key institutions of modern society that contribute to shame are an emphasis on rationality and the suppression of the social-emotional world in favor of thought and behavior. He argues that these cultural institutions have numerous outcomes, but importantly, they serve to suppress the development of emotional vocabularies and hide alienation.

Building on the work of Gilligan (1996), Scheff (2011b) puts forward a model of violence wherein shame plays a critical role. He articulates four psychosocial processes that give rise to violence:

1. Shame can be dangerous only when it is hidden, as it almost universally is in modern societies. Because it is hidden, it becomes ubiquitous.

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2. Hidden shame and alienation, in conjunction, are the main causes of both withdrawal and violence.
3. Feedback loops of shame, shame/anger, and alienation give rise to the extraordinary power of violence.
4. Feedback loops are also produced by avoiding emotions: avoidance gives rise to backlogs of emotion that get larger and more frightening the larger they grow. (pg. 16)

Scheff's model of alienation and violence aligns with Salmela and von Scheve's model of right-wing populism in how it highlights the role of unaddressed shame – shame, when not explicitly acknowledged as such, gets transformed and directed to external sources.

Scheff's model of shame's role in violence is also important for its focus on recursive feedback loops of emotions. This view of emotions, which Scheff identifies as cybernetic, presents a model of emotions that operate within the psychological system of the individual, as well as the interaction between the individual's mind system with the larger social processes. Concluding the outline of his theory of violence, Scheff identifies that these shame loops (including other recursive loops of emotion, such as shame-rage spirals) have no natural limit and pose crucial existential threats toward our civilization.

Corroborating Scheff's model, these links between shame and aggression have been supported by neuroscience studies. In a theoretical paper reviewing recent research (Elison, Garofalo, & Velotti, 2014), the authors built their model of the link between shame and aggression on studies identifying that social exclusion elicits physical pain, and that physical pain may be sufficient to elicit anger. Thus, they provide empirical support for the link between shame's emotional pain and the threat of social exclusion to physical pain and threat, which lead to the same threat-defense mechanisms as physical pain: fight, flight, or freezing.

In a related article by the same authors (Velotti, Elison, & Garofalo, 2014), they review the relatively separate works of literature on shame and aggression and conclude that “internalized shame and maladaptive shame-regulation are key factors in a number of

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psychopathologies and that the latter may in turn lead to violent outcomes” (pg. 454). They based their conclusions on analyses of studies on partner violence, incarcerated violent offenders, and personality disorders (Narcissistic, Borderline, Antisocial), and highlight the role of shame as a common antecedent to violence.

Noting that most research on the relationship between negative emotionality and aggression tends to focus on the connection between anger and aggression, Velotti et al. (2014) highlight a few important studies that focus directly on the link between shame and violence. They note Websdale’s (2010) study on familial homicide, where he found compelling evidence of strong feelings of shame in almost all of the 211 cases he investigated. Reviewing the developmental psychopathology literature, they identified studies showing shame positively linked to aggression and externalizing among children (Bennett, Sullivan, & Lewis, 2005); a study of college students, early adolescents, at-risk youth in middle adolescence, and adult inmates, which found shame and aggressiveness in all groups, mediated by blame externalization (Stuewig, Tangney, Heigel, Harty, & McCloskey, 2010); and a study demonstrating that shame was specifically related to aggression as opposed to general antisocial behaviors (Robinson, Roberts, Strayer, & Koopman, 2007).

Concluding their argument establishing the link between shame and aggression (Elison et al., 2014), the authors advocate for more research “on the chain of events linking shame to aggression, as well as on shame-regulation strategies, adaptive and maladaptive” (pg. 454). The empirical support for the link between shame and aggression on interpersonal levels provides theoretical support for its role in extreme right-wing ideologies advocating domination and social exclusion.

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The call to understand the role of shame in violence is echoed in a critical reflection on the complexities of studying shame (Rasmussen, 2007). In this article, Rasmussen states that “[s]hame needs to be analyzed in terms of both intimate and subjective sentiments, on the one hand, and politics and domination, on the other” (pg. 231). She goes on to highlight challenges in studying shame, especially the “pragmatic problems of intentionality and agency” and “how to make sense of personal, intimate and subjective sentiments in settings of larger cultural scale and emergent social and political formations” (pg. 237).

The Devaluation of Shame.

While the above research on shame is compelling to recognize it as a significant problem, it sometimes seems that the helpful and prosocial aspects tend to get overlooked. Within the clinical psychological literature, one can find discussions of the distinction between guilt and shame in which guilt is seen as a productive or healthy emotion, while shame is seen as a destructive or pathological emotion. For example, one of the most popular scholars on shame, Brene Brown (2017), says this about shame on her website explaining the differences between shame and guilt:

I don't believe shame is helpful or productive. In fact, I think shame is much more likely to be the source of destructive, hurtful behavior than the solution or cure. I think the fear of disconnection can make us dangerous.

Much of Brown's work on shame is powerful and illuminating, and her work and message have touched a wide-ranging audience; for example, a common response to me explaining my dissertation topic from people is for them to ask me if I know of Brene Brown's work, and how helpful it has been for them. However, I believe the above-articulated assumption about shame may miss some critical and important functions of shame.

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Turning to her empirical work in a grounded theory study she conducted on shame in women, Brown's (2006) study concludes in the proposition of Shame Resilience Theory (SRT). She identifies numerous factors in women's experience of shame, highlighting the interactive effects of the feelings of being trapped, powerless, and isolated. She notes that while there is a huge diversity in experiences of what elicits shame in individuals, that there are some shared experiences of being a woman that contribute to feelings of shame. These categories include "appearance and body image, sexuality, family, motherhood, parenting, professional identity and work, mental and physical health, aging, religion, speaking out, and surviving trauma" (pg. 46). Commonly, the women in the study cited "unwanted identities" relating to some of those categories as a factor in evoking shame is experiencing, such as being considered a *loud-mouth* or *pushy* when speaking out.

In SRT, Brown asserts that to reduce destructive and alienating effects of shame and its related feelings of being trapped, powerless, and isolated, we can encourage shame resilience through fostering their opposites on a continuum of empathy, power, and connection. What particularly stands out to me is the role that power and social identity play in this study. Some of the categories that Brown identifies are areas in which women as a group suffer in particular ways as a result of their identities. Interestingly, what seems to be missing in this study or the analysis of results are themes related to identities in which individuals are in the dominant group, or how that might interact with what Brown identifies as a necessary component of being resilient to shame, which is seeking power.

While Brown does well to acknowledge fundamental risks that shame poses to society and especially groups of marginalized people, I believe this framing of shame brings its own set of risks. In addition to questions of power and identity I raise in her work above, I am also

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compelled to wonder how framing shame as an “unproductive” emotion might lead us to misunderstand shame and its role in shaping our behaviors. Does labeling shame as unproductive reduce our willingness to acknowledge or experience it, or contribute to its taboo? Or worse, does it lead us to devalue it or dismiss important functions it might serve?

The Adaptive Function of Shame

While there can be some dismissal of shame’s value in research on shame, there are limited studies and explorations on its potential social value. In one such empirical study (Tracy, Robins, & Tangney, 2007), the authors posit that shame may play a role in motivating and regulating people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; in motivating people to work hard to achieve; and importantly, to behave in moral, prosocial ways in their social interactions and relationships. This interpretation of shame aligns with Scheff’s (2011a) view of shame as the pre-eminent social emotion.

With the understanding of shame as the foundational social emotion, shamelessness is highlighted as a particularly compelling puzzle. If shame is fundamental to our ability to navigate social bonds, what does its absence look like? There is a relative dearth of research conducted specifically on shamelessness, at least by that name (though it could be argued that shamelessness might fall under the category of antisocial personality or other of the “Dark Triad” psychological characteristics, though this section will remain limited explicitly to shamelessness). However, in the very limited studies I reviewed on shamelessness, none identified positive indicators of shamelessness but instead seemed to identify shamelessness by a contextual or comparative lack of shame where it may have been expected or was present in higher degrees in counterparts.

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One of the few extensive explorations on the concept of shamelessness (Mason, 2010) was conducted through a philosophical lens and possibly provides the closest thing to a positive account of shame (as in that there are noticeable features that present themselves, as opposed to a lack of expected features). Mason notes that “to call a person or action shameless often purports to mark a moral fault in that person or action.” She examines various categories of shamelessness, some of which serve as adapted defenses against what she identifies as “false” shame; however, she identifies several aspects of shamelessness that function as moral evasion.

Expanding the functionality dimension between shame and guilt (articulated in the literature review section on shame), Mason examines the prosocial function of shame beyond how it is often presented in the literature as simply restoring reputation and invoking reflection general tendencies and patterns. Mason identifies a lack of shame as lacking “constraint on what one will allow oneself to be,” which serves not only a prosocial function (i.e. preventing harmful behavior against others that might elicit social rejection) but also a self-protective function.

In closing her exploration of shame and shamelessness, Mason writes:

standard attributions of shamelessness pick out not those who have no character ideals at all—which would appear to be a pathological condition—but those whose ideals of character lack connection with a good human life. When we say that such people must have no pride or that they lack self-esteem, we do not thereby ignore whatever pride or self-esteem they may have despite (indeed, in light of) their unworthy ideals. Rather, the thought is that, insofar as their ideals are unworthy, pride or esteem has in their case no proper place. (pg. 423)

This assessment is powerful in terms of highlighting the many varied avenues and contents of shame and shamelessness, and how those relate to moral and psychological health. Shame can serve entirely different functions and have significantly different psychosocial impacts, depending on whether one is vulnerable to feeling shame about looking like a fool, seeming weak, or whether they have hurt someone. Thus, depending on what one values, in Mason’s

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words, shame “has emerged as a necessary bulwark against the lack of a valuable form of self-regard.” Mason boldly (and correctly, in my evaluation) concludes that “we should be mindful of [shame’s] moral importance and unapologetic in its defense” (pg. 401).

Turning to the empirical psychological literature, we can extend some of Mason’s conclusions on shame and shamelessness as moral emotions that guide behavior. Examining the relationship between shame and anger, Farmer and Andrews (2009) compared groups of incarcerated young men (age 18-21) with young men in an undergraduate setting. Their findings showed that the group of incarcerated young men reported significantly less shame and shame-proneness than their undergraduate counterparts, but higher trait anger and depression. While the undergraduate groups’ shame and anger were correlated and aligned with the general literature, the incarcerated groups’ shame did not appear to correlate with their levels of anger. The study included a control for social desirability and defensiveness, but this did not appear to account for this divergence. The authors take note of this divergence, especially since the offenders displayed higher levels of depression, and in the context of dealing with the stigma of being incarcerated.

The authors suggest two possible explanations for these divergent findings. In the first, they cite research on the significance of a lack of certain emotions:

One possible explanation for the offenders’ low shame levels is that they are particularly motivated to avoid shame. Mesquita and Ellsworth (2001), in discussing cultural differences in emotion, argue that ‘infrequency [of emotions] is a sign of their significance rather than their insignificance’ (p.243). Anderson (1999) and others (Canada, 1995; Wilkinson, 2001) have observed that the inner-city subculture in which many young offenders are immersed is based around peer-given respect, an essential commodity in achieving an affirmative sense of self. Its antithesis is shame – the feeling of being defective in the eyes of others. This may be a constant threat in contexts such as prison where there are few sources from which to gain positive self-regard. (pg. 59)

Secondly, they point to the possible role of anger in displacing or bypassing shame:

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In this way anger may work to reduce shame in the potentially shaming moment, by providing a powerful identity to self and others – and also over time, by slowly building an internally-held positive sense of self. (pg. 59)

Bringing in some of the insights from Mason’s philosophical exploration on shamelessness, we might compare how vulnerability to different contents of shame might be missed by different shame scales, depending on what values people hold. This might be especially important when demonstrating emotional vulnerability is in itself something to be ashamed of – and regarding their study, this is especially relevant within the context of a corrections facility – which could profoundly distort how one might report their shame or be bypassed or transformed into emotions that are more acceptable to one’s self-concept or situation.

As noted above, Mesquita and Ellsworth’s (2001) argument that the infrequency of emotions is often a sign of their significance, rather than insignificance, is potentially a powerful lens for explorations on shame. Shamelessness, especially any fierce declarations of rejection, might very well be some of the most poignant indicators of its importance.

In opposition to some of the popular literature on shame as the “unhelpful” or “destructive” emotion, I have outlined above some arguments of its importance. Shame is an ever-involved homunculus in our mind, driving our actions through sometimes treacherous social landscapes. If acknowledged, it can motivate us to reflect on our values, identities, and actions, and can move us to take more structured and committed measures to change how we interact with others.

Summarizing the reviewed research, there exists theoretical and empirical support for the role of shame in violence, and potentially in politically repressive ideologies. An investigation into the role of shame in the political landscape suffers when it does not also include a focus on what a lack of shame might look like (or a rejection of it), if there are positive indicators of

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shamelessness, or if it neglects any potential pro-social manifestations of shame. This provides a wide range of possible lenses for examining various aspects of shame and shamelessness, and how those might manifest and serve as different social mechanisms across different communities and contexts and especially within our current volatile political climate. With white masculinity in a state of crisis, and various groups vying for political control over our economic and state apparatuses, understanding the role that shame plays in fueling and subverting these hegemonic projects is crucial.

Research Question

In an exploratory qualitative research design, we used mixed methods to explore the following research question:

What are the relationships among political ideologies, gender ideologies, and shame/shamelessness as emotional-cognitive phenomena?

Method

For this study, Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) was the principal methodology used to create the Cognitive Affective Maps (CAMs). This study design incorporated three phases: 1) using CQR to construct the general political-ideological CAMs for each subreddit community, 2) using CQR to construct the gender-specific ideological CAMs for each community, and 3) using CQR to construct CAMs related to shame and shame-related concepts. Finally, I reflect on the process of creating and using CAMs to understand the studied phenomena in the discussion section. Throughout this section, the results, and discussion sections, I will switch between the use of “we” and “I” to reflect when decisions were made collectively in a consensus process versus ones made dominantly by me.

Data Selection and Collection

This study examined text through political online social media found on Reddit, which is a discussion-based website. For a detailed overview of Reddit as a social media platform, consult Medvedev, Lambiotte, and Delvenne's (2017) work reviewing previous research looking at Reddit. Relevant to this study, the authors argue that Reddit is especially useful for research due to how the platform facilitates the self-organization of communities and the organization and collection of data.

Because there was an indefinite number of posts and points of potential data extraction, it is impossible to get a comprehensive view of all the potentially available data. Instead, we collected representative data of the communities determined by the Reddit members through voting. Reddit's voting system, or "karma points," allows users to vote on content that is submitted to the subreddits through "upvotes" or "downvotes," influencing the submission's visibility. Positively evaluated content goes to the top of the subreddit's ranked content, depending on how the user chooses to organize the content (i.e., by timeframe or by rankings), and ignored or disliked content gets filtered out of the visibility algorithm. In Davis and Graham's (2021) study exploring the emotional and attentional interactions of Reddit users' engagement with the voting system, they argue, "ratings indicate approval and disapproval, signifying how a contribution is regarded by the community and more broadly, the extent to which content converges with, and diverges from, community values" (pg. 4). Therefore, while not based on traditional sampling methods, selecting the "top-rated content" is particularly suited as reflecting the communities' dominant values and priorities.

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The data corpus included the top 30 “All time” threads from each subreddit between 2016-2019 and the top ten comments of each thread. It also included resources linked to from the “Sidebar material” of the communities which served as “official positions” of the community, such as introductory threads written by moderators or prominent members of the subreddit, explicit ground rules for participation, verified or endorsed resources (e.g., theoretically relevant reading materials, guides, or thinkers/public figures), or glossaries of commonly used terms.

We engaged in Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) coding specifically with the collected posts of the top 30 threads from each community and used the Sidebar Material as context and reference points. We did not code the Sidebar Material, but these materials were used as supplemental materials and reference points to inform our analyses. We used the “Original Posts” or “OPs” (meaning the initial post to which subsequent posts are responding) of each community as a separate set of data which we used for correlational analyses to construct the General Ideological CAMs (described below in *Phase 1: Building the General CAMs* section).

Research “Participants”

Below is a list of the communities we explored, along with short descriptions taken from previous research on the communities and any relevant self-descriptions of the communities that were found in the “Sidebar Material” on the front pages of the forums (content that moderators write of the communities, typically reflective of the dominant values of the communities).

The communities are as follows:

1. */r/MensRights* (r/MR): Men’s Rights Activists (MRAs) – this group makes up a major subgroup of what is known as the “Manosphere,” (Ging, 2017; Lilly, 2016), which is a cluster of groups organized around anti-feminism. A core tenet of their philosophy is that feminism has gone “too far,” and that a “hyper-feminized” society oppresses men. A short description from the Men’s Rights subreddit is as follows: “The Men's Rights subreddit is a place for those who wish to discuss men's rights and the ways said rights are infringed upon” (2018a).

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2. */r/TheRedPill* (r/TRP): another sub-community of the “Manosphere,” the Red Pill community are Pick-Up Artists (PUAs), who are men who want to learn how to seduce women. They tend to share overlapping beliefs with MRAs about gender roles and antifeminism (Ging, 2017; Lilly, 2016). The description of the community from the sidebar is the following: “The Red Pill: Discussion of sexual strategy in a culture increasingly lacking a positive identity for men” (2018b).
3. */r/MensLib* (r/ML): The Men’s Liberation Movement or “Men’s Lib” allows for men to examine issues of gender through a feminist lens. As popularly articulated by bell hooks (2000), feminism is an ideology that advocates for equality for everyone. It explicitly articulates current power differentials between men and women and aims to eliminate them. The following description for the Men’s Lib subreddit was taken from the front page of the forum:

Welcome! /r/MensLib is a community to explore and address men's issues in a positive and solutions-focused way. Through discussing the male gender role, providing mutual support, raising awareness on men's issues, and promoting efforts that address them, we hope to create active progress on issues men face, and to build a healthier, kinder, and more inclusive masculinity. We recognize that men's issues often intersect with race, sexual orientation and identity, disability, socioeconomic status, and other axes of identity, and encourage open discussion of these considerations. We consider ourselves a pro-feminist community. (2018c)

The identified communities are complex and there is ideological diversity among them. We attempted to identify significant conflicts in terms of goals, priorities, and values within these ideological strains, but it is important to highlight these communities' heterogeneity. Further discussion on the complexity of identifying the contours of the ideologies is included in the *Limitations* section of the discussion.

Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR)

In a review of CQR methodology (Hill et al., 2005), the authors describe the essential components of CQR as:

[T]he use of (a) open-ended questions in semi-structured data collection techniques (typically in interviews), which allow for the collection of consistent data across individuals as well as a more in-depth examination of individual experiences; (b) several

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judges throughout the data analysis process to foster multiple perspectives; (c) consensus to arrive at judgments about the meaning of the data; (d) at least one auditor to check the work of the primary team of judges and minimize the effects of groupthink in the primary team; and (e) domains, core ideas, and cross-analyses in the data analysis. (pg. 2)

The authors explain that CQR methodology is grounded in assumptions that worldviews and belief-systems are socially co-constructed. The CQR methodology also recognizes that investigation into and presentation of people's belief-systems are influenced by the researcher's own theories, background, knowledge, and values. The primary way CQR attempts to deal with the challenge of researcher bias is through collaborative analyses. Hays and Woods (2011) identify the process of seeking consensus as the distinguishing feature of CQR. They describe the process of seeking consensus as involving a shared power within the research team and typically between the research team and participants. However, because this project used social media data, there were some significant challenges in the CQR process (which will be discussed in more depth in the *Limitations* section).

Additionally, because the collected data was publicly available posts on the three subreddits contributed by members under pseudonyms, there was no interaction with participants. Therefore we focused mainly on seeking consensus within the research team and among other scholars familiar with the communities studied. While the use of CQR for studying social media data is a novel use of this methodology, we determined it to be the best fit for striving to obtain a less biased representation of the material due to the consensus-seeking process that encourages the integration of multiple perspectives and interpretations of the data.

Coding Team

The coding team consisted of one developmental psychology and two clinical psychology Ph.D. graduate students from the Suffolk University psychology program, with a clinical psychology Ph.D. faculty member serving as the auditor.

CQR Coding Process

At each stage of analysis, we sought consensus on interpreting the texts. The CQR team conducted an iterative process of coding, inspection, discussion, and revision, and the auditor reviewed the agreed-upon analyses. We used different questions to guide the coding process during the three phases of analysis; we identified most of these questions before analysis, but some emerged as important during the coding process. For example, one of the most important questions that emerged in the process of creating the first sets of CAMs was the identification of the relevant “ingroup” and “outgroup” social identities of each community, which eventually became its own set of CAMs.

Open Coding — Identify Domains.

We engaged separately with the larger corpus of collected data to familiarize ourselves with the communities and their respective lexicons and identify common themes and dynamics across the communities during the initial coding phase. We then independently began open coding, line by line, for up to five salient themes within one of the data sets (starting with the data from r/MR) and established lists of potential codes. We then discussed the overlap we found and identified larger categories that would more succinctly capture some of those themes. For example, for one of our categories, “Policy or social issue,” we came to this category as a larger umbrella category that emerged from the various open coding themes, such as: “censorship,” “discrimination,” “custody,” or “court/government decisions.” We then continued with the two other communities' data sets and continued to refine the categories. The following are the main categories (subsequently referred to as “domains”) that we established and the criteria through which we began to seek reliability in our coding:

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- Policy/Social Issue: This is a broad category that attempted to capture comments on policy issues or the formal legal system (e.g., custody battles, the justice system, the “Trans Bathroom Bill,” etc.).
- Gender Ideology:
 - Anything having to do with beliefs about what men or women are like, why they're like that, or anything talking about gender roles or expectations.
 - Beliefs about what gender relations are currently like or how they should be, and descriptions of obligations and relationships between men and women.
- Calls to Action: Comments indicating beliefs about what should be done relating to social/policy issues. These included such things as calls for punishment, collective action suggestions, or guides on how to do things.
- Shame/Ressentiment: We coded for anything invoking the affect or themes of shame or resentment, and anything having to do with negative emotions surrounding self-assessment or assessment of others. This included the following criteria:
 - Negatively evaluated behaviors (in the self or other)
 - Theme relating to affective experiences, such as “feeling small,” worthless, powerless, exposed, or inferior
 - Blame for problems (related to resentment)
 - Language about escaping/withdrawing from society/social interaction
 - Themes relating to threats to social bonds, social standing, lower status, or not mattering.
- Targets of Hostility/Threat: This category captured content that pointed to perceived sources of problems, shame/resentiment, or social/political threats. These targets could be specific entities, groups, or institutions (e.g., Trump, women, liberal media) or could be more abstract concepts, such as social behaviors, ideas, or processes (e.g., traditional masculine roles, feminist concepts like "male privilege," gender socialization, patriarchy, ideologies, or emotions themselves).
- Conflict: This category tracked comments pushing back on ideas expressed, questioned sources, or that challenged the ideas of the original post.

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Using the above categories, we then began independently coding the rest of the data, periodically meeting to discuss our codes until we reached a consensus — we met several times until we achieved 80% coder reliability. Once we obtained 80% reliability, I continued to code the remaining data. After coding all the data, we used it to create the CAMs based on these domains.

Cognitive-Affective Maps (CAMs)

Mock and Homer-Dixon (2015) outline five steps for conducting a CAM analysis:

1. Identify the main concepts of the subject concerning the issue in question.
 2. Identify these concepts as emotionally positive, negative, neutral, or ambivalent and represent them accordingly.
 3. Identify relations of coherence (solid lines) or incoherence (dashed lines) between concepts and the relative strength of these relations.
 4. Arrange the concepts and their relations in such a way as to minimize crossing links. This brings closely related concepts into proximity with each other and helps identify highly connected concepts or “hubs.”
 5. Finally, confirm the validity of the resulting map, by either:
 - a. showing it to the subject to see if it accurately captures his or her understanding of the issue (because the method is easy to grasp, a subject can quickly understand and if necessary correct CAMs representing his or her viewpoint).
 - b. showing it to other people familiar with the subject’s views on issue in question; or,
 - c. assessing it against interview, survey, or textual data that reveal the subject’s beliefs and emotional attitudes that had not been used previously to develop the CAM.
- (pg. 19)

The above-outlined steps of creating CAMs were conducted in the first phase to get baseline maps for each of the identified ideologies.

Because we did not interview participants and instead used comments collected on public fora, we did not use the first method of confirmation of validity (showing maps to subjects). However, the CAMs were confirmed as accurate by another scholar (Annie Kelly, Ph.D.) studying The Red Pill and Men’s Rights groups and a moderator of the Men’s Liberation subreddit. The CAMs were also compared regularly throughout the analysis process with more recent posts from within each community.

CAMs Keys

This section will provide an introduction to the visual elements of the CAMs. The following two figures provide an introduction to the visual coding of the CAMs used for the Phase 1 and 2 CAMs. The Phase 3 Shame CAMs were slightly adapted, and the changes made to them will be covered in a later section. While previous research (Thagard, 2015) using CAMs used the EMPATHICA¹ program to construct the CAMs, I used the Visual Understanding Environment² program developed by Tufts (Kumar, & Saigal, 2005).

As illustrated at the end of this section, ***Figure 1. CAMs Nodes and Links Key*** the

shapes and colors of the CAMs indicate

emotional valence: a green circle

indicates positive valence, a red

hexagon indicates negative valence, a

purple square with rounded edges

indicates ambivalence, and a yellow

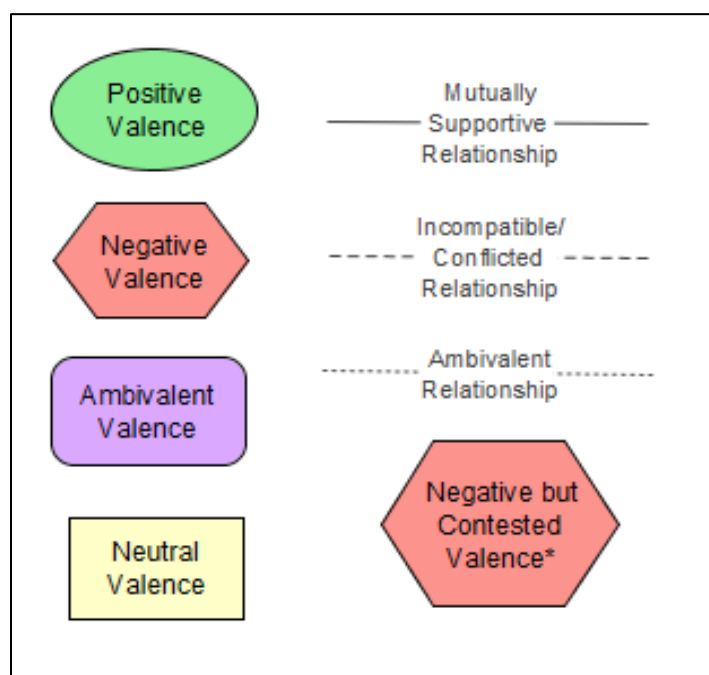
square indicates neutral. While the

original CAMs methodology uses a

purple superimposed hexagon and

circle to indicate ambivalence (Homer-

Dixon et al 2014; Mock and Homer-Dixon 2015), I use a rounded square because I did not use



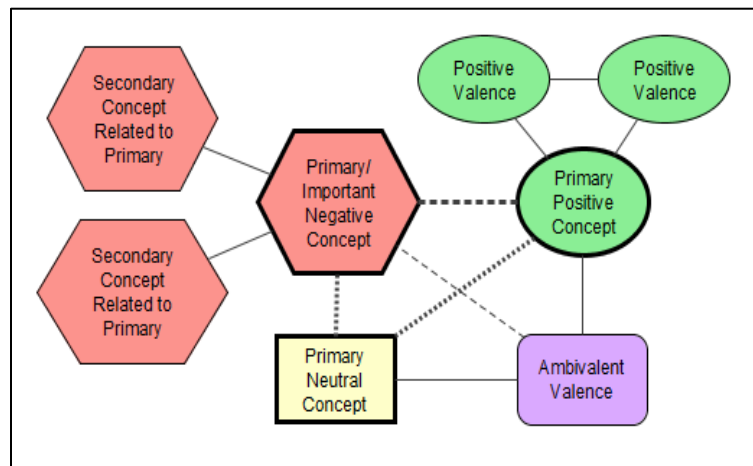
¹ The EMPATHICA program is available for download, along with a brief bibliography of articles that use CAMs, at the following website: <http://cogsci.uwaterloo.ca/empathica.html>

² The Visual Understanding Environment program can be found at: <https://vue.tufts.edu/>

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the same visual mapping program. Nodes with bolded outlines represent concepts that have special or central importance to the CAMs' organizational structure, which are not used in the Phase 1 CAMs but are used in the CAMs for Phase 2 and 3. Additionally, I used an asterisk within the nodes to indicate if a concept is contested within the community; this means that most of the discourse aligns with the coded valence, but there is some degree of disagreement from other members in the community.

The next representational objects are links representing the relationship between concepts (Mock and Homer-Dixon 2015). Mutually supportive concepts are represented by solid links, while dashed lines represent incompatible



concepts or concepts in conflict. For this study, I introduce a dotted line to represent links that have ambivalent relationships, where they are mutually supportive in some contexts and incompatible or conflicted in other contexts.

Figure 2. Example of CAMs Nodes and Links

Using CQR to Construct the CAMs

After reaching 80% reliability in the open coding stage, we used the data coded into domains to begin constructing the General Ideological CAMs. By isolating and reorganizing the posts according to domains, we identified the “Policy/Social Issues,” “Values,” and “Call to Action” categories as the most useful for pulling out salient ideological constructs to make the General Ideological CAMs. Using these three

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categories, we then engaged in another consensus-building process by creating subcategories within the domains to determine the content of the CAMs for each group. We engaged in this process by first independently pulling out themes among the data coded data for each ideological community, met to discuss them, and reached a consensus to determine the themes that captured the most amount of content with the least amount of overlap. These subcategory themes served as a basis for the “nodes” of the CAMs.

Research Questions Used to Guide Inquiry

To identify the subcategories that would make up the CAM nodes, we used a few research questions as heuristics to guide our analysis:

General Political Ideological CAMs questions:

- What political issues are important? What are the most discussed issues?
- What language or terms are unique in each group’s lexicon?

Social Identity Ingroup and Outgroup CAMs questions:

- Which social identities are most commonly discussed?
- Who makes up group membership? How are ingroup and outgroup membership delineated?

Gender Ideology CAMs questions:

- How do different groups talk about gender? What are beliefs around how men/women should or should not act?
- What beliefs do different groups have about the biological or cultural differences between sexes? What do they think causes these differences (e.g., genetic essentialism versus cultural norms)?
- How do different groups conceptualize gender and social power? Do they think one group is more marginalized than the other, and what evidence do they use to support those beliefs?

Shame Related CAMs Questions:

- What themes do community members feel they are shamed/stigmatized for, and by whom?

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- What kinds of things do they reject, stigmatize, or find shameful?

In the process of generating the CAMs for the General Ideological CAMs, the first set of questions about who makes up membership and how are ingroup and outgroup memberships are delineated emerged as particularly rich and salient. Therefore, we decided to construct another set of CAMs for ingroup and outgroup social identities, as it was determined to best represent how certain social groups/identities as used as *boundary objects* (discussed further in the *Empirical Implications* section).

Determining Emotional Valence and Relationship Links

While the subthemes across the groups were generated through the CQR process, the coding of the emotional valences for the identified themes and the nature of the links between them were determined by myself. As the coding and the construction of the CAMs took a significant amount of time and work, it was determined to be logistically impracticable to incorporate all team members into all of the processes involved in constructing the CAMs. However, all sets of CAMs were confirmed through the consensus process with the CQR team, and some of the coding for the emotional valences and relationship links were discussed and subsequently changed due to team member input.

Phase 1: Building the General CAMs

Using the subthemes determined in the previous process, I coded the Original Posts (OPs) of the top 30 threads to get a sense of the frequency and importance of the themes. In the frequency coding process, I coded for whether a subtheme (generated in the CQR process by the coding team) was present within the OP or not. I went through each of top 30 OPs for each group and coded for whether the subthemes we generated in the CQR process for that group were found in the OPs, with either a 1 indicating that it

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was, and a 0 if it was not. For example, an OP might contain subthemes relating to "feminism," "censorship," and "hypocrisy," and they would have 1s under those subtheme columns and zeros for the rest. I then ran a correlation analysis to look at how often those codes showed up together in an OP. I reiteratively used correlational analyses with the frequency codes of the OPs to identify constructs with significant overlap; I collapsed conceptually related constructs that had relationships above .9 into more elegant categories. I repeated this process several times and obtained consensus with the coding team at three intervals (including the final CAMs).

The decision to incorporate frequency codings of the OPs and correlation analyses into the construction of the CAMs was not determined before the analysis but arose out of necessity due to the complex and messy nature of the data and the difficulty of presenting the material concisely. I needed to include a way to determine relationships among the subthemes in a manageable way that was still based on the data. The decision to use OPs was in part to reduce the amount of coding to a manageable and uniform number across the communities, as well as to try to identify the concepts within the posts identified by the community (determined through the reddit voting algorithm) as being representative of the highest quality content.

Relationships between subtheme frequency coding greater than .20 are represented on the CAMs as lines connecting the nodes. The statistic of .2 for two reasons: 1) it is commonly used as the lowest threshold of identifying a statistically significant relationship, and 2) it was useful for reducing the number of connections between subthemes while maintaining enough for the most relevant subthemes to have multiple relationships. Subthemes/nodes that did not reach at least a .20 relationship with any other subtheme coding were integrated into other relevant subcategories, as these were determined to be of insufficient importance or lacking coherence with the other constructs.

Building the Social Identity Ingroup and Outgroup CAMs.

We used the same domains for creating the General Political Ideological CAMs to create the Social Identity Ingroup and Outgroup CAMs and a similar process articulated above to identify social identity subthemes to create the CAM “nodes.” Additionally, we used the included content’s coding for the “Target of Threat/Hostility” domain to determine outgroup delineation.

Phase 2 and 3: Building the Gender and Shame CAMs

For the subsequent Gender CAMs and Shame/Ressentiment CAMs found in Phase 2 and Phase 3, respectively, we began by using the data from the “Gender Ideology” domain to identify the nodes of the Gender CAMs, and the data coded for “Shame/Ressentiment” and “Target of Hostility” domains to identify the nodes for the Shame/Ressentiment CAMs. We used a similar process of reaching a consensus of subthemes we used to establish the “nodes” of the General CAMs. I constructed the Gender and Shame CAMs and a sought consensus among the team at multiple points in the process.

Adapted CAMs for Phase 3 Shame Analysis

As the analysis for the Shame CAMs was considered a more exploratory analysis, I decided to make visual adjustments to the CAMs in ways that might better capture certain aspects of the dynamics. The color indicating emotional valence used in the previous CAMs remains the same for the Shame CAMs. However, I integrated changes to the meaning of the shapes to reflect the following themes: nodes indicating subthemes considered as significant sources or institutions of shame or injustice by the community (indicated by a square); concepts reflecting subthemes that are rejected by the community (indicated by a hexagon); concepts reflecting subthemes that are seen as being wrongly stigmatized by society (indicated by an oval); and concepts that contain subthemes reflecting a combination of internalization and externalization of shame (indicated by an octagon).

Figure 3. Adapted Shame CAMs Key



Reflections on Using CAMs

While this study did not involve a formal heuristic inquiry methodology, I used the concept of a guiding research question from within the heuristic research tradition to reflect on my experience using the CAMs methodology. As championed by Moustakas (1990), heuristic research is a discovery-based methodology that stems from the researcher's internal experiences in the area of study. Kenny (2012) explains the heuristic research process as requiring "a personal experience that has left the inquirer with a desire to understand the experience more fully" (pg. 7). As part of the research question identified in my proposal was to examine if using a Complex Adaptive Systems framework can help us to better understand the role that shame plays in political ideologies, I adapted this research question to reflect on and explore my

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experience using CAMs. After the conclusion of the three phases, I used the following guiding research question to reflect on my experience: "how did the use of CAMs uniquely contribute to my understanding of the studied phenomena?" Because this was not a formal review, I include these reflections at the beginning of the discussion section.

Validity and Reliability

As mentioned above, throughout the project, we worked as a team of co-researchers to consult on questions and sought consensus; throughout the project, we also consulted with our Ph.D. adviser at various points to audit our findings. We consulted with individuals and researchers familiar with the included subreddit communities (meaning they either self-identify as members or have spent time studying them) and reached intersubjective agreement on the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the CAMs in each case.

Results

This results section begins with findings from the Phase 1 analyses for each community in the order of r/TheRedPill (r/TRP), r/MensRights (r/MR), and r/MensLib (r/ML). Phase 1 results include the General Political Ideological CAM constructed for each community, a brief description of the most prominent themes and language that were unique to each group, and a table with correlational analyses of relationships between theme frequencies among the top thirty Original Posts (OPs). Additionally, Phase 1 results include a CAM depicting each group's social identities, with the concepts of "ingroup" and "outgroup" mapping onto the positive and negative valences of the CAMs, respectively. The social identity section includes a table with a brief description of the most salient identities and notable conflicts. Each Phase 1 group sub-section

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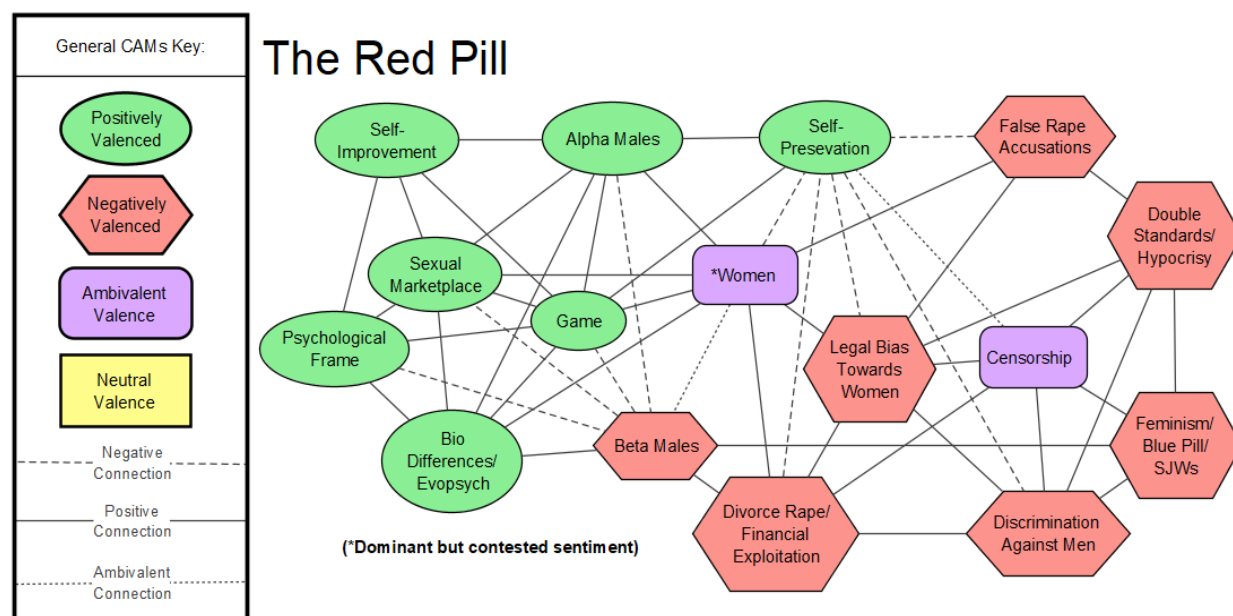
concludes with brief descriptions of the groups' overall ideological structure. Finally, the Phase 1 Conclusions section compares the three groups' general ideological structures.

Phase 2 results include the Gender Ideology CAMs for each group, a brief description of their ideological beliefs relating to gender, and some comparative analyses. Finally, Phase 3 results will have a similar structure as Phase 2 but will focus on CAMs and analyses related to the constructs of shame and resentment. Phase 3 will also include quotes from the data to provide supporting evidence for our decisions.

Phase 1 – r/TheRedPill: General Political and Social Identity CAMs

The following is the CAM generated from the Phase 1 data analysis of the top thirty threads from 2016 - 2018, representing the general ideological structure for r/TRP:

Figure 4. *The Red Pill: General Ideological CAM*



Theme Frequency and Relationships

The stated goals of this community identified in the above CAM derive from our thematic coding analyses of the top 30 threads. The most frequent themes found within the Original Posts (OPs) of these threads were: women (21); self-improvement (17); SMP (16);

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alpha (13); beta (12); game (13); frame (13); biological differences (11); feminism/BP/SJW (10); self-preservation (10); divorce/rape/financial exploitation (9); censorship (7); legal bias (6); discrimination of men (5); double standard/hypocrisy (5); and false rape accusations (3).

Correlations of .2 and above indicate a significant relationship between theme frequencies in the coded data for the OPs, indicated by lines in the General CAM. The line fillings (i.e., straight line, dashed line, or dotted line) were determined conceptually. The correlations between themes found in the OPs are as follows:

Table 1. The Red Pill Theme Frequency Correlations

	Women	Self-Improvement	SMP	Alpha	Beta	Game	Frame	Bio Diff	Feminism/ BP/SJWs	Self-Preservation	Divorce Rape/ Financial Exploitation	Censorship	Legal Bias	Discrim of Men	Double Standard/ Hypocrisy	False Accusations
Women	1															
Self-Improvement	0.01467892	1														
SMP	0.55405125	0.395514606	1													
Alpha	0.57247803	0.357466063	0.81799612	1												
Beta	0.53452248	-0.109847007	0.49099025	0.52177328	1											
Game	0.42568879	0.49321267	0.81799612	0.86425339	0.384464525	1										
Frame	0.13211031	0.49321267	0.41349254	0.59276018	0.384464525	0.59276018	1									
Bio Diff	0.34717228	-0.032570825	0.4344409	0.59092783	0.508304245	0.45133858	0.45133858	1								
Feminism/ BP/SJWs	0.15430335	-0.237825747	-0.0472456	0.0951303	-2.00308613	-0.0475651	-0.332956	0.0489116	1							
Self-Preservation	0.3086067	0.190260598	0.09449112	0.23782575	0.144337567	0.23782575	0.23782575	0.1956464	-0.2	1						
Divorce Rape/FE	0.26984127	-0.014678924	0.02916059	0.01467892	0.207869855	0.01467892	0.01467892	0.10566113	-0.1543033	0.46291005	1					
Censorship	-0.1547818	-0.153740724	-0.2738208	-0.1643435	-0.28957025	-0.1643435	-0.1643435	0.07086916	0.27863911	0.11145564	0.49874139	1				
Legal Bias	0.14547859	-0.235435478	-0.3674842	-0.2690691	-0.40824829	-0.2690691	-0.2690691	-0.2075143	-2.944E-17	0.35355339	0.40006613	0.51227176	1			
Discrim of Men	-0.09759	-0.330911261	-0.4780914	-0.3910769	-0.36514837	-0.3910769	-0.3910769	-0.1546721	0.25298221	0.25298221	0.29277002	0.59917127	0.67082039	1		
Double Standard/Hyp	0.09759001	-0.330911261	-0.4780914	-0.3910769	-0.36514837	-0.3910769	-0.3910769	-0.3402785	0.25298221	0.06324555	0.09759001	0.38769906	0.67082039	0.52	1	
False Accusations	0.21821789	-0.38118125	-0.3563483	-0.2914915	-0.04536092	-0.2914915	-0.2914915	-0.2536286	1.3084E-17	0.23570226	0.02424643	-0.1838924	0.38888889	0.1490712	0.4472136	1

Key Concepts — CAM Nodes

The following section provides brief overviews of the main identified themes that make up the nodes of the CAMs.

Women. The nature of women was commonly discussed in the form of advice guides, examples, or anecdotes about women that support their theories. These threads typically focused on tendencies or behaviors of women, theories about women's intentions and motivations, and the biological or cultural factors that determine why women act in those particular ways. These topics are framed as necessary to understand to be more sexually successful with women or protect themselves from the perceived threats that women pose to men (e.g., being manipulated or taken advantage of financially, cheated on, or falsely accused of rape).

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Self-Improvement. A prominent theme was Self-Improvement or improving one's "Sexual Market Value" (SMV) to be more sexually successful with more attractive women.

Sexual Marketplace (SMP). Discussions focused on concepts relating to the "Sexual Marketplace," a framework for discussing sexual strategy using economic principles and fundamental assumptions about evolution and the **Biological Differences** between sexes.

Alphas and Betas. In the r/TRP framework, alpha males are socially dominant and embody numerous psychological and physical qualities (e.g., physical strength, emotionally stoic, socially bold); beta males are considered to be emasculated, submissive, and effeminate, and therefore considered to be more easily taken advantage of by women.

Game and Frame. "Game" refers to the behavioral strategies and techniques that allow for men to be more sexually successful with women. "Frame" is the ability to remain unmoved by emotion and maintain psychological dominance in interpersonal interactions and is considered a significant component of game.

Feminism, Blue Pill, and Social Justice Warriors (SJWs). The following definition of the *Blue Pill* is provided from the official r/TRP Glossary, "The path of conformity with Society's expectations; the state of being unaware of the problems engendered by society." The Blue Pill is considered the "default," as feminism is seen as the dominant ideology in society. Closely related to feminism and the Blue Pill, r/TRP also often refer to SJWs, which Massanari and Chess (2018) describe as a pejorative used to describe individuals claimed to be "overly invested in identity politics and political correctness. (pg. 2)" The Red Pill primarily defines itself against members of these groups, as they are seen as advocating for a false ideology of gender and sexuality that is in opposition to theirs.

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Divorce Rape/Financial Exploitation (DV/FE). DV/FE include discussions surrounding the financially exploitative nature of women. This theme often showed up as discussions about women being dependent on men for resources due to evolution and discussions about perceived biases in legal systems. The term “Divorce Rape” is commonly used for alimony or the loss of resources in the process of divorce.

Censorship. Censorship was a salient theme within r/TRP discussions related to the concepts of “Political Correctness” or the suppression of free speech. Notably, censorship also often arose as a theme in self-censorship or rules about *not* talking in public about the r/TRP community or ideas.

Discrimination Against Men. An essential construct in r/TRP is discrimination against men or masculinity, as society is believed to favor women and girls.

Legal Bias Toward Women. The theme of legal bias toward women includes discussions about false rape accusations, *Divorce Rape*, and laws relating to parental custody rights or reproductive issues.

Hypocrisy and Double Standards. Themes of Hypocrisy and Double Standards typically relate to the discourse around women and feminism.

False Accusations. Though only found in 3 of the top 30 OPs, discussions about false rape accusations, false domestic violence allegations, and their social, legal, and financial ramifications are pervasive throughout the data.

r/TRP In-groups and Out-groups

Part of being in an ideological group is determining who is in and who is out of the group; within r/TRP, a few social identities are salient depending on context: 1) men, 2) those who endorse r/TRP beliefs or operate according to r/TRP values (a.k.a. those who have

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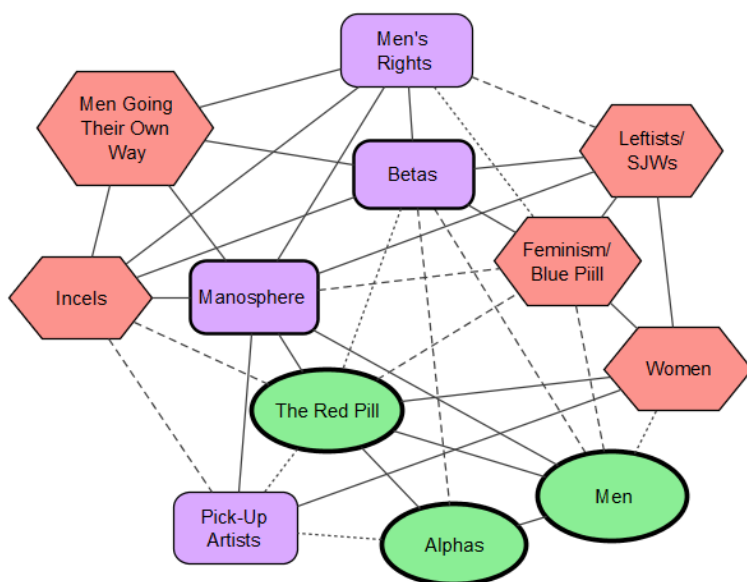
“swallowed the Red Pill”), and 3) “alphas,” or men who embrace their “natural masculinity.”

There is considerable overlap between these identities, but different aspects are brought forward depending on the discussed topics.

The relationships between these various identities are demonstrated below through the Social Identity CAM. The Social Identity CAM structure uses a similar structure as the General CAMs to depict emotional valence toward a concept; however, in the Social Identity CAMs, we used the coloring scheme to indicate the social identities' emotional valence and map these valences onto the concepts of ingroups and outgroups. Green indicates a positive affective valence and an embrace of a social identity (ingroup), red indicates negative valence or a rejection (outgroup), and purple indicates ambivalence and a mixed, conflicted, or contextual embrace of that social identity.

Below is the CAM illustrating r/TRP ingroup identities versus outgroup identities and how they relate to each other:

Figure 5. *The Red Pill: Social Identities CAM*



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The following table provides descriptions of the identity orientations as they are illustrated above, including a brief description of the main differences and relationship to the social identities of r/TRP members:

Table 2. *The Red Pill Ingroup and Outgroup Social Identities*

Social Identity	Orientation	Brief Description of Relationship with Social Identity
<i>Alpha Males</i>	Ingroup	Aspirational; what r/TRP aims to emulate or embody.
<i>Beta Males</i>	Ambivalent	Rejection; while some members identify as or identify their former selves with being a beta male, the goal of r/TRP is to have less beta male qualities and become more like an alpha male.
<i>Feminism/BP</i>	Outgroup	Rejection; r/TRP sees the feminist as trying to emasculate men and make them more "beta," and therefore more easily exploited by women.
<i>Incels</i> ³	Outgroup	Rejection; r/TRP sees incels as "losers" who are not willing or able to put in the work to improve their position in life, wallowing in their resentment, weak and emasculated.
<i>Manosphere</i>	Ambivalent	r/TRP identifies as a part of the larger Manosphere, especially in the consensus about men's oppression and opposition to feminism. However, they contrast themselves with other Manosphere communities regarding their strategies for dealing with that oppression.
<i>Men</i>	Ingroup	Aspirational; r/TRP aims to understand what makes a "true man," especially in terms of biological differences, to increase their Sexual Market Value (SMV) to women.
<i>Men's Rights Movement (MRM)</i>	Ambivalent	r/TRP tends to agree with the MRM's assessments of social problems, the oppression of men, and feminism; r/TRP contrasts from the MRM in strategy for dealing with those problems.
<i>Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW)</i>	Outgroup	Similar to MRM.

³ "Incel" is short for "involuntary celibates." They are an online group of primarily men, who are one of several groups that make up the Manosphere. They primarily discuss their perceived issues of being sexually undesirable to women. For a more in depth look at Incels and related groups, such as Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW), please read Ging's (2019) study on the Manosphere.

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<i>Pick-Up Artists (PUAs)</i>	Ambivalent	r/TRP and PUAs have a significant overlap in goals; they differ in some strategies, and r/TRP sees itself as advocating a larger worldview.
<i>Social Justice Warriors (SJWs) /Progressives</i>	Outgroup	r/TRP strongly rejects SJWs/progressives on most social and political issues and conceptualizations of gender.
<i>Women</i>	Outgroup	Women are seen as essentially biologically different from men and have evolved to seek exploitive relationships with men. While r/TRP emphasizes improving the odds of having sexual relations with attractive women, it also promotes being critical of their motivations and the necessity to protect oneself against them: financially, legally, psychologically, and socially.

Description of r/TRP's Ideological Network

While r/TRP self-describes as non-political (a claim that I reject), it promotes a worldview that embraces and encourages male supremacy. Within the CQR coding process, a few overarching themes emerged that represent r/TRP ideology's core assumptions:

- 1) There are essential biological differences between men and women that determine how each group engages in sexual strategy.
- 2) Society, and especially feminism, aims to obscure these facts (typically to provide women with societal advantage); using Evolutionary Psychology (EP), r/TRP aims to “undo” the damage done by feminist indoctrination to help men to understand “reality.”
- 3) As a result of these essential differences between the sexes, some identifiable rules and principles can help men compete and protect themselves within the “sexual marketplace.”

Because the main ideological project of r/TRP is to promote a particular vision of gender, there is significant overlap in the content of the Phase 1 analysis and Phase 2 analysis of ideology related to beliefs about gender.

As the main goal of the community is to understand the biological traits of women to be more sexually successful with them, the most frequent and in-depth discussions tend to revolve around their conceptions of women, what they want, and how to maintain dominance in

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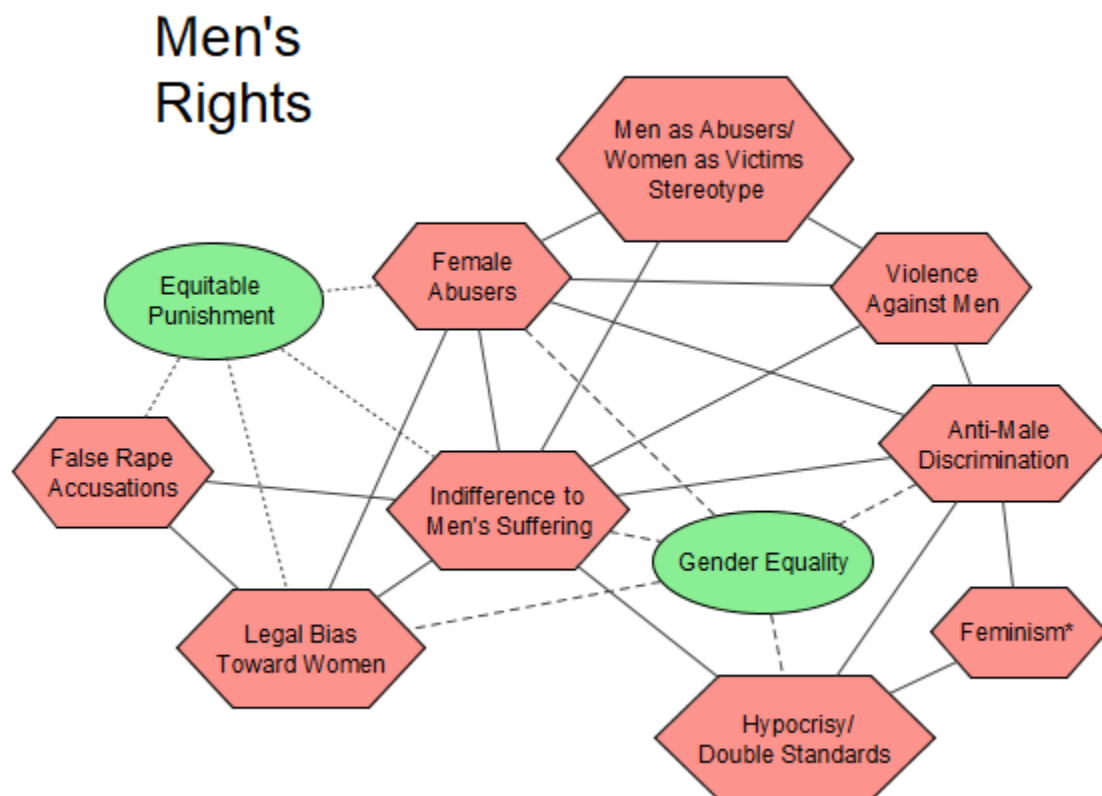
interactions with them (which is seen as being a key factor of sexual attraction for women). There is a range of attitudes towards women, with some seeing women as “equal, but different,” and others (making up a larger proportion of comments) viewing women as inherently physically and intellectually inferior and biologically predisposed to be deceitful and manipulative. Using EP to justify claims about women’s natural attraction to masculine dominance, strategies for increasing one’s capacity for physical and psychological dominance are central to discussions about dating strategy.

Despite their claims of being apolitical, there are strong beliefs about how society is structured, how they feel it should be changed, and active discussion about how to navigate these various challenges and perceived injustices to succeed — or more accurately — to dominate and maintain dominance. There are conspiratorial sentiments toward feminism and other “cultural elites,” which are seen as being pervasively dominant and hostile to men and their “true masculine natures.” There appears to be significant tension between general systemic anti-male discrimination and their attitudes toward victimhood. As weakness and emotionality are considered feminine traits, there is some degree of conflict over how to deal with or orient to this general sense of oppression (discussed later in the Phase 3 analysis on shame/ressentiment). This orientation to their perceived oppression serves as the most significant point of similarity with the next group (r/MensRights), and their general conflicted attitude about how to deal with it serves as the most significant point of contrast.

Phase 1 – r/MensRights: General Political and Social Identity CAMs

The following is the CAM generated from the Phase 1 data analysis of the top thirty threads from 2016 - 2018, representing the general ideological structure for r/MR:

Figure 6. *Men's Rights: General Ideological CAM*



Theme Frequency and Relationships

The stated goals of this community identified in the above CAM derive from our thematic coding analyses of the top 30 threads. The most frequent themes found within the Original Posts (OPs) of these threads were: indifference to men's suffering (16); hypocrisy and double standards (12); gender equality (11); feminism (10); female abusers (10); anti-male discrimination (10); the "women as victims, men as abusers" stereotype (8); false rape accusations (7); equitable punishment (6); violence against men (6); and legal bias towards women (5). The correlations between themes of the OPs are as follows:

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Table 3. *Men's Rights Theme Frequency Correlations*

Pearson's r	Indifference to Men's Suffering	Hypocrisy/ Double Standards	Gender Equality	Feminism	Female Abusers	Anti-Male Discrimination	Women = Victims, Men = Abusers	False Accusations	Equitable Punishment	Violence Against Men	Legal Bias towards Women
Indifference to Men's Suffering	-	0.239	0.448	-0.298	0.392	0.254	0.276	0.214	0.311	0.311	0.249
Hypocrisy/ Double Standards	0.239	-	0.241	0.302	0.160	0.443	-0.015	-0.112	0.114	0.114	0.192
Gender Equality	0.448	0.241	-	-0.079	0.209	0.209	0.179	-0.239	-0.022	0.149	0.225
Feminism	-0.298	0.302	-0.079	-	-0.329	0.410	-0.249	-0.373	-0.338	0.011	-0.303
Female Abusers	0.392	0.160	0.209	-0.329	-	0.114	0.697	0.122	0.361	0.535	0.260
Anti-Male Discrimination	0.254	0.443	0.209	0.410	0.114	-	0.066	-0.373	-0.163	0.186	-0.303
Women = Victims, Men = Abusers	0.276	-0.015	0.179	-0.249	0.697	0.066	-	-0.142	0.084	0.644	-0.058
False Accusations	0.214	-0.112	-0.239	-0.373	0.122	-0.373	-0.142	-	0.517	-0.069	0.392
Equitable Punishment	0.311	0.114	-0.022	-0.338	0.361	-0.163	0.084	0.517	-	-0.240	0.673
Violence Against Men	0.311	0.114	0.149	0.011	0.535	0.186	0.644	-0.069	-0.240	-	-0.215
Legal Bias towards Women	0.249	0.192	0.225	-0.303	0.260	-0.303	-0.058	0.392	0.673	-0.215	-

Key Concepts — CAM Nodes

Indifference to Men's Suffering. The most commonly coded theme in the Mens Rights subreddit is *Indifference to Men's Suffering*. This theme typically shows up in terms of anecdotes, news stories, and occasionally in the form of statistics about events or social issues which negatively impact men; it is commonly argued that issues that disproportionately impact men get less attention or are given less legitimacy in both the legal system and in public opinion.

Hypocrisy/ Double Standards. The next most common theme is that of hypocrisy and double standards. These tend to refer to differing societal expectations of men versus women and connect to **Anti-Male Discrimination** and **Feminism**, with a strong sentiment of feminism being a source of discrimination against men and boys.

Gender Equality. The theme of gender equality typically comes in the form of an appeal to correct anti-male discrimination and pleas for a similar concern for the welfare of men and boys that members perceive society to have for women and girls.

Female Abusers. *Female Abusers* is closely related to the theme of **Women = Victims, Men = Abusers Stereotype**. These themes were commonly found in anecdotes or news stories about women engaging in abusive behavior toward males or discussions about a perceived lack of caring from society about the abuse of men and boys at the hands of women.

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Violence Against Men. Commonly accompanying *Female Abusers* and the *Women as Victims and Men as Abusers Stereotype*, *Violence Against Men* tends to show up in discussions of domestic violence; however, this theme also tends to include systemic forms of violence, such as war (and especially the draft), incarceration, the impact of dangerous jobs, or disproportionate impacts of social epidemics like homelessness.

False Rape Accusations. Discussions about false rape accusations are a prevalent theme, particularly around the lack of concern toward the negative impact that false rape accusations have on males and the lack of consequences for women who leverage false accusations. Arguments for **Equitable Punishment** commonly accompany discussions of false rape accusations and discussions about women sexually molesting boys.

Legal Bias Towards Women. *Legal Bias Towards Women* commonly shows up in discussions about false rape accusations and the lack of legal repercussions for them. It also shows up in discussions about civil law, such as custody and child support (deemed “Father’s Rights”) or unequal financial repercussions for divorce.

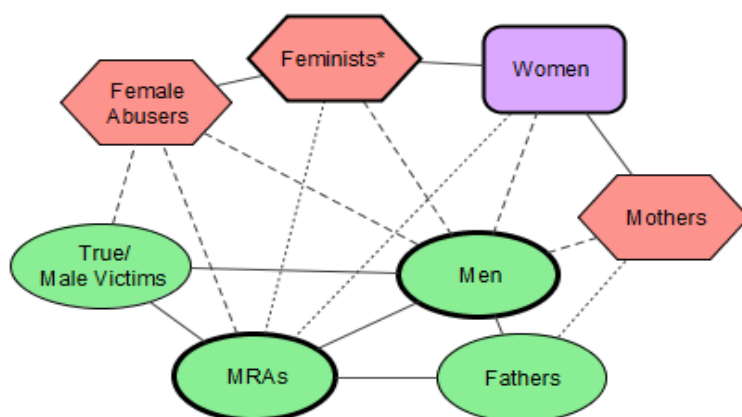
R/MensRights: In-groups and Out-groups

Like r/TRP, a few social identities are more or less salient depending on the context; however, the most prominent social identity is “men,” which include the related social identities of “males” and “boys.” Another salient social identity is that of “Men’s Rights Advocates” or “MRAs,” describing members of those who identify with the Men’s Rights Movement (MRM); this identity is most strongly juxtaposed with the social identity of “feminists,” though there is some degree of variance in this rejection of feminism.

Below is the CAM illustrating r/MR’s ingroup identities versus outgroup identities and how they relate to each other:

Figure 7. *Men's Rights: Social Identities CAM*

MensRights - Ingroups/Outgroups



The following table provides descriptions of the identity orientations as they are illustrated above, including a brief description of the main differences and relationship to the social identities of r/MR members:

Table 4. *Men's Rights Ingroup and Outgroup Social Identities*

Social Identity	Orientation	Brief Description of Relationship with Social Identity
MRAs	Ingroup	A "Men's Rights Advocate" or an "MRA" is the common label for someone who frequents r/MR or is a member of the Men's Rights Movement
Men	Ingroup	r/MR centers around issues perceived as predominantly impacting men.
True Victims	Ingroup	The central focus of the MRM is looking at how men are victimized and discriminated against due to their gender; MRAs tend to orient themselves again feminists, who are seen as trying to monopolize claims to legitimate victim status for women.
Feminists	Ambivalent	Feminists are mostly considered the outgroup and a significant threat to men. There is some conflict within the MRM over how opposed members are to feminism.
Women	Ambivalent	While there is a common sentiment expressed that MRAs are not against women or women's rights, discussions on r/MR frequently frame women as abusive and oppressive.

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Female Abusers	Outgroup	The central theme among topics of conversation surrounds specific incidents of women abusing men, especially how abuse from women is dismissed or ignored.
Fathers	Ingroup	One of the regular talking points for MRAs surrounds Father's Rights and the legal and economic discrimination that men face in family law.
Mothers	Outgroup	Within the Father's Rights discourse, mothers are commonly perceived as privileged by the legal system and often financially exploitative.

Description of r/MR's Ideological Network

The most central themes within r/MR are society's indifference towards men's suffering and men's oppression, primarily caused by women. Society is seen as being generally hostile/indifferent toward men, and women are considered to have significant "female privilege." This orientation to the perceived social hierarchy between genders is framed in opposition to feminism, which is seen as promoting positive stereotypes about women as innocent victims and negative stereotypes of men as abusive and violent. The perpetration of harm against men and boys by women is a prominent focus of the group, with little to no discussion of how other men might be contributing to the perpetration of violence or harm, except for the rejection of "male feminists," "SJWs," or "white knights," who are seen as furthering harmful attitudes towards men. While some posts within the r/MR seem to engage with the complexity and challenges of various social problems (e.g., determining the validity of sexual assault allegations, fairly determining custodial responsibilities), they tend to be less frequent than posts and topics framed in ways that evoke a one-sided perspective that men are more oppressed than women.

The identity of "victim" is not a defining social identity for ingroup membership of r/MR, it is a social identity that has central importance to the community given the frequency of themes related to grievances and arguments that center on the victimization of men. Because the social identity of "victim" or "true victim" is often invoked with exclusionary language (though not

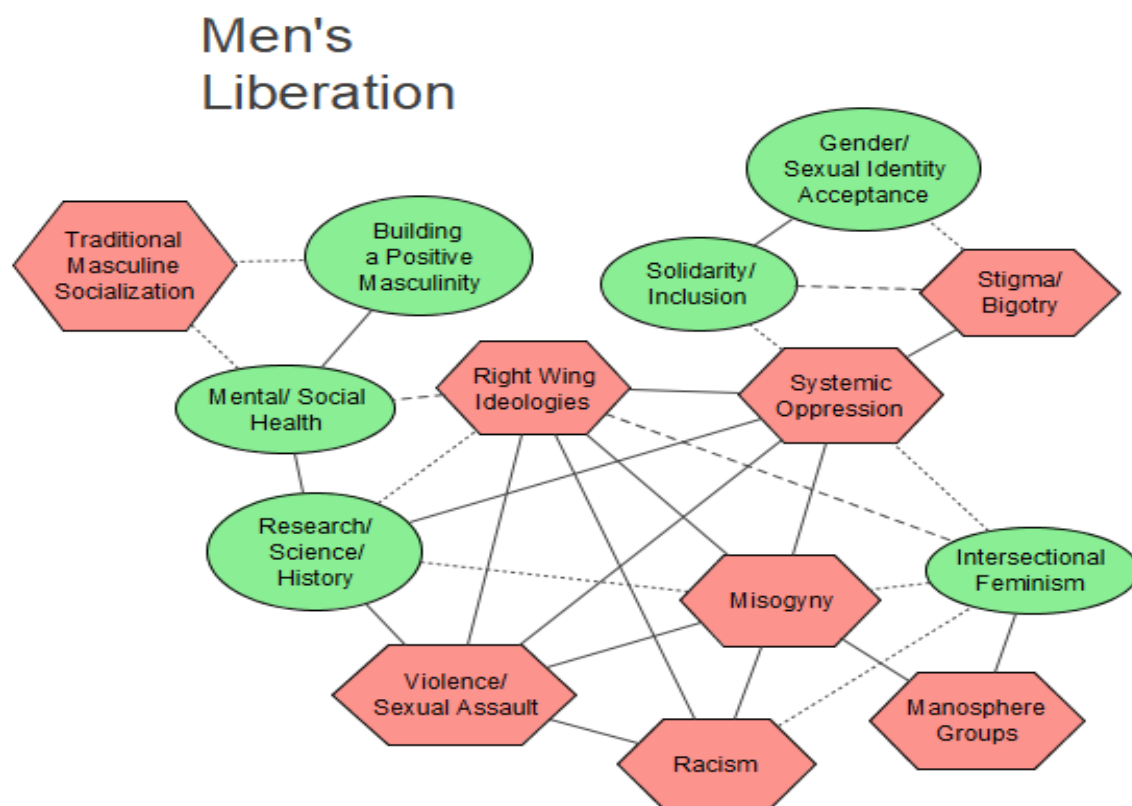
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ubiquitously), it appears to be a social identity over which the MRM is competing. According to the collected data, it appears that there is a clear emphasis and highlighting of information that engages in Competitive Victimhood (CV). Young and Sullivan (2016) define CV as “a tendency to see one's group as having comparatively suffered relative to an outgroup” (pg. 3) (this subject will be explored in more depth in the discussion). Despite the evidence of conflict within the community around the utility of engaging in CV, the highest-ranking content tends to fit the CV framing. The prominence of CV in r/MR’s highest-rated content points to its importance as a rhetorical strategy for the MRM. This emphasis on CV is one of the most significant points of difference between r/MR and the next group in the study: r/ML.

Phase 1 – MensLib: General Political and Social Identity CAMs

The following is the CAM generated from the Phase 1 data analysis of the top thirty threads from 2016 - 2018, representing the general ideological structure for r/ML:

Figure 8. *Men's Liberation: General Ideological CAM*



Theme Frequency and Relationships

The stated goals of this community identified in the above CAM derive from our thematic coding analyses of the top 30 threads. The most frequent themes found within the Original Posts (OPs) of these threads were: systemic oppression (21); stigma and bigotry (20); solidarity and inclusion (19); mental health (18); violence/sexual violence (18); gender and sexual identity (14); misogyny (13); building a healthy masculinity (12); research, science, and history (12); traditional masculine socialization (12); right-wing ideologies and the Alt Right (9); feminism (7); the Manosphere (7); and racism (7). The following chart displays the calculations among the thematic codes from the above subcategories within the top 30 OPs:

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Table 5. *Men's Liberation Theme Frequency Correlations*

Pearson's r	Systemic Oppression	Solidarity/ Inclusion	Stigma/ Bigotry	Mental Health	Violence/ Sexual Violence	Gender/ Sexual Identity	Misogyny	Building Healthy Masculinity	Research/ Science/ History	Traditional Masculine Socialization	Right Wing/ Alt Right	Feminism	Manosphere	Racism
Systemic Oppression	-	0.408	0.463	-0.238	0.356	0.029	0.279	-0.505	0.238	-0.505	0.270	0.361	0.189	0.017
Solidarity/ Inclusion	0.408	-	0.636	-0.339	0.085	0.296	-0.312	-0.226	0.056	-0.367	-0.106	-0.071	-0.071	-0.071
Stigma/ Bigotry	0.463	0.636	-	-0.289	0.144	0.378	-0.238	-0.289	0.144	-0.289	0.154	0.056	-0.111	0.056
Mental Health	-0.238	-0.339	-0.289	-	0.167	-0.191	0.165	0.389	0.250	0.389	0.238	-0.032	0.129	-0.032
Violence/ Sexual Violence	0.356	0.085	0.144	0.167	-	-0.055	0.302	-0.167	0.389	-0.167	0.386	0.129	-0.032	0.290
Gender/ Sexual Identity	0.029	0.296	0.378	-0.191	-0.055	-	-0.279	-0.082	0.055	0.055	-0.029	-0.042	-0.358	-0.200
Misogyny	0.279	-0.312	-0.238	0.165	0.302	-0.279	-	-0.165	0.247	0.110	0.455	0.472	0.313	0.313
Building Healthy Masculinity	-0.505	-0.226	-0.289	0.389	-0.167	-0.082	-0.165	-	-0.111	0.444	-0.238	-0.129	0.193	-0.129
Research/ Science/ History	0.238	0.056	0.144	0.250	0.389	0.055	0.247	-0.111	-	0.028	0.505	0.193	0.032	0.193
Traditional Masculine Socialization	-0.505	-0.367	-0.289	0.389	-0.167	0.055	0.110	0.444	0.028	-	-0.089	0.032	-0.290	0.032
Right Wing/ Alt Right	0.270	-0.106	0.154	0.238	0.386	-0.029	0.455	-0.238	0.505	-0.089	-	0.327	0.155	0.327
Feminism	0.361	-0.071	0.056	-0.032	0.129	-0.042	0.472	-0.129	0.193	0.032	0.327	-	0.441	0.255
Manosphere	0.189	-0.071	-0.111	0.129	-0.032	-0.358	0.313	0.193	0.032	-0.290	0.155	0.441	-	0.068
Racism	0.017	-0.071	0.056	-0.032	0.290	-0.200	0.313	-0.129	0.193	0.032	0.327	0.255	0.068	-

Key Concepts — CAM Nodes

Below is a brief overview of the content and context for each of the identified nodes in the CAM:

Systemic Oppression. The most commonly discussed theme within r/ML is related to patterns of oppression, primarily based on identity (e.g., race, sex/gender, ability). Relatedly, themes emphasizing the importance of **Solidarity/Inclusion**, often discussed how members could challenge oppression or be better allies to those with marginalized identities. Also closely related is the theme of **Stigma/Bigotry**, considered a significant aspect of systemic oppression.

Mental Health. Themes relating to mental health included such as issues as constrained emotional expression due to masculine socialization, lack of emotional support for males, or the intolerance of vulnerability/weakness in masculinity.

Violence/Sexual Violence. Topics related to violence, and especially sexual violence, were commonly discussed in the context of systemic oppression (e.g., discussions about who experiences certain kinds of violence more often, such as police violence or domestic violence).

Gender/Sexual Identity Acceptance. Most themes related to gender and sexual identity touched on topics related to homophobia/transphobia and ways that those can manifest,

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discriminatory policies or ways that the legal system perpetuates harm. They also included themes related to raising awareness or increasing visibility of particular gender or sexual minority identities or issues.

Misogyny. Especially as r/ML aims to distinguish itself from its Manosphere counterpart (the Men's Rights Movement), the topic of misogyny is commonly and denounced. As r/ML focuses on men and masculinity, the community discourages members from blaming or scapegoating women for their struggles.

Building a Healthy Masculinity. Identified as one of r/ML's main projects, Building a Healthy Masculinity is a common theme. Understanding **Traditional Masculine Socialization** is considered necessary in the process of deconstructing and reconstructing masculinity.

Research/Science/History. r/ML places a strong emphasis on the role of research in advancing particular arguments or claims; these themes include references to studies or historical accounts related to the topic at hand or discussed the role that science or history plays in their ideological positions about something.

Right-Wing/Alt Right Ideology. Discussion about right-wing ideologies tended to describe common forms of them and their effects on marginalized groups. Similarly, r/ML discussed communities from **The Manosphere**, especially the Men's Rights Movement and Incel communities, were framed as ideologies in opposition to r/ML's.

Intersectional Feminism. r/ML's self-description and mission statements identify them as a pro-feminist community. Within the top 30 threads, 7 threads were coded as explicitly discussing feminism, feminist concepts, or linked to explicitly feminist sources.

Racism. Topics discussed include how particular right-wing groups or ideologies encourage or enact racism, often in the form of violence. Other discussions about race commonly include how racism interacts with gender and sexuality.

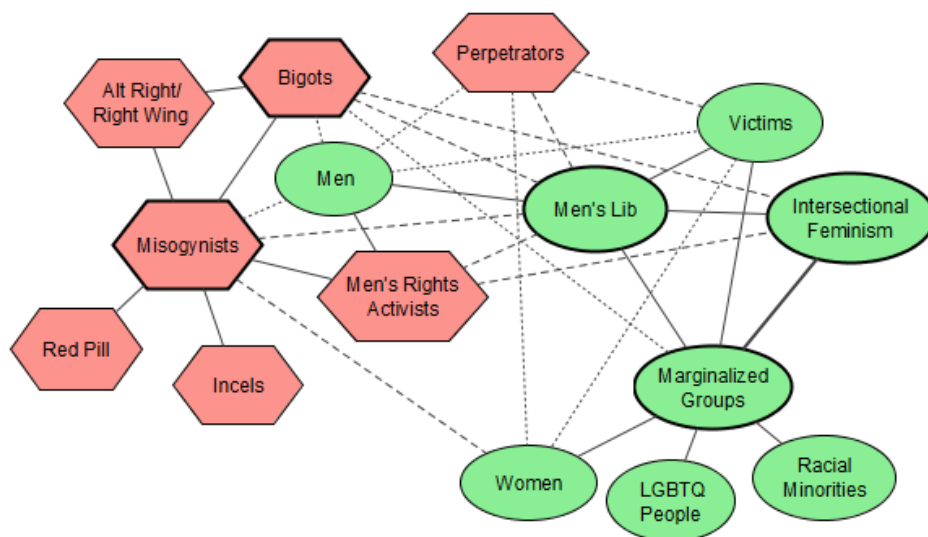
Men's Liberation Ingroup and Outgroup Social Identities

Within r/ML, social identities were at the heart of most discussion topics. While issues that commonly impact men and boys were the central themes of discussion, other social identities and how those identities intersect with gender interwove throughout discussions. Some of these social identities included sexuality, race, class, and disability. While there was a primary focus on issues that impact men, discussions also included the perspectives and impacts on women and non-binary people.

Below is the CAM illustrating r/ML ingroup identities versus outgroup identities, and how they relate to each other:

Figure 9. *Men's Liberation: Social Identities CAM*

MensLib - Ingroups/Outgroups



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The following table provides descriptions of the identity orientations as they are illustrated above, including a brief description of the main differences and relationship to the social identities of r/ML members:

Table 6. *Men's Liberation Ingroup and Outgroup Social Identities*

Social Identity	Orientation	Brief Description of Relationship with Social Identity
Alt Right/ Right Wing	Outgroup	Conservative and right-wing ideologies are rejected due to being perceived as oppressive, especially their constructions of gender and sexuality. The Alt Right is considered to be made up of extreme radical groups that promote bigotry.
Bigots	Outgroup	Bigotry in its various forms is aspirationally rejected by r/ML, as it aims to engage in discussion about oppression for various marginalized groups.
Feminists	Ingroup	Feminism is considered the primary lens through which r/ML explores issues, specifically through Intersectional Feminism. Some forms of feminism are rejected, particularly ones perceived as oppressive to specific marginalized groups (e.g. Trans Exclusive Radical Feminism).
Involuntarily Celibate (Incels)	Outgroup	A group of primarily men, who consider themselves involuntarily celibate. Within r/ML, incels are considered a radical, misogynist hate group.
LGBTQ People	Ingroup	r/ML aims to be inclusive of LGBTQ people, with several threads indicating explicit support of transgender people and sexual minorities.
Marginalized Groups	Ingroup	As r/ML endorses an Intersectional Feminist lens, topics in r/ML often highlight experiences of people with marginalized identities, such as race, sexuality, and disability.
Men	Ingroup	r/MR is centered around issues impacting men and masculinity.
Men's Lib	Ingroup	The did not appear to be a strong "Men's Lib" label serving as an ingroup social identity within the data, though there did appear to be a sense of community and support.
Men's Rights Advocates (MRAs)	Outgroup	As r/ML is focused on men's issues, it has some overlap with the Men's Rights Movement. However, r/ML rejects the MRM, primarily because of their perceived hostile relationship with women and feminism.

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Misogynists	Outgroup	r/ML appears to aim to be clear about its rejection of misogyny and gender essentialism.
Perpetrators	Outgroup	The social identity of a "perpetrator" is an aspirationally rejected outgroup identity—the community advocates for reducing harm to others.
Racial Minorities	Ingroup	r/ML strives to include racial minorities and aims to address the intersection of experiences between gender, sexuality, and race.
Red Pill	Outgroup	r/ML rejects the Red Pill community and ideology, identifying them as misogynistic and prescribing gender essentialism.
Victims	Ingroup	r/ML aims to center the needs of victims and explore systems of oppression.
Women	Ingroup	While r/ML aims to center the discussion around issues that impact men, they encourage women and people of all genders to participate.

Description of r/ML's Ideological Network

As addressed in the previous section on ingroup and outgroup identities, Intersectional Feminism is the main lens through which community members are encouraged to engage in discussion. r/ML differentiates itself from the other two communities in the study in terms of the content and framing of topics discussed and its explicit rejection of the other two communities. r/ML tends to frame gender as a combination of genetics and social forces, firmly rejecting gender essentialism (especially in terms of its emphasis on LGBTQ issues). The political priorities of r/ML tend to incorporate a broader set of social identities than both other communities, such as those of race, class, nationality, ability, and sexuality.

Additionally, r/ML emphasizes the importance of including feminist perspectives on women's experiences (and a firm rejection of misogyny) and how they relate to men's experiences and gender roles more broadly. Understanding the impact of traditional masculine socialization, especially on members' mental health and social relationships (both platonic and romantic), is a significant discussion area. This exploration of traditional masculine socialization

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serves as a basis for deconstructing members' experiences and trying to find new ways of engaging with their internal experiences and interactions, particularly in the face of the expectation for men to be stoic or constrain emotional expressions.

One of the most central themes in r/ML is systemic oppression, often seen as raising awareness of discriminatory policies or social behaviors or attitudes that disproportionately negatively impact specific groups of people based on their social identities. The concept of oppression is tied to victimhood, with nuanced explorations of how violence (systemic, interpersonal, and sexual violence) and harm are perpetuated.

A central theme within r/ML is its focus on sexual violence. While r/ML often sheds light on the impact of sexual violence on boys and men (perpetrated by both men and women), it also explores ways in which an exaggerated fear of false rape accusations (sometimes dubbed "false rape hysteria") are harmful to survivors by obscuring justice and instilling further stigma of survivors. Additionally, r/ML engaged in discussions about consent and how members can better identify, respect, and defend sexual boundaries (for themselves and others) and prevent sexual violence. This line of discourse represents the primary way r/ML differentiates itself from the other two groups in its emphasis on taking responsibility for identifying how members might fit into systems of oppression and privilege and how they can avoid perpetuating harm against others.

Phase 1 Comparisons and Conclusions

There are stark differences between the three communities regarding their political priorities and engagement with specific topics. The main overarching political differences tend to center around the following dimensions: understandings of victimhood, orientations to feminism and strategies for dealing with social problems, attitudes towards women, how they discuss

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sexual violence, and endorsement of gender essentialist beliefs⁴. This section will provide brief overviews, but most of these topics will be explored in more depth in subsequent sections.

One of the most notable contrasts among the three groups is their orientation to victimhood. Both r/TRP and r/MR share a view that society systematically oppresses men and privileges women; r/ML rejects this analysis of the overall gender hierarchy while engaging in more nuanced discussions about how the dominant gender order also harms men. This will be explored in the discussion section on *The Political Construction of Victimhood*.

Each group differs significantly in its orientation to feminism. While r/TRP and r/MR both reject feminism, r/TRP has less conflict in their firm rejection, whereas there is evidence of a more conflicted rejection of feminism within r/MR. On the other end of the spectrum, r/ML embraces feminism and considers it beneficial for men's liberation.

Despite the agreement between r/TRP and r/MR on the diagnosis of societal problems that oppress men and benefit women and their diagnosis of feminism as the root of that problem, r/TRP and r/MR differ significantly in strategies for dealing with it. While r/MR aims to spread awareness of men's oppression, r/TRP appears to have some tension in their belief system: on the one hand, they claim to have unique access to an understanding of "reality," but on the other hand, there is a sense of stigma around "speaking the truth" and a general belief that the consequences of trying to speak about these issues are not worth it. Further, due to their strong gender essentialist beliefs, and despite their agreement with r/MR about the source of issues, r/TRP tends to negatively judge r/MR as engaging in "female" behaviors of complaining and

⁴ For a thorough description and discussion on the fallacy of gender essentialism, what kinds of arguments invoke gender essentialist beliefs, and why they are scientifically objectionable, please read Hufendiek's (2020) social philosophical paper.

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trying to convince others of men's suffering. This topic will be explored in more depth in the *Phase 3* section of the results.

Another main difference between r/TRP and r/MR is their orientation to women. In r/MR, there is far less discussion about how to engage with women or dating strategies, as women tend to be framed as inherently threatening and hostile to men. While women are commonly framed as hostile in r/TRP, there is more ambivalence toward them as they are explicitly sexually desired. Occasionally in r/MR, there are sentiments reflecting men's fears about dating or having children with women and risking financial exploitation or being denied child custody. This topic will be explored in more depth in the *discussion's Ambivalent Sexism* section.

The groups differ significantly in their orientation to sexual violence. Despite the shared emphasis on the "epidemic" of false rape accusations against men by women and the resulting destruction of their lives, r/MR diverges from r/TRP in discussing male victims of sexual violence (who almost wholly ignored within r/TRP). r/MR and r/ML have a few overlapping topics, such as men and boys as victims of sexual violence, the harmful stigma male survivors face, and discussions about mental health issues specific to men. However, discussion about these issues within r/ML diverges from r/MR in several important ways, particularly in their inclusive framing of victimhood; this will also be covered in more depth in the section on *The Political Construction of Victimhood*.

The other primary way in which these communities differ is in terms of their relationship with gender essentialist beliefs. Gender essentialist beliefs are at the core of the r/TRP philosophy, and these gender ideals interact with their larger political belief systems. In contrast to r/TRP, r/MR tends to focus on men as disadvantaged in society and women as being culpable for their oppression, with far less emphasis on the perceived natural biological differences

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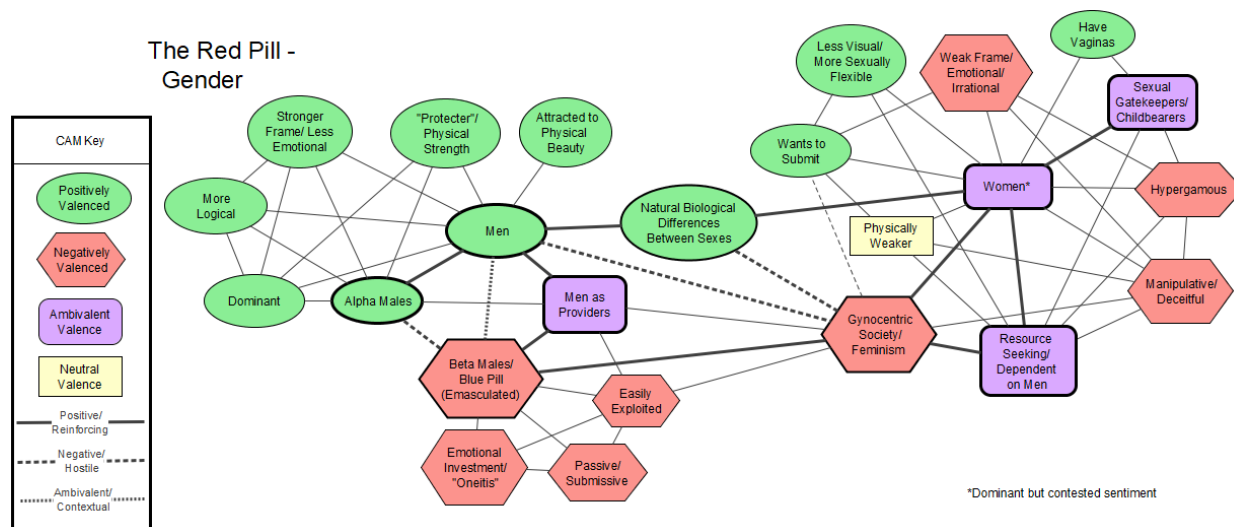
between men and women. Conversely, the r/ML movement rejects gender essentialism and domination, which is similarly (though inversely) reflected in their political analyses and priorities. The interaction between r/MR's gender ideology with their larger political ideology is less clear, as there is a less clear or coherent theory of gender within their discussions. The *Phase 2* results address these dynamics in more depth.

Phase 2 – Gender CAMs

The following CAMs present each community's dominant ideological beliefs about gender, particularly emphasizing beliefs about the roles of biology and culture. The most important concepts and relationships are bolded.

The Red Pill – Gender Ideology

Figure 10. *The Red Pill: Gender CAM*



With r/TRP's main focus being on sexual strategy, one of its primary ideological priorities relates to beliefs about the natural biological differences between sexes, which r/TRP aims to understand and exploit to their advantage. These biological differences are conceptualized as very strong and innate, thus the bolded relationships. Women have an ambivalent coding: despite a larger pattern of general disdain, distrust, or resentment towards

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them (negative valence), they are also sexually desired (positive valence). The role of women as sexual gatekeepers and child-bearers is highlighted as it is central to the concept of the Sexual Marketplace (SMP). The ambivalent coding of “sexual-gatekeeper” reflects women’s perceived social privilege as the “choosers” (negative valence) and the ideological belief of this role as being vital to evolutionary selection and the strengthening of the human gene pool (positive valence). Women are considered to be “hypergamous,” meaning that they are sexually attracted to men with higher social status (and therefore SMV) and are always looking to “trade up” in the SMP; this is related to beliefs about women being fickle, sexually promiscuous, and adulterous.

Society is considered “gynocentric,” as in preferential to or favoring women; it is considered hostile to men and the “truth” about biological differences, primarily due to the influences of feminism. The fundamental characteristics of women being resource-seeking and having a higher capacity for manipulation and deceit are considered a driving force behind why society is so skewed toward women’s needs and desires. The gynocentric society is seen as inherently hostile toward men, but especially toward masculinity itself, with a tendency toward “feminizing” or emasculating men. They believe society shapes men to be beta males, facilitating their financial exploitation by making them less able or willing to set boundaries in their relationships with women.

Building on the gender essentialist views about the differences between men and women, the “alpha male” is considered the masculine ideal. As alpha males are considered to be “real men,” and beta males are considered to be emasculated and less manly, the bolded ambivalent relationship between “men” and “beta males” reflects this as beta males are considered a lesser version of men. Significant discussion revolves around alpha or beta qualities and how men can avoid being beta and become more alpha (and therefore more manly). However, both alpha and

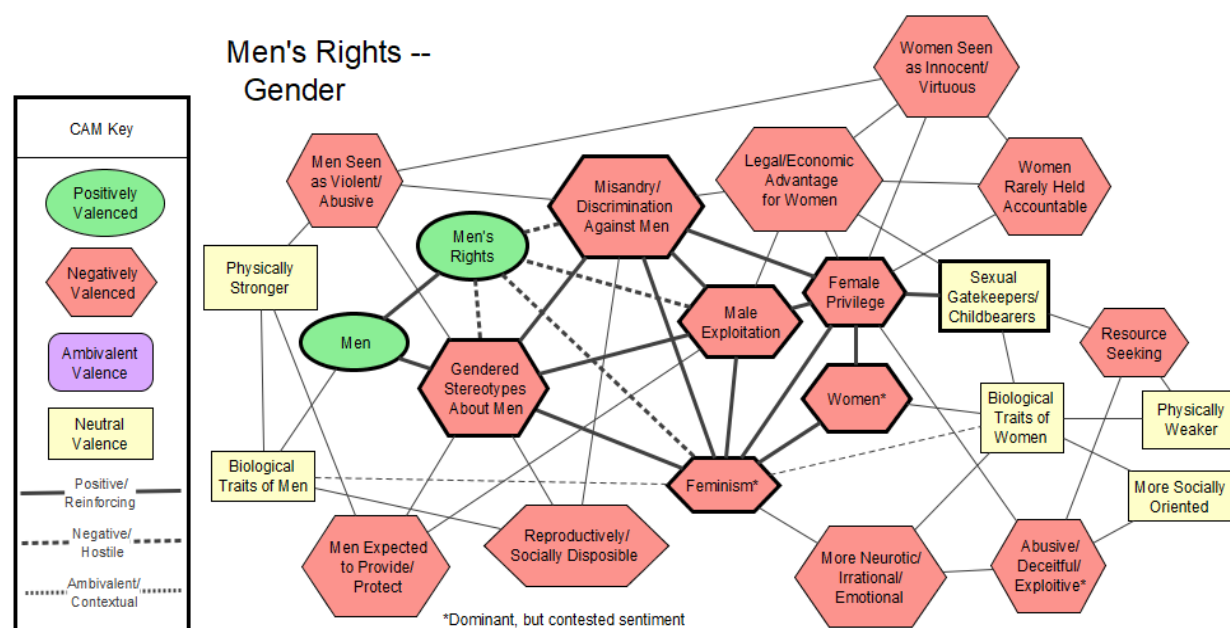
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beta men are considered providers; as r/TRP considers women to be fundamentally dependent on men, they see this as the sole reason women relate to beta males in a romantic or sexual capacity.

The phrase “Alpha Fucks/Beta Bucks” (AF/BB) is a fundamental principle of r/TRP, based on the idea that alpha men are desired by women to meet their sexual needs, whereas beta males are sought solely for their resources.

Men's Rights – Gender Ideology

Figure 11. *Men's Rights: Gender CAM*



There are some areas of overlap between r/MR and r/TRP beliefs about the biological determinants of gender and perceptions of social order. However, while r/MR tends toward sharing some assumptions about the biological determinants of gender, there is significantly less focus on this area than in r/TRP, and the contexts were limited in which this issue tended to arise. Additionally, the two communities draw very different conclusions about how to engage with gender roles or expectations of men, as r/TRP encourages leaning into these assumed differences

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to become more dominant, whereas r/MR tends instead to criticize specific gendered expectations of men.

In contrast with r/TRP, r/MR focuses far less on the biological beliefs about gender and more on the perceived gender order in society, primarily viewed as favoring/protecting women and discriminating against men. There is a shared sentiment about feminists or women more generally as being irrational or over-emotional, as well as exploitive and deceitful; however, these assertions are at times contested or dismissed as not being relevant to the fight for Men's Rights. While r/TRP is explicit in their belief system about these shared traits about women and feminists based on fundamental biological differences between men and women, r/MR does not posit root causes within the collected data. The topic of the biological differences between sexes appeared only one time within the collected data from r/MR, in the context of a thread endorsing the contents from the notorious "Google Memo" (for a review of this content and the events surrounding it, please refer to Pendergraft (2019)). This discussion involved contesting the validity of evidence for the gender-based Wage Gap and feminists' rejection of arguments justifying gender wage differences based on biological factors⁵.

While there is less emphasis on biological explanations for the belief about women's neuroses or abusive/exploitive tendencies, there is sentiment linking a perceived societal unwillingness to hold women accountable for their actions, which is mainly tied to their female privilege. The main target of hostility within r/MR tends to be toward a society that is perceived as coddling, favoring, and protecting women (especially from the repercussions of their actions)

⁵ For a review on the research about gender and race-based wage gaps, please see Bishu and Alkadry (2017), or Sent and van Staveren's (2019) critical feminist review of behavioral economic research examining gender differences.

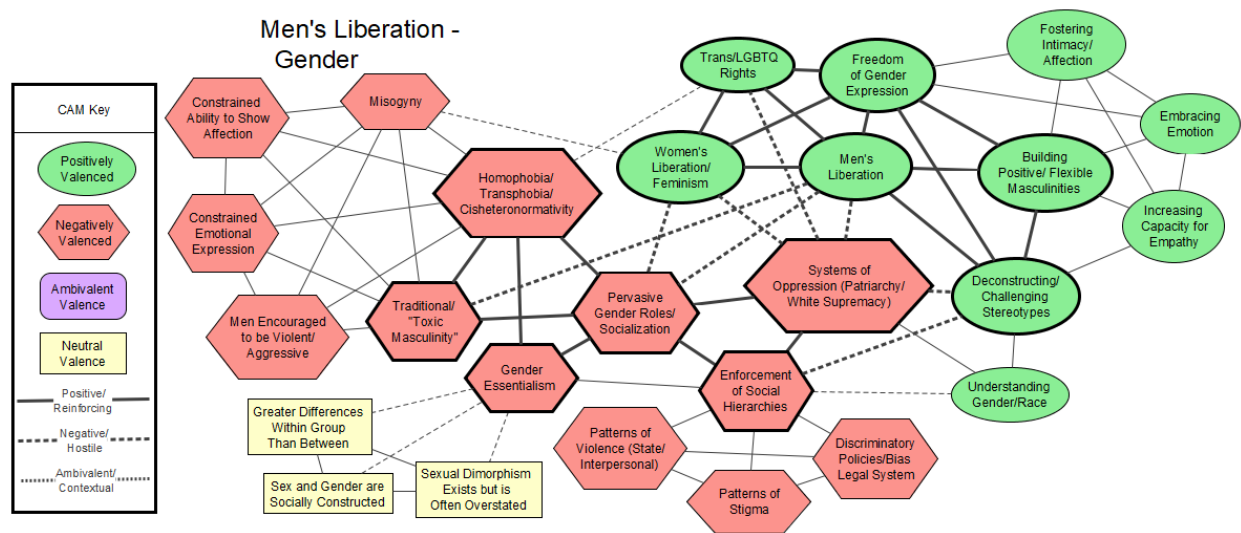
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— which is not necessarily the same as blaming the women themselves. However, there is also ample evidence in the collected data of r/MR members blaming women directly for men’s oppression.

Men being considered disposable contrasts with women’s perceived protected status. Emphasis on women’s protected status is highlighted, especially through discussions about instances where women have engaged in physical, sexual, or emotional abuse of men or boys (including incidents of rape/abuse allegations that are determined false) and have received little to no punishment.

Men’s Lib – Gender Ideology

Figure 12. *Men's Liberation: Gender CAM*



The Men’s Liberation Movement is significantly different from both r/TRP and r/MR in several ways; most significantly, within r/ML, men's liberation is believed to be intertwined with the liberation of people of all genders (and along other dimensions of identity, such as sexuality or race). These relationships are emphasized in the deconstruction of gender norms — especially more traditional masculine gender norms (often described as “toxic masculinity” when in its most extreme forms). Traditional gender norms, while often privileging men in some ways, are

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believed to hurt women, Gender Non-Conforming (GNC) people, as well as the men who hold them. The emphasis on LGBTQ rights is also often highlighted, noting that significant numbers of men are trans, gay, bisexual, or queer (and therefore belong under the banner of “men”), and how the fight for the freedom to self-determine and express one’s self is dependent on the dismantling of systems of oppression.

The role of biology within r/ML is not strongly emphasized; instead, some discussions aim to counterbalance traditional beliefs about how biology plays in the construction of gender — especially as traditional gender roles are considered to be rooted in gender essentialism, conflating sex and gender, and emphasizing erroneous beliefs about large and fundamental differences between men and women. The Men’s Liberation community stands in particularly stark contrast with r/TRP in their rejection of gender essentialism. When the discussion of biology does come up, it tends to be about how biological sex, gender identity, and sexuality are different and socially constructed; this is often highlighted to confront or contest traditional concepts of gender, which are seen as being rooted in unscientific and regressive gender essentialist beliefs. However, in contrast to r/TRP’s positively valenced relationship with “biological differences between the sexes” (which are framed as evolutionarily important and good for humanity’s well-being and health as a species), these are coded as neutrally valenced, as they tend to be expressed in value-neutral ways.

An understanding of the socialization processes is prominent within r/ML. Systems of oppression, such as the patriarchy and white supremacy, are conceptualized as enforcing social hierarchies between marginalized and dominating identities. These social hierarchies are seen as being perpetuated through violence (both state-sanctioned, such as police violence, as well as interpersonal violence, such as domestic violence or hate crimes) or the threat of violence,

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stigma, and in the legal system (through discriminatory policies or unequal/biased enforcement of the law). Understanding and subverting how violence and stigma are facilitated in society is considered a central project of r/ML, coming back to the beliefs of interdependence and everyone's liberation being intertwined.

While both r/ML and r/MR discuss the harmful pervasiveness of gender roles, they differ significantly in how they engage with that topic. While r/MR tends to focus predominantly on the negative stereotypes about men and how they see women as privileged, r/ML emphasizes more inclusive understandings of gender oppression, incorporating perspective on how gender roles also relate to the struggles of women or Gender Non-Conforming (GNC) people, as well as men (and often social identities interact with gender).

Building on these beliefs about how gender is constructed, especially in the context of inequality and oppression, one of the main projects of r/ML is to find ways to help individuals work toward more unrestrained gender expressions and better mental/social health. This project of building healthier/more flexible masculinities is related to deconstructing and challenging traditional conceptions of gender and masculinity, or “toxic masculinity” in its most extreme expression. Some of the most commonly discussed traditionally masculine gender roles include themes related to how men are or are not allowed to express emotion or affection; how men and boys are encouraged to be violent or aggressive; and how these factors impact their ability to understand and regulate their emotions, or to connect with and understand other people.

Phase 3 Results

The following CAMs present each community's dominant ideological relationships with shame, mainly focusing on their beliefs about significant sources of shame or injustice in society, concepts that they see as being wrongly stigmatized or rejected, and the concepts which they

Figure 13. *The Red Pill: Shame CAM*

Figure 13. *The Red Pill: Shame CAM*

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understanding of society as inherently hostile to men and the natural gendered order of male *Dominance*. This tension is most evident in r/TRP's relationship with *Victimhood*, as they embrace a worldview of a "*Gynocentric Society*" that bestows privilege upon females and discriminates against men. Their conception of the current, inverted gender hierarchy is seen as engineered by *Feminists/SJWs/Blue Pill* in cooperation with "*Cultural Elites*" (related to "*PC Culture*"). Feminism is seen as a force that is trying to "feminize" society, creating weaker men (*Beta Males*), who r/TRP see as being easier for women to exploit (*Exploited/Cucked Men*). The following quotes illustrate some of these sentiments:

- 1) It's the same reason you can't raise pro-male issues that aren't anti-woman in the slightest.
"My best friend was raped in prison last night." "OMG shitlord women are raped more shut up about your privileged patriarchy and cry me a river about your one stupid rape."
"My dog died last night." "OMG shitlord why are you comparing women to dogs?"
"Uh...I wasn't. I was just talking about my dog?" "And not about women and the issues we face?! Fucking misogynist."
If we take our eye off the ball for a single second, people might realize that women are stupid cunts and stop taking this feminism thing seriously. We can't let that happen. Down with men! But just white middle class men from the United States and Europe.
- 2) Masculinity (polarity) is now *illegal* in England.
Masculinity is now defined as an "abusive relationship"

In the first quote, found in a discussion about feminist *Hypocrisy* and censorship, the commenter presents a mock exchange with hypothetical feminist responses to issues he sees as impacting men. The comment reflects a belief that society is indifferent to the suffering of men and coddles women (*Entitled/Coddled Women*). Additionally, this quote demonstrates a common form of general disdain for women and their perceived inferior intellect; this intellectual inferiority is related to beliefs in women being more *Neurotic/Emotional*. The second quote is found in a thread criticizing an article about psychological abuse, which includes an example of a man's

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disparaging remarks about his wife's physical appearance; discussion in the thread about the framing of the husband's remarks as abuse is seen as antagonistic to the natural order and *Male Sexual Desire*. Members of r/TRP saw the article as evidence of feminists using the framing of psychological abuse as a way to oppress men and reject the natural gender order. Finally, the quote reflects how r/TRP ideology sees masculinity as stigmatized, and in this case, to the point of being outlawed.

Red Pill Beliefs are seen as shamed and stigmatized wrongly by society, often through censorship. They view efforts to "speak the truth" or discuss "reality," especially issues revolving around gender, as being unfairly punished and disparagingly labeled as "*Misogyny*." The following quote illustrates this:

Remember when talking to strangers, co-workers, friends and family even if you present a redpill argument eloquently and grounded in fact you will be accused of sexism and misogyny and your career and social life will suffer. Unless you have serious star power and fuck you money like Joe Rogan DO NOT TALK ABOUT REDPILL or redpill related ideas.

The above quote contains one of the most commonly cited and explicit rules within r/TRP, which instructs men not to openly discuss r/TRP ideas, tying this rule to the self-preservative need to avoid negative consequences that might undermine their efforts to achieve social dominance. The theme of *Distrusting Women*, which is considered to play a crucial role in men's ability to protect themselves, is a common theme related to censorship. Expressing distrust of women, especially when it comes to expressing doubts about sexual/domestic violence accusations, is seen as unfairly punished and is tied to the feminist agenda of reinforcing "female privilege" that enables women to exploit men.

Similar to previous r/TRP CAMs, *Women* have an ambivalent affective coding. Despite the generally negative view of women, sexually pursuing them is one of the main goals of r/TRP.

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The positive affective component of the ambivalent coding for women reflects how women *can* be considered worthy of time and attention despite their perceived inferiority. This appreciation is typically tied to the man's ability to dominate or to the woman's embrace of their "natural roles" of being subservient (*Subservience/Dependence*) and attentive to men (*Emotional Investment*) and men's sexual desires. The following quotes show this:

- 1) While betas exist to serve women, women exist to serve alphas. Sometimes this dynamic is subtle; other times women will explicitly enjoy being or feeling used up by their alpha male partners. Treat her a little bit like she exists to serve you to establish the desired alpha-to-female relationship pattern.
- 2) Much chatter in the manosphere regarding the unpleasant nature of women is only accurate when describing the interaction patterns of women with men who haven't learned female nature and how to consciously manipulate it so as to tip the balance of power in his favor.

In these quotes, the ability to enjoy and appreciate women is predicated on their domination. At times, the expression of negative affect toward women is denounced as resulting from insufficient psychological strength or dominance, as seen in the second quote.

Even within the more positive framings of women, they are considered potentially dangerous, manipulative, and deceitful (*Female Manipulation*). Women are often framed as being "like children" in their inherent intellectual and physical inferiority, thus necessitating constant vigilance or distrust. The following quotes demonstrate these sentiments:

- 1) Women are not inherently evil. It's not their fault. They are fundamentally different than us. Their brain has a different chemistry, and it's not their fault. They are the more vulnerable sex, and their brains have evolved to maximize their ability to survive and reproduce.
- 2) Treat women like men, of course you begin to think of them as shitty, evil men. Men have never been able to get away with acting like that.

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Treat women like fun children, and you begin to appreciate them for their impulse driven actions. When a child screws up, you aren't mad at them, they didn't know any better, it was just what they were wired to do.

Of course, you don't let children near the things you value most, they will just break them.

- 3) As a rule it is the nature of women to use men for protection, resources, and, in the case of her interaction with alpha-males, reproduction. This is due in large part to their physical vulnerabilities. Manipulation is an imperfect word to use to describe this mechanism because it presupposes a degree of maliciousness or intentional deception but it's useful in that it reminds us of how tricky women instinctively are with respect to the value they advertise versus what they provide in an interaction pattern not deliberately calibrated by a more-manipulative, intelligent, and self-interested male.

The first quote was taken from a discussion about women as hypergamous (*AWALT/Hypergamy*), meaning that they are always looking to “trade-up” in the SMP by getting into relationships with higher quality men, even while currently in a relationship (thus their propensity to cheat); this reflects how beliefs in women’s hypergamy connect with beliefs about women’s psychological fickleness and evolutionary sexual roles. The quotes provided in this paragraph and the previous one demonstrate some of the most positive attitudes expressed toward women found in the collected data for r/TRP; these more positively valenced orientations rely on a conceptualization of women as inferior and essentially different (to be explored in more depth in the Ambivalent Sexism section of the discussion).

Traits determined to be “feminine” or “female traits,” particularly emotional investment, weakness/softness, and subservience/dependence (often tied to *Lack of Ambition/Discipline*), are generally considered to be desirable in women but pathetic in men (though at times, emotional investment and lack of discipline are stigmatized and rejected as pathetic in women as well). Emotional investment is particularly discouraged in men as being a female trait, as illustrated by this quote:

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The thing is, women are programmed to focus on one guy, because that's how women evolved. That's why oneitis in men is inherently a beta/feminine behavior, because men evolved to spread their seed across several females.

The above quote ties the rejection of emotional investment to femininity to evolution. Emotional disinvestment is considered an essential strategy for maintaining dominance; men deemed as displaying too much emotional investment are ridiculed and stigmatized as effeminate.

Like emotional investment, weakness and submission are considered feminine and therefore rejected in men. This rejection of weakness as feminine likely plays a central role in the tension over victimhood in r/TRP. Despite their beliefs about men's oppression in a gynocentric society, it is common for r/TRP to look down upon men who are considered to be "cucked" or exploited by women, with some mixture of disdain or sympathy. The affective response to these situations tends to be shaped by whether the men are perceived as tolerant of the exploitation; subjects perceived as fighting to resist their subjugation but losing to a cruel and discriminatory system tend to receive more sympathy than those perceived as submitting.

The specific nodes of "Beta Males" and "*Low SMV Men*" are also central areas of tension for shame, as there appears to be a tension between internalization and externalization of these stigmatized traits within the community. Low SMV males and beta males have a negative relationship with "male sexual desire," as r/TRP logic posits that women are not sexually attracted to beta males despite their desires to exploit them for attention and resources. Many members identify either previously having "beta male traits" or "being betas," and being at various stages of undoing those qualities. This history of "being a beta" or having "beta traits" is typically framed as either a result of natural biological variation necessary to overcome, or more commonly, due to Blue Pill

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indoctrination necessary to unlearn. This rejection of “beta traits” is one of the clearest expressions of internalized shame within r/TRP discourse, reflecting a desire to expunge these qualities. Conversely, calling other men “beta” is a common insult (including among disagreeing community members), reflecting the externalization of that shame. The following two quotes provide examples of “beta” showing up with internalized and externalized shame characteristics:

- 1) Part of Killing the Beta^TM for me has been building a thriving life so a bitch won't dominate me. I climb rocks, do martial arts, dance, study, cook awesome food.....and boring fitness stuff, too.
- 2) Society hates betas and they will rip you apart for it if you ask for forgiveness. Most of you fake alphas do it here too. Like the good little sheep you were programmed to be. But anyways my point is... maintaining frame is essential in life and a large part is not walking around asking for forgiveness, and the more you do that the more youll see how often theyll try and shame you and how little it will affect you.

The first quote above shows how the idea of the “beta male” has been applied internally and expunged from the commenter’s self-image as he “kills” this part of himself by building a “thriving life” that prevents him from being dominated by “a bitch.” The second quote provides an example of how beta is used as an insult; by referring to “most of you fake alphas,” the commenter denounces most members of r/TRP as being beta males, as indicated by their willingness to submit and seek forgiveness. As many r/TRP members appear to have been attracted to the r/TRP community by their desire to be more sexually successful with women, there is a strong emphasis on increasing one’s SMV; this appears to produce a similar kind of internalized/externalized shame dynamic, with members who are at various stages in their development of the qualities determined to increase one’s SMV. These dynamics center around improving one’s looks through exercise (especially lifting weights), grooming, and cultivating the will to dominate.

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Men who are determined not to be trying hard enough to improve their SMV (*Lack of Self-Respect*), or to be trying to improve their SMV in objectionable ways (e.g., trying too hard and displaying desperation, or focusing too much on pick-up artistry at the expense of other self-improvement goals like physical fitness) are often looked down upon or ridiculed. The following quote is representative of this:

Then you get the betas who are scared of you and treat you like a king. The guys who stutter around you and worship the ground you walk on. You have the guys at the gym who end their sets early if you ask them for the rack because they're so fucking agreeable they're scared of telling you they have sets left. There was a dude who basically did my coursework for me for a while, whenever I'd ask him for help with a question he just sent me the full answer and it confused me at first why this guy was bending over backwards for me until I found out he was a faggot and that's when I realised just how much worship women get from betas; pathetic.

Then you have the betas who are absolutely threatened by you and try to AMOG you at every turn. They get all hyper-competitive in groups, especially with girls, and are fucking loud and obnoxious. I just sit back and let them crash and burn, knowing the golden rule is the more you talk the more faggy you come across. I feel kinda bad for these guys because they're not attractive and hate you because you are, but they don't lift or make any real effort and think being aggressive makes them more alpha so not my problem.

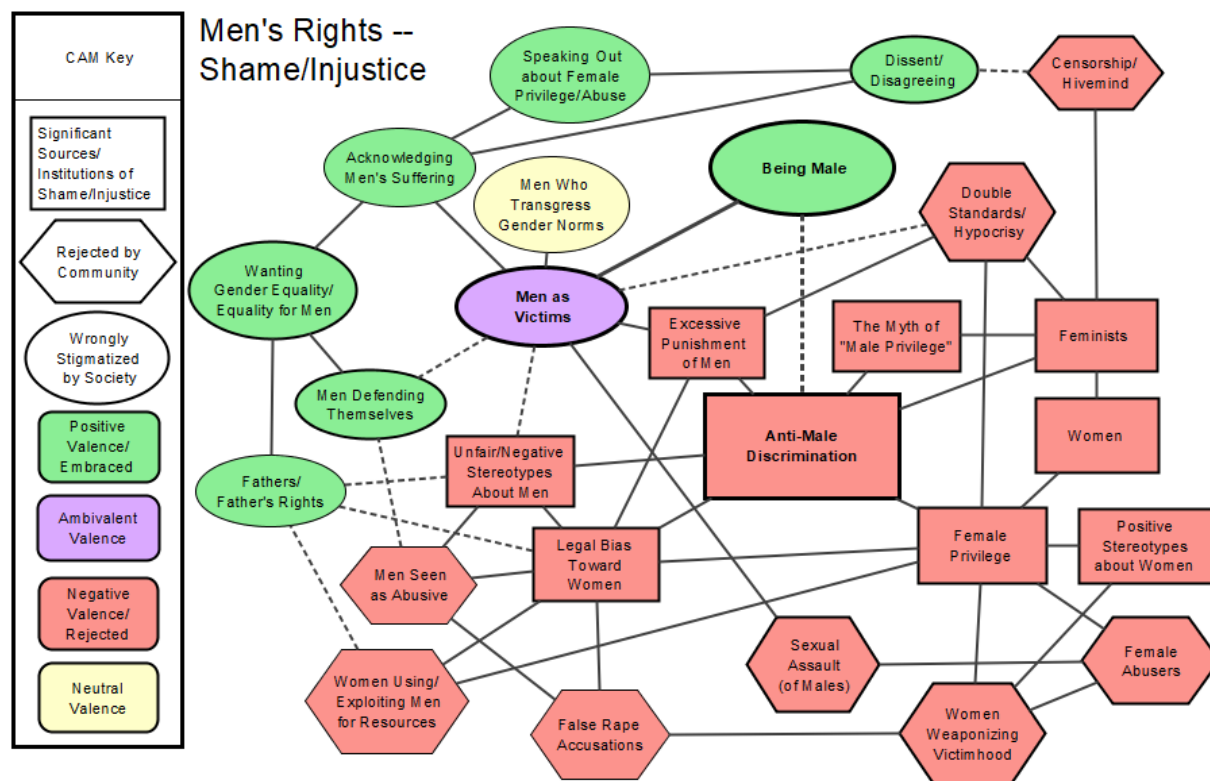
The above quote is notable in a few ways, including its overt homophobia (tied to gender essentialist beliefs about heterosexuality and disgust with the display of femininity in men) and the general disdain for men deemed to be beta males. According to the r/TRP Glossary, the term “AMOG” stands for “Alpha Male Of Group,” referring to a dynamic among males competing for social domination. The commenter emphasizes the importance of emotional disinvestment even within the context of competing for social dominance. He identifies in an earlier part of his post (not quoted here) that his dominance is the result of the qualities he nurtured through r/TRP-endorsed self-improvement strategies like lifting, thus feeding into his general disdain for the “beta males” whom he sees as being either too feminine or desperate to be manly and dominant but unwilling to put in the hard work that he has. The numerous negative judgments in the above

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quote reveal the overall tendency within r/TRP to look down upon and ridicule men who are determined not to conform to r/TRP's standards of masculinity.

Men's Rights – Shame and Resentment

Figure 14. *Men's Rights: Shame CAM*



Anti-Male Discrimination is at the core of r/MR's ideological map of shame and resentment. Men and boys are perceived to be shamed and rejected simply for *Being Male*. There is a strong sense that men are considered disposable within society, and their suffering is met with indifference, particularly in comparison to their view of how society views and interacts with women's issues. The following quote is demonstrative of this general orientation:

There's an old MRM joke that goes like this: When astronomers announced the end of the world, the headlines read, "Asteroid to strike the Earth, women and children hardest hit."

The punchline of the joke is reflective of one of the main arguments of the r/MR: that society minimizes men's suffering while amplifying the suffering of women. This relates to another key

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node in the above map, the ambivalently coded “*Men as Victims*.” This node is coded ambivalently due to the negative valence surrounding this perceived discrimination against males and the positive valence accorded to the acknowledgment of male victimhood. This is seen more specifically in *Acknowledging Men’s Suffering*. The acknowledgment of men’s suffering is seen as being crucial in seeking *Gender Equality/Equality for Men* within a society where victimhood is a label exclusively reserved for women and girls. The emphasis on “equality for men” reflects the idea that women have surpassed the goal of achieving “equality” in society and have gone on to establish an oppressive gender order for men. Men are considered to be victimized by society’s tendency to punish them unfairly and excessively (*Excessive Punishment of Men*). Their victimization and suffering, particularly at the hands of women (*Female Abusers*), is seen as ignored and invalidated, socially and legally. These beliefs are related to the significant source of anti-male discrimination identified by r/MR of *Unfair and Negative Stereotypes about Men*.

The most prominent of the negative stereotypes about men emphasized in r/MR is that of men as being abusive, violent, or predatory (*Men as Abusive*). This stereotype is linked to *Legal Bias Toward Women* in the courts and *False Rape Accusations*, as they perceive society as assuming men’s guilt. Conversely, *Female Privilege* is considered another significant source of anti-male discrimination, perpetuating *Positive Stereotypes about Women* as nurturing and innocent (and therefore incapable of violence/abuse). These positive stereotypes about women are seen as being a significant aspect of female privilege, protecting them from experiencing negative consequences for their actions, especially in contrast to what is seen as the excessive punishment of men.

Female privilege is seen as a significant source of protection for female abusers, including women who falsely accuse men of rape or domestic violence who are seen as

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weaponizing stereotypes of women as victims (*Women Weaponizing Victimhood*). The following quote is indicative of several of these themes:

It's a witch trial when women can point a finger and automatically be assumed a victim and innocent.

I know a person who broke up with his ex and out of spite she had her daughter accuse him of rape. This poor guy ends up getting life because a polygraph on a minor is inadmissible. Even the Innocence Project couldn't help. Yea great judicial system we have.

The above quote points to the pervasive view in r/MR's about how rape allegations ruin men's lives and how they rely on gendered assumptions of innocence and guilt. The commenter refers to an anecdotal experience of someone he knows to support his position about the nature of rape allegations being a "witch trial" for men (which is itself an ironic analogy to invoke, given the historically gendered nature of witch trials!), as he appears to believe and recount the perspective of the man who was convicted. The commenter supports the man's innocence by suggesting that a polygraph from the daughter is proof of her lying despite the dominant scientific consensus on the considerable problems with the validity of such procedures (Iacono & Ben-Shakhar, 2019). As outside observers, we cannot know the truth of the matter or how the commenter came to their decision; however, as the commenter presents the man's innocence without justification, this reflects the general distrust of sexual violence accusations within r/MR. The theme of gendered stereotypes of women's innocence and men's presumed guilt/violent natures is tied in with the related theme of women weaponizing victimhood to inflict harm on men.

In contrast to the focus on false rape accusations, r/MR also focuses on sexual violence perpetrated by women against men and boys to highlight society's indifference to men's suffering. Despite the scrutiny of women's accusations, sexual assault is typically rejected as bad for both sexes and generally denounced; however, the incidents of sexual violence focused on in

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the collected data is exclusively about violence perpetrated against men and boys by women, thus the specific qualifier in “*Sexual Assault (of Males)*.” Discussions about harassment are also included in this theme: harassment or sexual objectification of men by women is highlighted, as is the perceived lack of punishment for the women who engage in it. These themes are often tied to beliefs about female privilege protecting women from experiencing the kinds of consequences men would receive for the same behavior; the theme of *Hypocrisy*, commonly manifesting as hyperbolic wondering about where the *Feminist* outcry is, commonly accompanies discussion of these incidents.

Female privilege is also linked with *Women Exploiting Men for Resources* — especially fathers (*Fathers/Father’s Rights*) — particularly through child support and alimony. Fathers are seen as being unfairly treated by civil courts, especially in child custody hearings, as negative stereotypes about men are seen to contribute to fathers being considered less capable of caring for or less invested in their children. The following quote is found in a thread about a woman sexually molesting an 11-year-old boy:

The victim better start saving up his allowance for when he gets hit with an order to pay the child support for all these years where he was in middle school being a deadbeat dad /s
(/s for the deadbeat part, not for the victim ending up paying child support)

The “/s” in the above quote is used to indicate sarcasm; the commenter clarifies that they are not being sarcastic about the plausibility of the 11-year-old victim being on the hook for child support, which is indicative of a general sense of resentment in r/MR about the unfairness and bias towards males.

Related to the perceived assumption of men’s abusive nature is the theme of *Men Defending Themselves*. Men who defend themselves against women in physically violent situations are seen to incur shame and stigma from society, as they see society denying their

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victimhood and casting their attempts to defend themselves as expressions of male violence and abuse. The following quote from a commenter discussing his experience in a physically abusive relationship is representative of this view:

[T]he worst point in that relationship was one day when she was just nonstop punching me in the corner, shoving and yelling over something I can't even remember. I couldn't take the pain anymore, and after telling her to stop several times I finally pushed her away so I could get away from the punches. Cue crying, cue "why would you put your hands on me?", cue her telling all of her friends, and cue everyone turning against me. Keep in mind I used to tell people what she was doing and they would just laugh and not take me seriously, even police when I called didn't do much but "you two behave now" and that was it. But me pushing her away brought down an unholy amount of negativity on my back, and I lost a few friends.

The above quote embodies several of the main themes of r/MR's relationship with shame and injustice. These themes include the perceived legal bias (when his calls to the police were dismissed), the *Double Standards* and unfair stereotypes about men, female abusers, women weaponizing victimhood, and the excessive punishment of males (through the loss of friends).

Like the discourse around sexual violence, domestic violence within r/MR is almost exclusively discussed in terms of women being violent toward men and how it is commonly dismissed, ignored, or ridiculed. This emphasis on the way that gendered stereotypes lead to the dismissal of violence against men is similar in some ways to discussion seen in r/ML, which also highlights this dynamic; however, where r/ML diverges from the kind of discussion that we see in r/MR is in the way that r/ML discourse tends to include an examination of how gendered stereotypes feed into violence that men commit. However, there are a handful of comments which diverge from this larger pattern of exclusive focus within r/MR, such as the following quote about a billboard highlighting that men can be victims of domestic violence:

I really like this because there's been a massive campaign over the last year or so in Aus strictly about violence by men against women. I had an ex gf who would beat me regularly, luckily she never hurt me but I did call the cops (so did my housemates) and nothing ever came of it. I know I'm not the only bloke in this situation out of my friend

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group but no one really talks about it. I guess there's a comparison there with BLM vs all lives matter. Stats show men are more often violent but jeez its frustrating

In the above comment, the poster discusses his personal experience with domestic violence against him by his ex-girlfriend, the general dismissal he experienced, and the taboo against discussing it among his friends. However, while he does highlight the lack of focus on violence against men, he does not attempt to minimize, dismiss, or ridicule the experience of women's victimization; instead, he contextualizes the issue within the broader issue of domestic violence, acknowledging the higher rates of perpetration by men against women. This is a relatively uncommon mode of engagement within r/MR, though it does happen — in some ways, this comment appears to be more aligned with what one might find in the Men's Liberation subreddit, but it is useful in demonstrating the range of orientations to the issues discussed found in r/MR.

Despite the occasional comment which acknowledges how certain feminist topics or women's grievances have legitimacy or comments pushing back on hostility directed at feminism or women, there is an overwhelmingly negative sentiment toward feminists and women as the source of men's oppression. The following quotes reflect some of these types of comments:

- 1) "But patriarchy *makes* women take care of the children." Against their will. Until they see their critters 50% of the time. Then they suddenly can't live with seeing them half the time. How can we still take anything they say seriously??"
- 2) Male privilege is getting to have your gender 'norms' defined by the other gender. Female privilege is being able to define, dictate what a 'real man' is and rejecting and shaming anyone who doesn't measure up to your arbitrary standards.

In the above quotes, both commenters use feminist arguments or phrases to discuss men being more oppressed than women. In the first, the commenter ridicules the concept of patriarchy in the context of the thread about women's difficulty sharing custody to dismiss any claims of

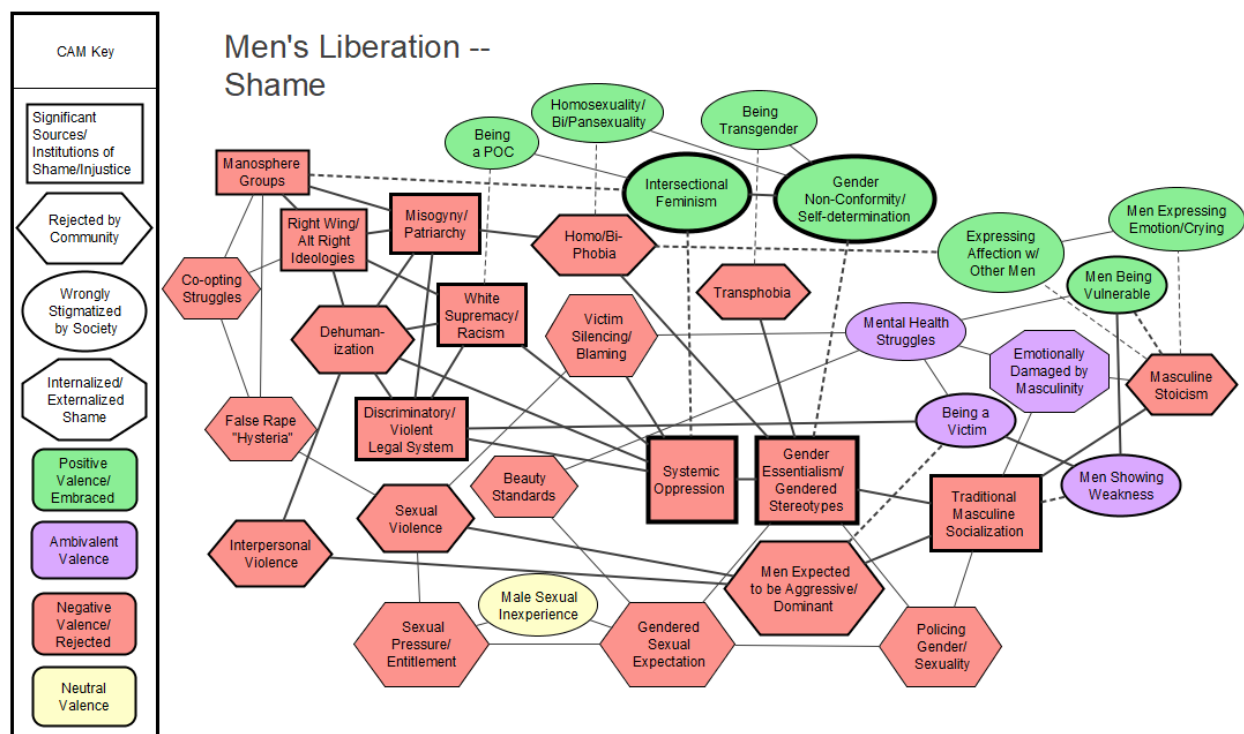
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women's oppression and undermine the credibility of women as a group. In the second post, the commenter inverts the original meaning of "male privilege" to highlight his perception of men's oppression, invoking the commonly held belief that the concept of "male privilege" is a myth (*The Myth of "Male Privilege"*). Further, the commenter argues that women are wholly responsible for creating and perpetuating gender roles. These comments reflect both a general resentment toward women as a group and especially toward feminism or perceptions of societal beliefs about the existence of women's oppression. This is also reflective of the common sentiment that feminists are hypocritical and intolerant of *Dissent/Disagreement* and that they often use censorship (*Censorship/Hivemind*) and shaming tactics to silence people who disagree with them, especially people who are acknowledging men's suffering or are *Speaking Out about Female Privilege/Abuse*. These mechanisms of social censure are seen as significant obstacles in seeking equality for men.

There are occasional references to the punishment of *Men who Transgress Gender Norms*, which is seen as being wrongfully stigmatized; however, the node for "men who transgress gender norms" is neutrally valenced, as there does not seem to be a significant emphasis on an embrace or acceptance of gender non-conformity other than as it relates to victimhood. This likely is related to the underlying endorsement of traditional masculine socialization and commonly held gender essentialist beliefs, despite the rejection of a few specific stereotypes which are seen as disadvantageous to men.

Men's Liberation – Shame and Ressentiment

Figure 15. *Men's Liberation: Shame CAM*



Central to the r/ML understanding of shame and injustice is that of *Systemic Oppression*, with *Gender Essentialism/Gendered Stereotypes* being of particular interest given the focus on issues impacting men. This emphasis on systemic oppression is explored through an *Intersectional Feminist* lens to foster self-determination (*Gender Non-Conformity/Self-Determination*). While gender is their primary focus, there are robust discussions of how other systems of oppression, especially *White Supremacy/Racism*, intersect with and impact people of all genders. The most commonly identified forms of stigma in r/ML are for *Being Transgender*, *Homosexuality/Bi/Pansexuality*, and *Being a Person of Color (POC)* (emphasizing racism toward black people). There are numerous discussions around the subtle and overt ways racism, homophobia/biphobia, and transphobia manifest. These are often paired with calls for members to engage in specific actions or reflect on their own beliefs and behaviors to be better allies.

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Gender non-conformity is seen as one of the primary sources of stigma in society; this is reflected by the frequent focus on discussions about gender and sexuality (as evidenced by 14 of the top 30 threads referencing or highlighting LGBTQ issues) and is indicative of a rejection of gender essentialism. *Policing of Gender and Sexuality* is rejected as one of the main mechanisms by which destructive gender essentialist beliefs and heteronormative attitudes are perpetuated. The goal of gender self-determination (for members and within society more broadly) includes calls for members to deconstruct and reflect on common gender essentialist/heteronormative beliefs and challenge those belief systems in themselves and in others.

Intersectional feminism is the main lens endorsed by r/ML, which is seen as having many ideological enemies who try to discredit it. The *Manosphere* is specifically identified as being hostile to feminism and misogynist (*Misogyny/Patriarchy*), propagating attitudes and ideas that dehumanize women (and many other groups). *Dehumanization* is considered a significant mechanism of bigotry and stigma. In one of the top 30 threads written by one of the r/ML moderators, the official r/ML position on feminism and various other issues is made clear, including the following quote, which clarifies their orientation toward r/MR:

While the MRM is able to call attention to some gender disparities that negatively affect men (suicide, workplace fatalities, lack of concern male rape and abuse victims, etc.), where they falter is who and what they identify as the root cause of these issues and how best to rectify them. The MRM posits that it is feminism, as well as the rights afforded to women through it, that is the reason(s) why men suffer; that gains for women have resulted in losses for men.

Through hatemongering about feminism, co-opting and weaponizing the struggles of vulnerable and marginalized men to silence women, overinflating the frequency of false rape accusations to obfuscate the ubiquity of legitimate cases of rape, and promoting of outdated, inefficient, and destructive traditional models of masculinity and manhood, the Men's Rights Movement--while claiming to be a force for men--is diametrically opposed to MensLib, which sees itself as an ally and compliment to feminism.

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The above quote provides insight into some of the various sources of shame/injustice that r/ML discusses in general, such as *Mental Health Struggles* and *Sexual Violence*, and sheds light on how they see certain groups (in this case r/MR) *Co-opting Struggles*, “hatemongering,” and silencing and discrediting women (*Victim Silencing/Blaming*). An example of a way they see r/MR co-opting the struggles of the marginalized is their usage of false rape accusations against black men to inflate fears about false rape allegations for white men by ignoring the racially motivated component of the allegations,

In addition to r/MR, r/TRP is also explicitly identified as a source of *False Rape* “*Hysteria*,” misogyny, and harmful gender essentialist ideology, which contribute to sexual violence through their dehumanizing view of women. The regressive and gender essentialist views rejected in r/TRP are also discussed and identified in other *Right Wing* (sometimes referred to as “reactionary,” “*Alt Right*,” or “conservative”) ideologies (such as “White Nationalists”). These are also commonly discussed in the context of how these ideologies promote hateful actions, discriminatory policies (*Discriminatory/Violent Legal System*), or dehumanizing views of racial minorities or other marginalized people.

The Red Pill stands in stark contrast with attitudes advocated by r/ML, where enthusiastic sexual consent is highlighted as a priority. *Sexual Pressure/Entitlement* and coercion are rejected as harmful. An emphasis is placed on understanding the experience of survivors of sexual violence, especially as they tend to experience shame and re-victimization if they choose to speak out about their experiences or seek justice within the legal system. There is also a significant exploration of the experience of male sexual survivors, as their victimization tends to intersect with various aspects of masculinity. Similar to victimhood in r/MR, “*Being a Victim*” is given an ambivalent valence, and it is seen as being a painful experience that society wrongly

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stigmatizes. However, r/ML emphasizes rejecting the stigma of victimization, finding ways to support victims in their healing, and acknowledging that men can be victims — thus, while victimization itself carries a negative valence, the acknowledgment and intent to support victims account for the positive valence. However, in contrast with r/MR's emphasis on male victims, r/ML's conception of victimhood is inclusive and extends to a more comprehensive range of social identities. Conversely, it also aims to promote ways to prevent sexual violations from members within the community, including acknowledging the possibility that some members may have perpetrated sexual assault. The following quote is found at the end of a long and resource-heavy thread in r/ML, which discusses common myths about consent (words in brackets contained links to further reading/research on the relevant topics):

It may be upsetting if -- after reading this -- you've learned there were times you've crossed the line. You may want to [work on your empathy], which is [not fixed], and can be developed by, for example, [reading great literature]. [For your own mental health], it might be a good idea to channel that guilt into something that helps to alleviate the problem. Maybe you donate to a local victim's services organization, or write to your legislator about making sure kids are taught consent in school, or even just [talk to your friends] about [the importance of getting freely-given], genuine consent. Whatever you choose, know that while some mistakes can never be undone, [you are not doomed to keep repeating the same mistakes].

This emphasis on taking personal responsibility for members' capacity for harming others is a stark divergence from the other two communities and is a common sentiment within discussions about systemic oppression. Personal responsibility in r/TRP tends to be discussed in terms of taking responsibility for one's self-improvement and self-preservation, particularly in how to prevent rape accusations (though never in terms of how to avoid sexually violating someone); here in r/ML, the emphasis on personal responsibility is focused on the importance of adjusting attitudes and behaviors which might be harmful to others.

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Incels, another Manosphere group, are seen to be reacting in part to things that are considered real issues by r/ML — the harmful shaming of *Male Sexual Inexperience* (which is a part of *Gendered Sexual Expectations* more generally) and *Unrealistic Beauty Standards*— but they go on to scapegoat and dehumanize women as a harmful and unhealthy way to cope with their shame. The impact of unrealistic beauty standards is explored, especially as it impacts body dysmorphia and eating disorders, especially as they see these as being less commonly acknowledged in men despite their prevalence. Gendered sexual expectations are explored, particularly in identifying, communicating, and respecting sexual boundaries. For example, one of the top 30 threads is titled: ‘Reminder: Don't let bros shame bros for saying "No"’ and includes a discussion about a thread where people are seen ridiculing a man for not being interested in having sex with a co-worker. There are two threads in the top thirty threads in r/ML where the OP seeks help to not become an incel despite feeling like there are aspects of the incel ideology which appeal to them; these threads are filled with supportive responses, advice, and encouraging seeking therapy and other avenues of getting support. The following comment can be found in one of these threads and provides insight into the r/ML relationship with shame:

It's hard to not be ashamed for your needs even if they are completely legitimate and everyone have it and are good. But what is more important is to not be ashamed of your shame. Incels are people who are full of shame for not being "good enough" (which is what society tells them virginity means), but that take the hatred into others because they can't take responsibility of their sense of shame because they feel ashamed of being ashamed. So that's my advice, it's ok to have your feelings.

In this quote, we see how this commenter identify how social judgments of people (especially for being a virgin) can make them feel ashamed for having unmet needs; they go further to identify that having feelings — and especially shame — is its own source of shame that they encourage the original poster to accept. This quote represents many aspects of r/ML’s relationship with shame, particularly in identifying the sources of shame from society and how those relate to

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emotions/feelings more broadly. This quote is also representative of discussions in r/ML about emotions and feelings, as they are considered in opposition to the historical masculine conditioning to not talk openly about them (*Men Expression Emotions/Crying*).

The above exchange relates to another of the most central aspects focused on in r/ML, which is that of dissecting how *Traditional Masculine Socialization* (sometimes referred to as “toxic masculinity”) is a significant source of harm and shame for men (as well as for people of all genders). Among the most commonly identified harmful aspects of masculinity are *Masculine Stoicism* and how *Men are Expected to be Aggressive/Dominant* — which are the inverse of society’s shaming and rejection of weakness and vulnerability in men (*Men Showing Weakness/Vulnerability*). Another common theme related to masculine stoicism is identifying a tendency in society to shame men for *Expressing Affection with Other Men*, which is also seen as being tied to homophobia. As one of the main projects of r/ML is to help members build “healthy masculinities,” there is significant discussion around the ways that they have been shamed or conditioned out of displaying certain emotions by people in their lives and how they can undo the damage that they see as being caused by these experiences. This shaming leads to the ambivalently coded and internalized/externalized shame node for “*Emotionally Damaged by Masculinity*,” as many members feel that they have been damaged by traditional masculine socialization in ways that they feel guilt or shame about, while also recognizing that it is a common reaction to their experiences with gender socialization. This topic tends to be discussed in mutually supportive ways, as demonstrated by the exchange below, found in the highest-rated thread in the subreddit:

- 1) My mom raised me with the “real men don’t cry” ideology and now I legit can’t cry even when I feel like I need to -- Have any of you experiences this? I’ve had some pretty emotional moments over the last 2 years and each time I’ve found myself wondering why I couldn’t cry. It’s like that part of me is permanently shut off.

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- 2) I am sorry that happened and I think it's totally a legitimate assumption that that unhealthy standard of masculinity is causing some emotional expression issues. That being said, I too struggle with masculinity and have been very self conscious about how it effects me, and a bad habit I often catch myself in is feeling guilty for not feeling or expressing my feelings in what I assume is the "right" way.

The above first quote is the OP of the thread, and the second quote is a response to it. In these quotes, we see the commenters identifying their masculine socialization as a source of damage to their capacity to express emotion and expressing confusion and concern about it. The second commenter discussing how he “catches” himself feeling guilt over not feeling or expressing emotion in the “right” way highlights the varying degrees of processing of shame within this group, where members appear to be at various stages of identifying and working through what is seen as the emotional damage wrought by traditional masculine socialization and the experience of “being broken” by it. This relates to mental health struggles, also seen as being stigmatized in society.

Discussion

The current study has empirical, theoretical, and clinical implications in several areas. Firstly, it contributes to the growing body of literature on the relevancy of CAMs for exploring broad social issues. I begin the discussion section by addressing the second aim of my research project: exploring the utility of the ICAS framework and CAMs to help us better understand the role that shame plays in political ideologies. Following those reflections, the next four chapters cover the study’s limitations and several empirical, theoretical, and clinical implications.

Examining the Utility of Creating CAMs

One of the most significant advantages of using CAMs was its emphasis on relationships and framing of ideologies as ecosystems. The CQR process used to identify the themes that made up the CAM nodes was crucial for understanding each group’s ideology; however, the additional

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step of visually mapping the relationships among the constructs forced me to take a more rigorous look at their relationships. This initial process involved in creating the Phase 1 CAMs served as my first iteration of examining relationships; by emphasizing the relationships between elements, constructing the CAMs compelled me to conceptualize the ideologies like ecosystems, as I considered every significant construct in relation to the others. This emphasis on relationships became central to the rest of my analyses.

In addition to needing to understand better the relationships between concepts within each set of CAMs, looking at different ideological levels across the different sets of CAMs generated even more insights. By striving to understand the different levels, which I refer to hereafter as “*sub-systems*,” a more in-depth understanding of how these ideological ecosystems interacted on various levels of cognitive organization emerged. In the following paragraphs, I present a few examples of how these insights arose in my analyses.

Some of my most valuable findings came from examining the overlap in constructs among the ideological sub-systems within each groups’ ideology. For example, it became clear that the gender essentialism in r/TRP is central to their ideology by noticing the significant overlap in constructs in their Phase 1 and Phase 2 CAMs. Similarly, with r/MR, comparing the overlap between the general ideological CAM with the Shame and Ressentiment CAM revealed that almost every node in the general ideological CAM is also represented on the Shame CAM, suggesting the centrality of shame and resentment to the r/MR ideology.

Another example of how engaging with the different sub-systems shed insight occurred while constructing r/TRP’s Shame CAMs which helped me deepen this understand of how their gender ideological sub-systems interacted with their broader political ideology. With the previous knowledge gleaned about the centrality of masculinity and dominance in r/TRP’s ideology, I saw

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how this complicated their relationship with victimhood. It highlighted the importance of self-preservation and self-improvement (which hypothetically results in a higher social status). The centrality of their gender essentialist beliefs emerged as relevant to their partial aversion to victimhood: I connected that victimhood is related to the idea of weakness, and ultimately, femininity. The ability to connect those constructs resulted from the emphasis on relationships between constructs facilitated by constructing the CAMs and repeatedly returning to the data to find how constructs were linked.

The insights generated by understanding the relationships between ideological sub-systems within groups were further enhanced by understanding the relationships among the communities themselves, as aided by the Social Identity CAMs. The most notable example of this emerged while trying to understand the gender ideology within r/MR and its relationship with shame. In trying to construct the gender CAMs for r/MR, I noticed the significant difference in the degree of engagement with evolutionary psychological theories of gender between r/TRP and r/MR, as r/TRP was far more invested in that discourse. However, in the shared disdain for the perceived feminist agenda to censor dissent, discussion about The Google Memo incident brought forward the endorsement of these gender essentialist theories in r/MR. This incident highlighted how while advocating for gender essentialist beliefs is not a priority within r/MR like it is in r/TRP, the comments in that thread indicated a general sympathy to those beliefs. I reflected back on my difficulty creating the gender CAM for r/MR due to the lack of discussion about how gender is shaped; this was an apparent dearth, as discussions about those beliefs were relatively abundant in the other two communities. Taking into consideration the Social Identity CAMs enriched my understanding of the differences in r/TRP's and r/MR's relationship with shame: the tendency of r/TRP to agree with r/MR's diagnoses of male oppression but looking

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down on their strategy for dealing with it as “feminine whining” struck me as a powerful dynamic with implications for both groups. In the case of r/TRP, this helped me understand the group’s orientation of reinstating masculine domination as a moral imperative (discussed later in the section on *The Political Construction of Victimhood*). For r/MR, r/TRP’s rejection of them and the lack of mutual rejection from r/MR of r/TRP highlighted an overarching dynamic: r/MR tended to neglect any discussion about the ways that other men contribute to their shame or victimization, which was in stark contrast with a tendency to blame women.

In conclusion, the use of CAMs enriched my understanding of shame's role in political ideologies, particularly by emphasizing networked relationships. My decision to create the Shame Related CAMs in Phase 3 further highlights the value of using CAMs in my analysis; in my original proposal, the Phase 3 exploration of shame did not specify constructing another set of CAMs. However, while engaging in a more open-ended analysis, I felt compelled to continue using the CAMs to explore the connections between the shame-related content in relation to the other sub-systems. In constructing this final layer of CAMs, I began to articulate each group’s most central tensions and identified the significance of the role that the constructions of victimhood and social inequality played across all three groups. The emphasis on relationships among constructs, ideological levels, and social identities proved crucial for the generation of insight in my subsequent analyses, which I articulate in the ensuing three chapters.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has several limitations, some of which are woven into the relevant subsections throughout the discussion section. The most significant limitations of this study are the flip-side of one of its strongest aspects: the use of social media data. In the subsequent subsections, I

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review some of the limitations, challenges, and potential alternatives for working with social media data to study ideological phenomena.

Challenges of Working with Social Media Data

Beyond the usual limitations of qualitative research (which were mitigated to some degree by the consensus process), there were some significant challenges in conducting this study. To the best of our awareness, there were no previous studies that used social media data in either the CQR literature or the CAMs literature; therefore, while we used the guidelines identified by both of these frameworks, the coding process was often cumbersome and awkward.

There were pros and cons to using CQR with social media data. Some of what was cumbersome about the coding process discussed above related to the use of CQR, especially relating to the team members having varying levels of familiarity with the communities and their vernaculars. Additionally, it is more common for CQR studies to use more traditional methods of obtaining data, such as a semi-structured interview format, which allow for consistency and flexibility; the use of social media data did not provide as much consistency beyond the similar algorithmic curation of material as the Reddit karma points system determined it. While social media data arguably provided the most naturalistic representations of the ideologies (or at least the discourses that represent them), the data collected was at times challenging to make sense of, and researchers were unable to ask follow-up questions or seek clarification from the individuals who posted the material.

Delineating Ideological Boundaries

In addition to the general limitations and challenges of working with social media, there were also significant challenges identifying and defining the boundaries of the ideologies. Boundaries of subreddits are permeable, and most subreddits (including the ones in the study)

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are open and thus do not require users to be “members” of the subreddits to post. This openness makes it difficult to know when users expressing conflicting beliefs or opinions might be considered a part of that community or if they might be considered “outsiders”; it was therefore up to our discretion to use context clues and occasionally checking the threads for subsequent comments, to determine if a comment was from an “outsider.” Additionally, it is common for threads that gain enough popularity to reach the “front page” of Reddit, exposing the thread to the wider Reddit audience, and therefore users who do not frequent to subreddits from which those threads originated. (Since collecting the data, r/TRP has been “Quarantined” by the Reddit moderators, which is not an outright ban of the subreddit but isolates the community and prevents threads posted there from reaching the front page.⁶) The practice of “brigading” is also a semi-common occurrence on Reddit, wherein a user in another subreddit links to a thread from another subreddit for any number of reasons, and users from that community are then likely to “invade” the thread, typically posting mockery or generally contradictory sentiments to the dominant beliefs of the “invaded” community. As a result of these permeable boundaries, it was occasionally difficult to identify when conflicting sentiments were coming from members within the community versus members from outside the community.

These permeable boundaries discussed above may have also impacted the karma voting system, which could skew the voting results to reflect threads that are popular within the subreddits and less objectionable to the wider Reddit audience. However, while this may be a limiting factor in being able to identify the most dominant or representative sentiments and

⁶ For a more in depth exploration of the implications of r/TRP’s quarantine, please read Cousineau (2020).

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constructs within a community, it also has a potentially mixed effect of filtering out some of the most generally objectionable content, and therefore presenting the most “palatable” forms of the ideologies for a general audience. These limitations are essential to keep in mind when comparing the findings from this study with other studies looking at these same communities.

Limitations of the Data Selection and Potential Alternatives

Related to the above issue about how the permeable boundaries may have impacted the Reddit voting and skewing the results are the potential limitations that came with the decision to focus on the top-rated content. This study design focused on analyzing the top 30 posts and the top ten comments responding to those posts; however, research looking at the relationship of content with Reddit voting scores indicates that the quality of content and community endorsement of posts are not the only factors that influence the scores of the posts (Medvedev, Lambiotte, & Delvenne, 2017). For example, factors such as the timing, relevancy, or novelty of the comment or post may impact its score. While I chose to use these posts due to their high visibility and endorsement based on community members’ voting, suggestions for research on social media can include numerous ways of approaching data collection; some other potential heuristics for data inclusion and exclusion are explored in the next section on future directions.

In one framework for studying social media data put forward by Stieglitz and Xuan (2013), the authors suggest a few different potential ways for tracking political discussion on social media, including a “Keyword/topic-based approach,” a “Random/exploratory approach,” and an “Actor-based approach.” The first, keyword/topic-based approach involves entering relevant search terms to provide more targeted information; this approach could have been particularly beneficial to incorporate in trying to better understand the specific ideological sub-systems, such as beliefs about gender their relationships with shame. The Random/exploratory

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approach involves pulling random sets of data rather than more targeted data, which arguably would provide a broader representation of the kinds of sentiments present within the communities. Finally, an Actor-based approach would involve identifying community members considered more popular or influential; this approach could have been a particularly fruitful way of organizing the data, especially as the Reddit communities provide ways to identify those users, such as through moderator tags or “flair,” indicating a member’s status within the community. An actor-based approach might also mitigate some of the difficulty determining whether disagreements or tensions within the community are representative of within-community conflict or from “outsiders” or people who otherwise do not frequent those subreddits.

Another potential way of looking at the data would include focusing on dialog and interactions between members, allowing for a more in-depth exploration of dynamics, conflicts, and tensions within the communities. By focusing on the top-rated posts, I aimed to get a broader view of the kinds of topics considered valuable to the community. Some degree of conflict and tension was already present within the top-rated original threads' content. However, the inclusion of the top ten comments responding to those posts offered a more nuanced understanding of those conflicts and tensions. A specific emphasis on these conflicts and tensions might provide a different and valuable perspective.

Another limiting factor in working with social media data is that how users engage on social media is not necessarily reflective of their behavior offline or their entire worldviews. While this study is looking specifically at a community discourse and not necessarily at the individual participants, it is difficult to estimate how impactful these discourses are on the people who participate in them (or perhaps, simply observe or “lurk”). Even just looking at online behaviors, previous research looking at Reddit users (Tan & Lee, 2015) have found that Reddit

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users typically interact with multiple subreddit communities, tend to migrate to new communities over time, and individuals who post in multiple communities at once tend to employ different language patterns in those different communities. These findings highlight a few questions in considering the influence of the findings of this research. One of those questions is how central to their worldview and personality some of these beliefs may be versus how they may be more situationally encouraged. Additionally, given the complexity of human minds and their social needs, it seems possible that users posting in these communities may have totally different or even conflicting social needs, which might bring out entirely different ways of thinking or interacting in different contexts. Researchers who might want to better understand this aspect could do studies with recruited participants, comparing and exploring the relationships between participants' online and offline behaviors.

Empirical Implications

This chapter covers some of the most salient empirical implications of this study. I begin with the implications for one of the study's main identified goals: examining the role of shame in ideology. I start first with thoughts on how the findings fit in with Scheff's (2000) work on shame, especially the concept of bypassed shame, and follow with how they fit in with Salmela and von Scheve's theorizing on its role in right-wing populism. Subsequently, I examine how this study contributes to the literature on boundary objects. From there, I discuss the study's implications for the political construction of victimhood and especially look at the concepts of Competitive Victimhood and Inclusive Victim Consciousness. Finally, I discuss the study's implications for the literature on Ambivalent Sexism (AS) and how the communities studied display or do not display some aspects of AS.

Bypassed Shame in Ideology

There are different patterns of relationships with shame within the communities, which may speak to how different ideologies might facilitate different kinds of emotional regulation and interpersonal functioning. Central to Scheff's (2003) thesis about shame is that it is the primary social emotion, in which trying to avoid it is the organizing principle of most human behavior. He points to its function in maintaining or helping to navigate social bonds and defines it "socially and broadly as all affects that arise from threats to the bond" (pg. 248). This principle centering social bonds and how they are shaped by ideology and beliefs about gender differ significantly across groups.

The concept of bypassed shame is important for understanding the relationship with shame prevalent in both r/TRP and r/MR. In a review on some of the scholarly work about shame, Scheff includes the work of psychologist-psychoanalyst Helen Lewis, highlighting the relationship among shame and anger:

Finally, Lewis noted that there was an affinity between shame and anger. She found that anger markers in the patient's speech were always preceded by shame markers. Apparently one way of hiding shame is to become angry. (pg. 248)

In his work summarizing Lewis' work, he also touches on her theory of *bypassed shame*, which occurs outside of the patient's conscious awareness. In another theoretical article on the role in which shame plays in sexual violence (Scheff & Retzinger, 1997), they make the following claim about the relationship between more overt forms of shame (wherein shame is painful, visible, and conscious) and bypassed shame with gender:

Men are more likely than women to experience shame in the bypassed mode. This mode is much less available to consciousness than the overt mode, and associated with shame-anger loops. Men may bypass the painful experience of shame by becoming angry. But they are ashamed of their anger (in the bypassed mode), and angry that they are ashamed, and so on. Unacknowledged shame in this mode gives rise to what Lewis (1971) called "humiliated fury."

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The above idea of bypassed shame and its relationship with gender is salient when considering hegemonic gender norms, especially for r/TRP and their idealized masculinity.

The following quote, found in a thread from a member discussing his frustration and disappointment with the world after becoming a “Chad” (a slang word used to describe a sexually active “alpha male”), provides an interesting example of what might be considered as bypassed shame:

Before trp I didn't hate women. They baffled me, they confused me, they scared me, but I didn't hate them. I treated them with “respect”, which really meant I kissed ass and sucked up to them. I didn't get laid.
Now I get laid, and I hate women. Now they piss me off. Now they frustrate me. Now they disappoint me. Now I'm a misogynist.

In the above quote, the commenter takes the somewhat atypical step of openly admitting that he is misogynist and hates women; typically, charges of misogyny within r/TRP tend to get dismissed or minimized as feminist attempts to silence them. Therefore, it is notable that this member openly embraces this label, firmly directing his hostility and ire toward women. In the first part of his comment, he uses several words that Retzinger (1995) identifies as indicating a shame state, including being “confused” and “scared;” he concludes then with words indicating hostility and anger, which Retzinger also identifies as potentially indicating shame states, such as acknowledging frustration, disappointment, and hatred. He identifies the shift between the first state of confusion and fear about women and the second state of hatred, resulting from his relationship with r/TRP. In his account of his existence before r/TRP, the conceptualization of his bond with women was subservient and uncertain; after internalizing and living a life according to r/TRP values, he appears to be even more alienated from women, though in a more socially dominant position and therefore more aligned with r/TRP masculinity ideals. While it is impossible to know how accurate this narrative arc is to describe the commenter's life trajectory,

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it is notable even in its purest discursive form, especially as it was voted as the top 20th rated thread in the r/TRP subreddit. It is possible that this kind of pattern in emotional trajectory – movement from being anxious or uncertain about relationships with women to more dominant and hostile relationships – is reflective of the bypassing of shame.

On the other end of the spectrum, r/ML displayed a significantly different relationship pattern with shame from the other groups by discussing the overt and felt experience of shame. An example of the way that this manifests differently within r/ML can be found in the following quote, wherein a member recounts his experience with child sexual abuse and his difficulty finding support due to not wanting his mother to know and feel guilt about it:

I remember everything. I remember the shame I felt when I got home [...] I remember not wanting to tell my mother because I thought what had happened was my fault.

It is notable that this member acknowledges and explicitly names his experience as shame, as Scheff (2011) argues that shame is not only ubiquitous and hidden, that discussion and acknowledgment of it is itself considered taboo.

While there are clear patterns of repressed or bypassed shame in r/TRP and acknowledged shame in r/ML, r/MR tended to have a less clear and more hybrid pattern with shame than the other two. A more repressed relationship with shame, indicated by a marked hostility toward women, was the more dominant form of shame seen within r/MR, though several examples diverged from that pattern as well. The following three quotes are representative of the range of relationships with shame within r/MR:

- 1) Note how all they care about is the cost to the police. Nothing about the trauma and damage caused to the man. But then again, the mangina bore “no harm or ill will” towards the false accuser — maybe he deserves what he got.
- 2) The idea of having a child with a women, and then having that child taken away terrifies me.

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- 3) My father always took my mothers punches and kicks with a painful laugh. I really admire him for that, when she hits me I don't have it in me to smile or laugh it off. And what often hurts even more than the punch is how disappointed she looks when I wince in pain. She stopped hitting us a few years ago and I'm thankful for that, but I still instinctively flinch often when she moves her hands to grab something suddenly. And she's hurt by that, that I'm afraid of her, and in turn that hurts me, because i love my mother despite her many flaws and I don't want her to feel guilty. I don't know why I'm telling you guys this personal story, it's just that that text makes me think that it's ok to share this

The first quote is in the context of a discussion about a woman who was jailed for a false rape accusation; the use of “mangina” is a portmanteau of “man” and “vagina,” indicating that the commenter believes that the falsely accused man is displaying feminine qualities for his lack of hostility toward his accuser. This first quote is most representative of bypassed shame regarding the hostility that the commenter displays, even toward the falsely accused man, who would presumably be considered the victim. The second quote is representative of shame in a different way, as there is a display of fear about social bonds; rather than the more dominant and hostile expression that is characteristic of bypassed shame, the fear about the social bond and the commenter’s hypothetical vulnerability is acknowledged. Finally, the last quote represents the more atypical category of more vulnerable responses within r/MR, which are not the dominant sentiments but show up enough to be considered significant. In this quote, while the commenter does not explicitly use the word shame, he uses more vulnerable language, indicating a more overt experience of shame, such as acknowledging how his mother’s guilt hurts him. He also expresses uncertainty about why he is disclosing this experience and references the context of the discussion about physical abuse from women as justifying the sharing of his story. A notably different aspect of this quote from many others within r/MR is the commenter’s affirmation of his bond with his mother; he expresses that he still loves her despite the abuse, reflecting a desire to maintain a bond with her.

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These differing patterns of relationships with shame among the communities are further supported by the patterns in their explicit use of the words “shame,” “ashamed,” or “shaming.” Within r/TRP and r/MR, the most frequent use of these terms were in discussions about feminists or women and their attempts to silence men. Conversely, r/ML tended to have a more diverse use of the word, and notably, there are explicit applications of these terms to the commenters’ internal experiences. Within the collected data, there were at least six examples of comments referring to the commenter’s internal felt sense of feeling shame or being ashamed, in addition to its usage to describe the externalized act of shaming from a diverse range of people (as opposed to the more rigid use of “shaming” as coming from feminists or women, as seen in the other two groups). Conversely, there were no discussions explicitly referring to an internal or felt sense of shame from members within r/TRP and only one example within r/MR.

In conclusion, there appear to be meaningfully different patterns of relationships with shame, and support for the idea that the different ideological structures among the group might facilitate different ways of processing the affective experiences of shame or threat to bonds. This concept of bypassed shame and how ideology might facilitate it is a salient concept for the next topic, looking at the role of shame in right-wing populism.

Shame and Ressentiment as the Emotional Roots of Right-Wing Populism

One of the study's main goals was to examine if there was empirical support for Salmela and von Scheve’s (2017) theoretical argument that shame and resentment represent the root emotions of right-wing populism. While none of the ideologies studied are the clearest examples of right-wing populist movements, the study’s findings contribute to understanding how emotion and social identity (specifically gender, in these cases) interact within political ideology.

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Elements of r/TRP reflect right-wing populist movements, as discussed by Salmela and von Scheve (2017), which are especially highlighted when integrating the idea of bypassed shame. In the case of r/TRP (explored in more depth in the subsequent section, *A Case Study in How Antifeminism May Lead to White*), I argue that the example I provide illustrates Salmela and von Sheve's theorizing about resentment. To reiterate, they articulate resentment as the transformation of "repressed shame into anger, resentment and hatred towards perceived 'enemies' of the self and associated social groups, such as refugees, immigrants, [...] cultural elites, and the 'mainstream media'" (pg. 1). The transformation of repressed shame into resentment and hatred toward perceived enemies is already clearly demonstrated within r/TRP as it pertains to women and feminists, though the example I provide in the next section integrates the concept of emotional coherence to help explain how that resentment and hostility can spread to other outgroups, like refugees.

While there appears to be evidence suggesting r/TRP's association with more right-wing populist positions, such as the identification of immigrants and "cultural elites" as social outgroup enemies (despite their explicit claims not to be a political community), there was no evidence of these themes appearing within r/MR or r/ML within our collected data. A lack of evidence is, of course, not proof of absence, especially considering that the data we collected is only a tiny portion of the available posts. However, on the other end of the spectrum, numerous discussions within r/ML identify and explicitly reject the processes by which many right-wing movements dehumanize marginalized groups. For r/ML, drawing attention to these processes and establishing group norms discouraging those processes may help prevent repressed shame from transforming into anger toward marginalized outgroups.

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This pattern aligns with Salmela and von Scheve's theorizing in another paper on the differences between right and left-wing populism (2018), articulated below:

[W]e suggest that right-wing populism is characterized by repressed shame that transforms fear and insecurity into anger, resentment, and hatred against perceived "enemies" of the precarious self. Leftwing populism, in turn, associates more with acknowledged shame that allows individuals to self-identify as aggrieved and humiliated by neoliberal policies and their advocates. The latter type of shame holds emancipatory potential as it allows individuals to establish bonds with others who feel the same, whereas repressors remain in their shame or seek bonds from repression-mediated defensive anger and hatred. (pg. 434)

The above distinction between rightwing and leftwing populism and their relationships with shame map onto the patterns of shame found in r/TRP and r/ML, respectively. However, there is a noteworthy distinction between how Salmela and von Scheve define left-wing populism to emphasize more economically orientated analyses than are commonly found in r/ML. While discussions about economic conditions are sometimes included, it does not appear to be as dominant of a focus within their discourse as other forms of oppression. For example, in further exploring the relationship of r/ML with left-wing populism, it is helpful to recall the quote from the previous section wherein the poster discusses his experience with sexual abuse and the resulting shame. For further context within that thread, the poster describes the conflict he has getting support without his mother finding out and notes that he wants to protect her from the knowledge of this event because he believes that she will blame herself. He discusses some of the situational contexts which he saw as leading to his mother's decision to support the relationship that he had with his abuser, which were not explicitly tied to neoliberal policies, but are compatible with an analysis of them (e.g., the stress she was under as a single mother). While explicit ties of oppressive systems with economic circumstances were at times made within r/ML but were not a dominant theme, I, therefore, do not think that r/ML is best described as a left-wing populist group. However, despite the relative lack of emphasis on economics, the patterns

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of relationships with either repressed or acknowledged shame align with Salmela and von Scheve's theorizing on the differences between those two movements and seem to map onto how those patterns interact with how those ideological movements orient to different social identities.

In addition to the mechanism of resentment (repressed shame transforming into resentment/hostility toward perceived enemies), the second mechanism of emotional distancing that Salmela and von Scheve (2017) articulate is also relevant to the findings from this study. As a reminder, they describe this mechanism as "the emotional distancing from social identities that inflict shame and other negative emotions and instead promotes seeking meaning and self-esteem from aspects of identity perceived to be stable and to some extent exclusive, such as nationality, ethnicity, religion, language and *traditional gender roles*" (emphasis my own) (pg. 1). The findings surrounding the different roles traditional gender norms play in each group provide evidence supporting their conception of this mechanism. In r/TRP, the emphasis on embracing traditional gender roles was especially strong; the embrace of these gender roles and pursuit of social dominance is a significant component of self-esteem within the group, as members regularly attested to how the methods of self-improvement led them to become more in line with their ideal masculinity improved their self-esteem. In comparison, while there was evidence within r/MR of support for *most* traditional gender roles, this was not a primary emphasis. Finally, on the other end of the spectrum, r/ML demonstrated a strong emphasis on inclusivity and a rejection of many right-wing ideological tendencies, especially rejecting traditional gender roles. As we only studied three groups, these findings are limited, and it is impossible to generalize about the relationships between the overt endorsement of traditional gender roles and the presence of a more right-wing populist rejection of social outgroups seen in r/TRP. One of

the clearest examples of how both mechanisms of emotional distancing and resentment operate within r/TRP can be found in the next section.

Case Study in How r/TRP's Antifeminism May Lead to White Nationalism.

This section focuses on an example found in the data demonstrating how the principle of emotional coherence (Thagard, 2017) along with the psychosocial mechanism of Resentment (Salmela and von Scheve, 2017), can help to explain how r/TRP's ideological emphasis on antifeminism and dominance as sexual strategy can lead to the embrace of xenophobic attitudes. This is placed in the Empirical Implications section, as it provides evidence supporting the concepts of emotional coherence, resentment, and emotional distancing, as well as supporting previous studies and theorizing that r/TRP and other Manosphere communities act as an ideological bridge toward the Alt Right and white supremacist ideologies (Kelly, 2017; Hartzell, 2018; Dignam, & Rohlinger, 2019).

However, in addition to the empirical implication, I believe this example also has theoretical implications, as I argue it represents a contribution to another theoretical framework, which Farris (2017) calls "femonationalism." In her groundbreaking text, Farris describes femonationalism as the rhetorical and political strategy of invoking gender equality to advance xenophobic or imperialist strategy. She argues that this deployment of gender equality rhetoric (typically aimed at Muslim countries or communities) is cynical, as indicated by an otherwise marked lack of commitment to advancing gender equality from the groups using such rhetoric. In the following subsections, I articulate the context and specific evidence to illustrate how this example manifests as a sort of inverted expression of Farris' concept of femonationalism.

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Sexual Violence, The Red Pill, and “Nationalist Antifeminism.”

First, I expound on the dominant characteristics of r/TRP’s relationship with sexual violence, as the politicization of victimhood (especially in the context of sexual violence) is a critical nexus of ideological conflict across the three communities studied. Among the collected data, the most dominant patterns of discussion within r/TRP about sexual violence tended to be in the context of false rape accusations; these discussions were usually about specific cases in the media and led to discussions about how easily women wield rape accusations against men, necessitating strategies for dealing with this risk of being falsely accused. The other most common form of explicit use of the term “rape” was in discussions about “divorce rape,” wherein expectations of men to pay child support and alimony are likened to rape. Outside of discussions that minimize the occurrence of sexual violence or emphasize women lying about it, discussions that take seriously the premise of sexual violence happening tended to contribute to the stigmatization of survivors of sexual violence, as illustrated by the following quote:

8. Stay away from damaged women. If she's been abused and/or traumatized be empathetic but write her off as a serious prospect. Cold for sure but very important for self-preservation.

The above quote represents the limited way r/TRP engages with what is perceived as the actual occurrence of sexual violence: in this instance, the commenter writes off survivors as too psychologically unstable to consider viable romantic partners.

The lack of discussion about the perpetration or impact of sexual violence (for either men or women) is especially notable within the context of a community that self-describes as one that focuses on “sexual strategy,” and especially for one that highlights the importance of “masculine dominance” as a core component of sexual attraction. The following quote demonstrates the role dominance plays in r/TRP’s understanding of women’s sexual attraction:

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A girl can ONLY get horny for you if you have a stronger frame than her. Think of this like a mathematical equation. There's no getting around it, no cheating it, no short-circuiting it. It is an immutable law. Women want to submit to you. They want to submit to a strong man. But she can't submit to you if your frame is weaker than hers. Physiologically, girls can't even become wet for a guy who has a weaker frame than they do. It's literally impossible. [...] Women are wired in such a way that they can't become wet for a man unless he's overcome some kind of *resistance* to get her.

The above quote, particularly at the end, reflects a phenomenon that Muehlenhard and Peterson (2005) identify as “token resistance,” which the above commenter extrapolates to be not only ubiquitous but essential to women's sexual pleasure. It also aligns strongly with research on Token Resistance as a pervasive and important factor in rape myth acceptance (Shafer, Ortiz, Thompson, & Huemmer, 2018). This orientation to their beliefs about male domination within the context of sexual strategy and their otherwise generally dismissive orientation toward sexual violence serves as a background for understanding one of the lone discussions about sexual violence wherein women were presumed to have actually experienced it.

Mass Sexual Assault by Refugees: the Single Discussion of Believed Sexual Violence.

The fifth top thread within r/TRP at the time of collection introduces the events of mass sexual assault in Cologne, Germany, on New Year's Eve of 2015/2016. These incidents became highly contentious in Germany, with people of differing ideological orientations highlighting or engaging with different aspects to advance various political agendas (for a more thorough understanding of these events, please read Abdelmonem, Bavelaar, Wynne-Hughes, and Galán's (2016) paper which discusses the details and aftermath of the incidents). As Boulila and Carri (2017) point out, the political aftermath of the incidents resulted in a significant shift in discourse in the political and mainstream media toward the defense of the “‘German value’ of gender equality,” despite what they identify as “decades of political indifference towards sexual violence” (pg. 286). They also note that pattern of how, rather than focusing on addressing the

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inadequate laws governing sexual offenses, the debate tended to focus on “expelling those who were believed to endanger post-feminist Germany” (pg. 286).

This pattern identified by Boulila and Carri is reflected in the response of r/TRP, but with some unique features resulting from its strong antifeminist positions. The following quote is from the original post of the thread in which the events are introduced:

Many of us have pointed out that feminists will avoid and even censor any discussion of rape when it is not committed by white men. [...] worldnews has banned it as local news, although it is front page news all across Europe many right wing papers, the number 2 story on BBC, and reported widely in America now. [...] Worst of all is that the 2XChromosomes subreddit has deleted all threads talking about the mass sexual assaults and rape in Cologne on that evening. The default sub for females is actively covering up mass sexual assault! The silence is deafening. Leftist/Feminists enable rape by attempting to cover up assaults. They choose to virtue signal or fight for agendas that make themselves feel good, even when it results in more rapes for other women. It is the ultimate act of selfishness and hypocrisy.

I know we aren't really activists here, but we can do good by pointing out the progressivism pecking order to women that are close to us: 'oppressed' rapists come before female victims.

Aligning with Boulila and Carri’s description of the resulting discourse, the above quote engages in accusations of feminists censoring and engaging in “political correctness” when it goes against what is described as the “progressive pecking order.” The focus on the perceived media censorship and hypocrisy of feminists fits into their larger orientation to feminists, is arguably the main focal point for many of the responses, and is potentially one reason it gained as much attention within r/TRP as it did.

The following response to the OP supports the primacy of the antifeminist sentiments discussed above:

It's not that people don't care about rape by minority groups. They're just petrified that if any attention is given to anything other than the primary issue of female power over the majority cis-white-male-patriarchy engine, then they'll lose the war. It's the same reason you can't raise pro-male issues that aren't anti-woman in the slightest.

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"My best friend was raped in prison last night." "OMG shitlord women are raped more shut up about your privileged patriarchy and cry me a river about your one stupid rape." "My dog died last night." "OMG shitlord why are you comparing women to dogs?" "Uh...I wasn't. I was just talking about my dog?" "And not about women and the issues we face?! Fucking misogynist."

If we take our eye off the ball for a single second, people might realize that women are stupid cunts and stop taking this feminism thing seriously. We can't let that happen. Down with men! But just white middle class men from the United States and Europe.

Particularly striking in this response is the rhetorical shift away from the violence committed against the German women, positioning “white middle-class men from the United States and Europe” as the victims. Blatant misogyny aside (i.e., the reference to women as “stupid cunts”), this kind of rhetorical shift is similar to an identified strategy within right-wing ideologies that co-opt plights of violence against women in developing nations to advocate for imperialist political agendas, which Farris (2017) calls “femonationalism.”

Given the explicitly political nature of the thread (which otherwise tends to be discouraged within group norms and explicitly in the community’s rules), the significance of the thread’s emphasis on feminist hypocrisy sticks out in comparison to its otherwise less prevalent anti-immigrant sentiments (which were not found elsewhere in the collected data outside of the discussed thread). Drawing on Farris’ framework of femonationalism, Schuster (2020) offers the following analysis of the exclusive focus on sexual violence committed by immigrant men in the wake of the events in Cologne:

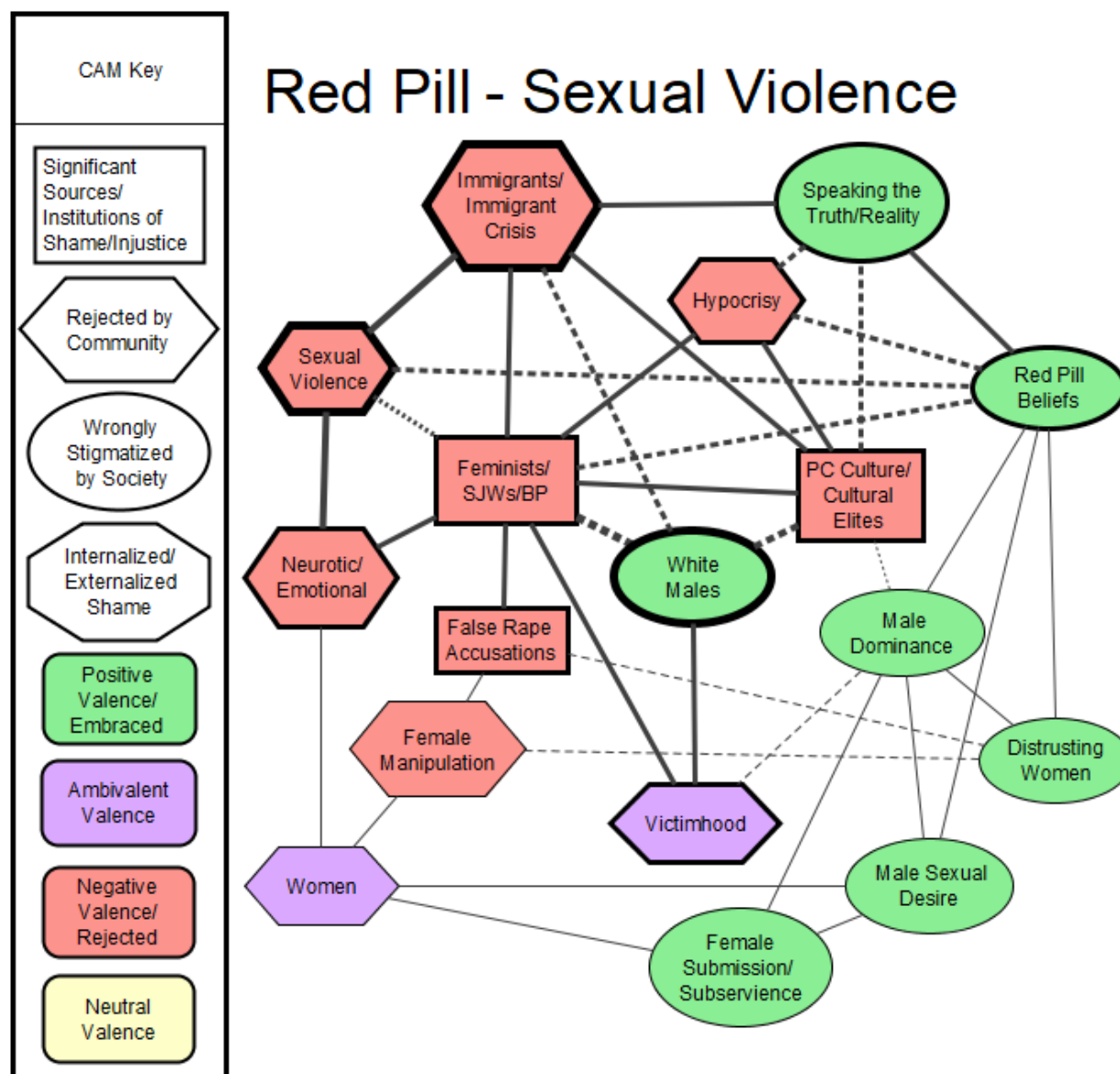
The phenomenon that sexual violence by refugees became a main concern of the media (unlike sexual violence by Germans at the Oktoberfest) was a direct outcome of sexualised racism that supports the colonial stereotype of the ‘dangerous dark man’ and construes white men as above reproach. ‘Cologne’s’ perpetrators were a welcome excuse for the political right to brand refugees as enemies; not because they threatened women per se but because they threatened white women as the bearers of the German nation. This distinction is crucial because it shows that women’s interests are not a genuinely important factor in this scenario. Muslim women were absent from this discussion because concern about their protection from sexual violence is neither required nor desired in a femonationalist logic. Consequently, the focus of ‘Cologne’s’ discourse was on the perpetrators’ backgrounds and not on the women’s experiences. (pg. 15)

The above analysis of what Schuster deems the “political right” can be applied to the analysis of r/TRP’s engagement of the subject with confidence in how it is utilized in the service of right-wing political agendas. However, in contrast to some of the other right-wing groups which might prioritize nationalist policies, antifeminism is the primary motivating factor within the ideological network of r/TRP, which appears to use antifeminism in ways that lead to and nurture racism and xenophobia.

In summary, the findings explored above about r/TRP’s general attitudes toward sexual violence align with previous studies examining the emphasis on false rape accusations within Manosphere communities (Gotell & Dutton. 2016); the general misogynist and male supremacist orientations within r/TRP (Schwartz, 2020); and the existence of a link between r/TRP, racism, and Alt Right communities (Dignam, & Rohlinger, 2019). However, similar to Munn’s (2019) study, which tracks the cognitive shifts of *normalization*, *acclimation*, and *dehumanization* in the ideological developmental process of individuals drawn into the Alt Right, I argue that the psychosocial mechanisms of emotional coherence and Ressentiment are useful for examining this ideological developmental process. In the subsequent sections, I first present an adapted CAM describing r/TRP’s relationship with sexual violence, and then I apply these two concepts to r/TRP’s overall ideological features and demonstrate how they result in the promotion of racist and xenophobic beliefs.

The Red Pill: Sexual Violence CAM.

The following CAM integrates the themes relating to the immigrant crisis and sexual violence with the relevant constructs from the Shame CAM:

Figure 16. *The Red Pill: Shame and Sexual Violence CAM*

In this CAM, the most salient nodes and links for understanding their decision-making about this incident are bolded, with the nodes for “*Immigrant Crisis*,” “*Sexual Violence*,” and “*White Males*” bolded heaviest due to their centrality to this analysis. The node for “*Sexual Violence*,” which is notably absent from r/TRP’s other CAMs, is included on this CAM arguably *due* to the inclusion of the immigrant men, who are identified as the true source of threat to women’s safety. *Sexual Violence* is also connected with women’s *Neurotic/Emotional* traits, as

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the only other contexts in the collected data in which mentions of sexual violence that are believed to have happened tended to be related to why men should avoid getting romantically involved with survivors of sexual violence. While this theme occasionally emerged in the data, it was not frequent enough of a subject to otherwise have been included on the other CAMs. Importantly, the link between *Sexual Violence* and *Feminists* is ambivalent, as feminists are framed as only caring about sexual violence from *White Males*. Importantly, a link between *Red Pill Beliefs* and *Sexual Violence* is added to indicate the perceived incompatibility between r/TRP beliefs and sexual violence, as they use the opportunity to frame themselves as caring more about sexual violence than *Feminists*, who are *Hypocrites* for only caring about rape from *White Males*.

The introduction of racial identity to this CAM is also central to this analysis. The *Immigrant Crisis* is connected with *Feminists* and *Cultural Elites* (serving as boundary objects) as they are seen to be in cahoots, particularly in their desire to target *White Males*. This antagonistic relationship with feminists and cultural elites is mirrored in the antagonism with immigrants, as they are seen as a threat to white people and their culture. In this CAM, the connection between *Victimhood* and *White Males* is made explicitly, as white men are seen as the main targets of feminist/progressive hypocrisy and the true subjects of systemic oppression. The beliefs in these overarching political factors combined with the frequent discussions about Masculine Dominance being essential to women's sexual desires have some clear and troubling implications. While these insights about the harmfulness of r/TRP's views are by no means novel, what is unique about the contributions of this study is its empirical support for the specific mechanism of emotional coherence in how these anti-feminist views can serve to radicalize members into other forms of social intolerance, as argued by previous scholars (Kelly, 2017;

Hartzell, 2018; Dignam, & Rohlinger, 2019). I will now explicitly apply the concept of emotional coherence to this example in the subsequent section.

Applying the Concept of Emotional Coherence.

The theory of *emotional coherence* proposes that “people make decisions and other inferences based on how well competing alternatives fit overall with their beliefs and goals, including the emotional values (valences) that they attach to these representations” (Thagard, 2015, pg. 17). Given the atypical nature of the thread focusing on sexual violence and politics -- two topics in which r/TRP tends to either minimize/dismiss or discourage -- I believe that it warranted a deeper exploration of how it fits into the overall ideological gestalt.

Determining the ideological motivations for the popularity of the thread within r/TRP should take into consideration the community’s overall cognitive and affective features to best understand the role that it serves. I argue that the following factors are crucial in understanding its popularity and ideological function: 1) the male-centric nature of the r/TRP community (meaning that it is a community explicitly and exclusively for the benefit of men) which defines itself in opposition to feminism; 2) the emphasis on male domination over women and the centrality of overcoming women’s resistance to their sexual strategy; 3) the otherwise frequent minimization of sexual violence within the rest of the data; 4) the framing within the thread centering feminist hypocrisy; and 5), the frequency of antifeminist sentiment found throughout the data. Given the nature of these patterns, which oppose feminism and encourage male domination, it seems likely that antifeminism is the primary factor in the ideological motivations for the thread’s popularity and providing an ideological focal point for the encouragement of anti-immigrant beliefs, which would otherwise be considered irrelevant to their discussions. With a more holistic look at how r/TRP engages with the topic of sexual violence, the willingness of

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those in r/TRP to believe and discuss the occurrence of these assaults seems to be strongly influenced by the general antipathy toward feminists and progressives, who are seen as being antagonistic to white men and acting preferentially to ethnic minorities, immigrants, and refugees. This leads to the following two concepts: *emotional distancing* and *ressentiment*.

Applying the Concepts of Ressentiment and Emotional Distancing.

Within this larger mechanism of emotional coherence, I refer back to the specific psychosocial mechanisms of emotional distancing and resentment (Salmela & von Scheve, 2017) as salient for understanding r/TRP's interpretation and relationship to these events. Starting first with emotional distancing, the emphasis on r/TRP's construction of the relationship between feminists and political elites with ethnic minorities, immigrants, and refugees, arguably allows for some degree of psychological distance to take the existence of sexual violence seriously. With that space, they can acknowledge its occurrence and severity without having to examine or acknowledge capacity for sexual violence from within their own social ingroup identities. This location of the "*true threat*" of sexual violence in an identified social outgroup also allows them to be able to claim a moral high ground (fulfilling the need to maintain a positive moral identity as discussed previously in the Competitive Victimhood section) by claiming to care more about sexual violence than feminists themselves. By being able to direct hostility toward immigrants (as they are favored and protect by feminists and cultural elites), there is an incentive to invest in what Salmela and von Scheve identify as the more stable and exclusive social identity of "white males," or nationality, which is perceived as under attack.

Having an outgroup to place moral culpability for sexual violence allows members of r/TRP to acknowledge that sexual violence does indeed happen, which is otherwise *mostly* downplayed and dismissed. However, as explored previously, there are also times when members

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do talk about survivors of sexual violence in ways that stigmatize them and identify them as “damaged goods” or potential threats due to their assumed psychological volatility; this suggests that there is only so much of the perpetration of sexual violence within their worldview that can be minimized or dismissed. The immigrant crisis, then, may serve as a convenient outlet for acknowledging the problem of sexual violence as real without having to adjust or challenge the various assumptions that otherwise deny or minimize the problem, such as the beliefs that women are manipulative and deceitful, that feminists are hypocrites, and that we live in a gynocentric society which caters to women.

In addition to having an emotionally distant social identity to blame, I also argue that the lens of resentment and repressed shame may help interpret their reactions. As there is a strong emphasis within r/TRP on the rejection of external shaming, typically from feminists or “SJWs” (to the point where there is a link in the sidebar material to a “Glossary of Shaming Tactics”), one of the most common things they view themselves as being shamed for is their misogyny. Ridiculing the feminist idea of “rape culture” is somewhat common, especially as some members report being accused of promoting it through their endorsement of r/TRP beliefs. Typically, there is an explicit rejection of shaming by feminists due to their perceived indoctrination, rejection of the “reality” of the natural biological differences between the sexes, and support for the feminist agenda maintaining a gynocentric order in society. However, I believe that this example allows for the shame that they reject and feel they have to defend themselves against (as evidenced by their rules about not talking about r/TRP beliefs in order to avoid the social censure they are likely to experience) to be placed on a social outgroup in a way that also provides them with a sense of moral superiority. By directing hostility toward immigrants, refugees, and feminists, they can bypass any felt sense of shame that they might be defending against from accusations of

misogyny. When confronted with the idea of their attitudes and behaviors being harmful to others and faced with the potential of social exclusion or threat to social bonds, they can instead point to the “real misogynists,” or the “real threat to women:” hypocritical feminists and immigrants.

Future Research Looking at Ressentiment.

There are many ways that future studies can build on this work to glean more insights into the mechanisms of right-wing populism. Future studies can focus on groups who more clearly fit the criteria for right-wing populism movements or examine communities on other online platforms that tend to be more dominated by right-wing extremist groups (e.g., 4chan, Gab, Parler, or Stormfront), especially as Reddit tends to be more heavily moderated than those platforms. Studies could take more longitudinal approaches, examining different “snapshots” of ideological communities across time (another advantage of using social media data) to track their development and identify what factors provoke shifts in ideological networks. Other research could analyze a broader range of emotions, different sets of emotions, or frequencies of various emotional sentiments within or across groups.

Boundary Objects in the Construction of Ideology

This study contributes empirical support to the literature on the concept of boundary objects, connecting it with the Ideologies as Complex Adaptive Systems (ICAS) framework. LeighStar (2010) defines boundary objects as “a sort of arrangement that allow different groups to work together without consensus” (602). The more general concept of boundaries is useful in looking at the construction of social identities within the groups. In a seminal review of the literature investigating the concept of boundaries across various social science disciplines, Lamont and Molnar (2002) suggest two crucial concepts for investigating the formation and

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maintenance of boundaries: symbolic boundaries and social boundaries. The authors provide the following description of these concepts and their relationship to each other:

Symbolic boundaries are conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space. They are tools by which individuals and groups struggle over and come to agree upon definitions of reality. Examining them allows us to capture the dynamic dimensions of social relations, as groups compete in the production, diffusion, and institutionalization of alternative systems and principles of classifications. Symbolic boundaries also separate people into groups and generate feelings of similarity and group membership (Epstein 1992, p. 232). They are an essential medium through which people acquire status and monopolize resources. [...]

Social boundaries are objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and non-material) and social opportunities. [...] Symbolic and social boundaries should be viewed as equally real: The former exist at the intersubjective level whereas the latter manifest themselves as groupings of individuals. At the causal level, symbolic boundaries can be thought of as a necessary but insufficient condition for the existence of social boundaries (Lamont 1992, Ch. 7).

These concepts are significant in understanding the formations of the ideologies studied and theoretically may play a significant role in further examining how ideologies in general develop, evolve, or spread. Through engaging in the construction and refining of symbolic boundaries, the studied communities establish their definitions of reality; each community's conceptualization of the existing social boundaries comes with implications for how individuals should interact within those social structures.

One of the best ways to try to understand these boundaries comes from the CAMs examining the social ingroups and outgroups, as the construction of these ingroups and outgroups appear to have a relationship with the groups' consideration of the experiences, accounts, or needs of people in various social groups (or to reject them). For example, r/TRP clearly differentiated the social boundaries along gender essentialist lines and how well people embraced and conformed to those idealized concepts of gender. With r/MR, there was a similar emphasis in terms of the differences between men and women, but these were less based on

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gender essentialist beliefs than how members saw power and privilege distributed unequally among men and women. Finally, within r/ML, there was an explicit emphasis on inclusion for people along numerous axes of unchosen social identities (e.g., gender, sexuality, race, ability); contrasted with the other two groups, r/ML tended to define themselves against those who are intolerant of diversity, with bigotry/bigots acting as their boundary objects.

The Political Construction of Victimhood

This study's findings emphasizing the frequency and quality of discussions around victimhood — who gets to be considered a victim, who defines harm, and how it is defined — were central among all three groups included in the study. The centrality of these questions among the studied ideologies may generalize to a much broader range of political ideologies. Chouliaraki's (2020) proposes that we conceptualize victimhood “as a structure of affective communication that renders our public conversations a terrain of struggle over competing claims to suffering and their communities of recognition” (pg. 3). As the theme of victimhood (i.e., who gets seen as a victim, who should or should not be trusted, and what should be done to prevent further victimization) was prevalent across all three groups, suggesting its centrality as an important dimension of ideological construction.

Jacoby (2015) notes in her articulation of a Theory of Victimhood that “[w]hile nobody wants to be victimized, once the victimization takes place, injured parties generally seek recognition to attain the values (material, political, spiritual and other) that accompany a victim identity (victimhood) in contexts that support rights-based recognition” (pg. 514). The latter half of this statement acknowledges the various resources that a legitimate claim to victimhood may grant, which perhaps makes grievance-based politics so compellingly pervasive. Jacoby identifies the following:

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The right to define a victim (and be so defined) is an equally salient form of power as it grants legitimacy to some groups and not others. From this act of labelling flows a host of material and other benefits bestowed on recognized victims, from which those who fail to get recognized are deprived. (pg. 516)

As Jacoby argues, the identification of victimhood comes with the potential for significant social resources, rendering it an inherently ideological construction. Further, as Chouliaraki points out, the complicated question of who gets to be considered a victim is inherently wrapped up with questions about the political power of those involved.

The centrality of the theme of victimhood as an ideological construction within each community has empirical implications for the social psychological literature on *collective victimization*, especially the sub-concepts of *Competitive Victimhood (CV)* and *Inclusive Victim Consciousness (IVC)*. As Noor, Vollhardt, Mari, and Nadler (2017) define it, CV “reflects the motivation of conflicting groups to establish that their group has suffered more than their adversarial group” (pg. 123). They go on to identify how victimization can contend across numerous domains, including: “the physical dimension (i.e., which side has suffered from a higher death toll or more injuries); the material dimension (i.e., who has lost more resources in the conflict or who is more severely deprived, relative to each other; Runciman, 1966); the cultural dimension (i.e., who has been more forced to give up their ways of life); and the psychological dimension (i.e., which group’s psychological well-being has been more severely affected)” (pg. 124). Additionally, they identify that groups may also compete over “the moral dimension of suffering and the perceived legitimacy of who is a victim” (pg. 124). This conceptualization of CV and the dimensions across which this competition extends is especially salient for both r/TRP and r/MR.

TheRedPill: A Complicated Relationship with Competitive Victimhood. Within r/TRP, an ideology that rejects weakness in men complicates the discussion of victimhood. While

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r/TRP tends to agree with many of the same assessments of social problems and share similar grievances with the r/MR community, there also tends to be an explicit rejection of appearing to be emotionally impacted by them. Instead, members are encouraged to emotionally divest and “accept the truth” about women and society (particularly society’s catering to women’s needs). Members are also encouraged to do what is considered necessary to protect themselves (e.g., self-censoring their r/TRP beliefs, having a prevention plan for rape accusations, or being firmly against marriage to prevent “divorce rape”) or be in the most dominant position possible to prevent victimization.

The Red Pill and Men’s Rights: Morality and Victimhood. As the Men’s Rights Movement is formed primarily around a collective understanding of men’s oppression and shared sense of grievances, the Men’s Rights political project is around the fight for the legitimacy of Male Victimhood. The concept of moral identity is an especially important concept for understanding r/MR. Sullivan, Landau, Branscombe, and Rothschild (2012) articulate the mechanics of CV within the larger framework of Social Identity Theory:

According to social identity theory, individuals define themselves largely in terms of the social groups with which they identify, and are motivated to maintain a positive conception of these groups (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Morality is perhaps the most important dimension on which the individual evaluates her ingroup(s). Supporting this idea, Leach, Ellemers and Barreto (2007) obtained evidence that a group’s perceived moral status is more important for identification processes (e.g., taking pride in group membership) than a group’s competence or sociability. In addition, studies show that people are more motivated to improve the status of their group when they perceive higher status as reflective of higher moral standing as opposed to higher competence (Ellemers, Pagliaro, Barreto, & Leach, 2008). [...] Given that individuals are motivated to see the groups to which they belong as moral, it is psychologically threatening when the moral standing of one’s group (relative to other groups) is called into question (Leach, Ellemers, & Barreto, 2007). (pg. 1)

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In the above quote, the authors identify the centrality of morality as a crucial psychosocial need.

Additionally, the concept of “debt-avoidance” is also useful for understanding the social function of CV:

[K]nowledge that one’s group has victimized an outgroup induces a personally distressing sense of moral debt. The individual can either acknowledge this debt and attempt to repay it in some way, or she can attempt to void the debt using cognitive strategies such as legitimization or minimization of the harm suffered by the victim group. A third such “debt-avoidance” strategy proposed here is pursuing competitive victimhood. [...] Victim status – at least at first glance – appears predominantly negative and undesirable, given its implications of relative disadvantage, weakness, and low status, and indeed it has historically had such negative connotations (Fassin & Rechtman, 2009). Nevertheless, in the current cultural climate, status as an undeserving victim of illegitimate harm might be somewhat desirable insofar as it appears to confer moral credentials (Strassel, 2001). (Sullivan et al, 2010, pg. 3)

The idea of competitive victimhood as a debt-avoidance strategy and its relation to morality has interesting implications when looking at the different relationships to victimhood within r/TRP and r/MR.

While r/MR more frequently and directly invoke CV (explored in the next section), the ambivalent embrace and rejection of it in r/TRP reveal their different moral frameworks. While they share some underlying assumptions about how society is structured, r/TRP appears to cope with these perceived injustices by striving to render themselves invulnerable to them through various psychological and social strategies based on domination. This strategy aligns with their gender essentialist beliefs that men *should* be dominant and that it is their duty to restore the “natural order” of male domination. As r/TRP professes the importance of masculine domination as both an individual strategy for men seeking to be sexually active in a gynocentric society, they also invoke the language of responsibility to embrace masculine dominance to preserve and maintain the health of the human race. The quest to return the “natural order” of male dominance is tied to the process of human evolution, and the relatively recent divergence from the

previously established order is seen as a moral abomination. While there is evidence to support the use of CV within r/TRP as a way to posit men's ultimate victim status within society, we can understand the inverse strategy of rejecting victimhood and embracing domination as a competing moral framework rooted in their gender essentialist beliefs.

Men's Rights: Fighting for Male Victimhood. In contrast with r/TRP, r/MR tends to have a less complicated embrace of victimhood. In their exploration of CV, Young and Sullivan (2016) argue, "[m]embers of high-status groups engage in CV largely because of a phenomenon called stigma reversal [30] – given the cultural transformations previously described, privileged group members now feel stigmatized due to their reversed moral standing" (pg. 7-8). Stigma reversal appears to be evident within r/MR, especially within the themes of the *Women as Victims*, *Men as Abusers Stereotype*, the conversations reacting to *Feminism*, and in the (arguable) hyper-focus on the occurrence of *False Rape Accusations*. It is notable that within the coded OPs, three threads were coded for as being about sexual violence against men; in contrast, seven threads focused on false rape accusations against men, suggesting a more serious concern with the possibility of being falsely accused of sexual assault than on the impact of sexual violence against men. Further, within the three threads coded for sexual violence against males, the emphasis in the subjects tended to be more about the existence of female abusers, the hypocrisy of feminists, or society's more lenient attitudes towards women who engage in sexual violence than on other aspects of the abuse (in contrast with r/ML, which tended toward a more inclusive and broader exploration of sexual violence and its impacts).

In coding for ingroup victimhood within the OPs of the top 30 posts, most threads (22 out of 30) met criteria for themes of ingroup victimhood; discussions surrounded ways in which members or individuals with ingroup identities (as identified in the ingroup and outgroup social

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identity section) have been victimized in some way. Typically, these were related to things like being falsely accused of rape, experiencing violence (physical or sexual) at the hands of women (and subsequently having those violations dismissed/ignored), having their character maligned or assumed to be abusive due to being male (thus being subjected to anti-male discrimination), being censored, or being denied custody. Taken together, this emphasis on victimhood in men is much clearer in r/MR than in r/TRP, and the morality of victimhood appears to be much more clearly defined: r/MR appears to be fighting for the right of men to be considered victims, which may be based in conceptions of physical violations, financial/resource violation, or of reputation and social exclusion. This relationship with victimhood may result from numerous different forces or conditions in society, which I believe includes a complicated mixture of reactions to pervasive hegemonic gender norms that assume male power and agency and female subordination, along with some degree of stigma reversal.

Men's Liberation: An Example of Inclusive Victim Consciousness. Compared to the other two communities, the MensLib community radically diverges in their constructions and relationships to victimhood, power, and morality. The tendency for r/ML to look at harm more holistically can be considered an expression of what McNeill and Vollhardt (2020) describe as “Inclusive Victim Consciousness” (IVC):

This sense of “inclusive victim consciousness” (Vollhardt, 2009, 2012, 2015) or a “common victim identity” (Shnabel, Halabi, & Noor, 2013) is contrasted with competitive victimhood (Noor, Shnabel, Halabi, & Nadler, 2012), which focuses on claims that the ingroup has suffered more than the other conflict party or other victim groups (see also Szabó, this volume). Instead, people can highlight the similarities between their own and other groups' experiences of victimization, thereby acknowledging that other groups suffered as well (Vollhardt, 2013). (pg. 470)

McNeill and Vollhardt identify numerous positive pro-social impacts of inclusive victim consciousness (IVC); for example, they identify that IVC predicts positive intergroup attitudes,

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both within a conflict setting and toward other victim groups. These dynamics are evident within r/ML in its general emphasis on inclusion and solidarity.

On the other hand, Noor, Vollhardt, Mari, and Nadler (2017) identify potentially harmful impacts of IVC that might obscure an understanding of asymmetrical power dynamics and prevent challenges to those asymmetries. The emphasis on r/ML, while it focuses significantly on the harms of hegemonic gender norms to men, appears to attempt to incorporate an analysis of power asymmetries within their framework in ways that may mitigate some of the more harmful impacts of IVC. For example, in a thread discussing the harmful tendency for fathers to joke about threatening to kill their daughters' prom dates, the dominant emphasis in the analysis is how that propagates beliefs that predominantly negatively impact men. However, there is also some exploration on the other side of how the sexual objectification of females and assumptions of male domination is psychologically harmful to men and provides a connection to how the power asymmetries within the current gender order are harmful to men despite their more powerful position. Future studies might look more closely at these dynamics and whether specific strategies might prevent or mitigate some of the hazards of IVC.

Ambivalent Sexism in The Red Pill and Men's Rights

Distinct patterns of Ambivalent Sexism (AS) (Glick & Fiske, 1996) manifest within r/TRP and r/MR. According to Glick and Fiske, AS has two main dimensions: Hostile Sexism (HS) and Benevolent Sexism (BS), and three components within those dimensions: Paternalism, Gender Differentiation, and Heterosexuality. We can see how r/TRP and r/MR diverge in patterned ways across all three within these constructs, with a strong presence of both HS and BS in r/TRP and a tendency within r/MR to reject BS but embrace HS to varying degrees.

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Dominative paternalism represents the HS aspect of Paternalism, which views women as not being fully competent adults and therefore legitimizing the need for male domination.

Conversely, *protective paternalism* represents the BS dimension, which conceptualizes women as the cherished wives, mothers, and romantic counterparts to men and whose “weaknesses” justify the male protector/provider role. These forms of AS can co-exist in one worldview and are not in opposition but are complementary; the co-existence of both forms of AS is seen very strongly within r/TRP in their expressed attitudes toward women. However, in r/MR, there tends to be a rejection of the protective paternalism, which relates to their more dominant political project of competitive victimhood; the expectation of protective paternalism, which sees men as being the protectors and providers, is identified as one of the main barriers in their ability to be seen as victims.

The second dimension of AS, gender differentiation, manifests in what Glick and Fiske call *competitive gender differentiation* (which they liken to dominative paternalism, in that it serves as social justification for male structural domination, and *complementary gender differentiation*, which posits that women have positive traits that complement those of men, such as being more nurturing and attentive. We see both of these attitudes endorsed strongly and are pervasive throughout r/TRP’s ideological understanding of the evolutionary reasons behind the identified essential differences between sexes. This gender differentiation is often explicitly tied to heterosexuality. For example, the conceptualization of men being inherently smarter, more emotionally stable, and physically stronger is seen as resulting from the different reproductive roles that evolved, and which justify the naturalness and necessity of male dominance within heterosexual relationships.

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The emphasis on gender differentiation is much weaker within r/MR, though it is salient in terms of how these gender differentials are seen as contributing to men's victimization. When gender differentiation does tend to be endorsed, it is usually along the HS axis of competitive gender differentiation. For example, r/MR rejects The Gendered Wage Gap; if not outright denied as a myth, it is tied to beliefs about the unfair expectations for men to be providers to women or beliefs about men being more competent in high pressure/high paying jobs. Conversely, the BS axis of gender differentiation, complementary gender differentiation, is almost entirely rejected. We can see how this rejection of the complementary gender differentiation manifests in the explicit and frequent disputation of the stereotypes of women as pure and innocent victims and the importance to the community of fostering awareness of the existence of predatorial and abusive women.

Finally, the ambivalent nature of heterosexuality in the AS frame breaks down the heterosexuality dimension into the draw of *heterosexual intimacy* (BS) and *heterosexual hostility* (HS). Glick and Fiske argue that for men with sexist beliefs, the desire for heterosexual intimacy with women has the potential to render them psychologically dependent on them, which can stand in stark contrast with a worldview that otherwise considers women dependent on men. The view of women as sexual gatekeepers (a central belief in r/TRP) reflects this understanding of gendered power dynamics; women's sexuality is framed as a resource used to control men. The desire to dominate women reveals the HS dimension of heterosexual hostility, especially as this sense of vulnerability in men to the "sexual wiles" and "manipulativeness" can be a source of resentment. Both hostile and benevolently sexist sentiments around heterosexuality are rampant within r/TRP, as they appear to be grappling with the fear of being vulnerable to women; this

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vulnerability is tied to the sexual desire of women, which conflicts with their otherwise dismissive beliefs about women as being generally inferior.

In summary, the evidence for both HS and BS within r/TRP is pervasive throughout its discourse, with varying degrees of HS or BS. These patterns lend more empirical support to Glick and Fiske's theory of AS, as r/TRP's discourse provides numerous examples of how both HS and BS are compatible with each other and often feed into one another.

In contrast, r/MR appears to display a general rejection of the BS component of heterosexuality, which at times manifests in members explicitly stating their rejection of romantic involvement with women due to their fears of victimization. The emphasis within r/MR on heterosexual hostility can be seen in the numerous discussions of abuse of men by women within interpersonal relationships, the fears about false rape accusations, and the fears surrounding the potential to be financially exploited by women in the context of divorce or child support. There is evidence of r/MR believing in the fundamental dynamic of women as sexual gatekeepers, which is another way in which men are conceptualized as victims in terms of the perceived differences of difficulty in finding mates.

Conversely, r/MR provides an example of how a rejection of BS may feed into HS. There are many ways in which r/MR's pattern of emphasizing the harm men experience in society, particularly in the context of negative stereotypes about men or positive stereotypes about women, emphasizes the downsides for men without acknowledging the advantage of those same dynamics. For example, while there is a strong rejection of the stereotypes that frame men as perpetrators and women as victims, there is no exploration of how men are advantaged by those same sets of stereotypes that see men as powerful or harmful to women who are seen as weak.

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In contrast with both r/TRP and r/MR, the rejection of both AS dimensions is explicitly explored within r/ML. While r/ML grapples with many similar topics as r/MR, how hegemonic gender norms are rooted in beliefs about men being strong/dominant and women considered weak are more critically explored in terms of the harm conferred to people of all genders. In a certain light, r/MR can be seen as rightly rejecting benevolent sexist tropes commonly held in society; however, especially in contrast with r/ML, r/MR's focus often fails to acknowledge how the things they are reacting to hurt women as well. They sometimes go further than simply failing to acknowledge those harms by framing these things as evidence for the existence of female domination over men and ignoring or dismissing women's oppression.

In summary, AS was prevalent throughout the collected data in both r/TRP and r/MR. In r/TRP, both HS and BS were widespread; this is likely tied to its emphasis on gender essentialism, sexual strategy, and heterosexuality. In contrast, evidence of HS was found throughout r/MR, though there seemed to be an explicit rejection of BS. Finally, likely related to its feminist lens and explicit rejection of misogyny, no evidence for any form of AS was found in the collected data for r/ML.

Theoretical Implications

This section discusses the broader theoretical implications of this study, specifically focusing on this study's contribution to the Ideologies as Complex Adaptive Systems framework. As noted at the beginning of the discussion, some of the most useful theoretical implications of this study come from the use of CAMs to explore relationships: the relationships of the ideological content within each group and how those relationships formed cohesive networks; the relationship among the different levels of ideological structures as explored through the different sets of CAMs; and the relationships of each group with one another. This section

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discusses how these aspects of my study design fit into the previous ICAS/CAMs literature, particularly noting the novel aspects of this study design. Throughout this section, I also note limitations and potential future research directions.

Novel Uses of CAMs and Adaptations to the CAMs Structures

I incorporated several novel ways of using the CAMs to explore our questions of interest, contributing to the CAMs literature base. These novel approaches include using social media content as our raw data, adaptations to the CAMs' visual structure, and how the ideologies were examined on different levels or sub-systems. This section includes a comparison of how this study diverges from previous studies using CAMs, the potential implications for the CAMs methodology, as well as for larger theoretical implications in understanding ideologies as complex adaptive systems.

The Use of CAMs with Social Media Data

This study appears to be the first to use social media as its raw data. The following is a brief survey of some of the identified data sources within studies using CAMs, which include: semi-structured interviews (Milkoreit, 2017; Wolfe, 2012); "environmental literature, questionnaires of environmental students and experts, and discourse analysis of annual reports and about sections from major environmental organizations" (pg. iii, Williams, 2017); psychotherapy case studies (Thagard & Larocque, 2020); a mixture of institutional documents such as educational plans and in-service training programs with observations of group discussion (Luthardt, J., Schröder, T., Hildebrandt, F., & Bormann, 2020); and memoirs and supplemental reports of the 1978 Camp David negotiations (Findlay & Thagard, 2014). As the current study uses social media data as the raw data upon which we constructed the CAMs, it represents one of many unique contributions to the CAMs literature base.

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This novelty of this study design also represents one of its most significant limitations: the lack of standardized methodology for the construction of CAMs. Further, while there is no standardized guide for the construction of CAMs (beyond the brief suggestions outlined in the methods section), most studies involved more targeted ideological data, such as interviews. As discussed briefly in the Limitations sub-section of the Methods, social media data provided some unique and complicated challenges. Future research might establish more standardized approaches for creating CAMs; particular emphasis can be put on establishing guides for engaging with social media data, as it is an exceptionally abundant, rich, and accessible source of ideological data.

Visual Adaptations to the CAM Symbols

One of the main adjustments made was introducing an “ambivalent relationship” line (reflected by a dotted line), which better fit with how certain constructs had more ambivalent connections than relationships that were primarily reinforcing or antagonistic. An example of this more ambivalent relationship is found in the Men’s Liberation’s relationship with Building a Healthy Masculinity and Traditional Masculine Socialization; while traditional masculine socialization is seen as being detrimental to mental health and a positive gendered self-image, it is seen as being critical to better understand and reflect on the nature of traditional masculine socialization, which is considered a central aspect of the process of deconstructing those old beliefs and building a positive masculinity.

CAMs for Examining Different Levels of Conflict/Ideology

CAMs have flexibly been used in previous studies to examine various dimensions of belief-systems and ideological change. For example, researchers used CAMS to explore changes in cognition and affect in longitudinal comparisons, such as Findlay and Thagard (2014), who

examined the emotional change in international negotiation, and Thagard and Larocque's (2020), who used CAMs to track emotional change within psychotherapy. According to my knowledge, only one other study used CAMs to examine different levels of belief-systems within-subjects (Luthardt, Schröder, Hildebrandt, and Bormann, 2020) of participants involved in Early Childhood Education programs. However, their study differed significantly in its focus on a specific challenge faced within an identified institution. As the current study focused on three online communities' ideologies, this study provides a unique contribution, particularly in its emphasis on the relationships of multiple and layered *sub-systems* of ideology, both within each groups' ideological systems and among their relationships with each other.

CAMs for Social Ingroups and Outgroups

While social identities are often included in CAMs as components of ideologies that identify political allies and enemies, this study appears unique in its specific emphasis on examining the networks of social identities as their own sub-systems within ideologies. As explored previously, this specific emphasis on social identities and their relationships to each other provided unique insights. The utility of CAMs specifically to explore social identities, especially ingroups and outgroups, may be fertile ground for exploring the mechanisms of how and why political ideologies spread across different social groups and how we might engage in ways that reduce the spread of ideologies that encourage bigotry and inequality.

A significant limitation of this study relates to the use of social media data, which limited our ability to understand the demographics and social identities of the individuals making the posts. Future research may focus on individuals' interactions and their experiences within these online ideological groups.

CAMs to Explore Specific Emotions

Perhaps the most unique contribution of this study to the CAMs literature was the novel use of CAMs to examine the affective components of shame and resentment as they manifested within each community. Part of the challenge of working solely with social media data is the limited modes of understanding the internal experiences of our subjects. However, while shame has an internally experienced component, it is an inherently social emotion that goes beyond the generally social nature of emotions (i.e., it is an emotion definitionally centered around social relationships and threats to social bonds), making it a good subject for examining on a collective level. We also visually adapted the CAMs to reflect the specific patterns of how shame and resentment appeared to show up in the data, which may prove to be a valuable option for future researchers who might want to focus on other emotional networks. Another area of future research could be analyzing different sub-systems of emotional networks, which may deepen our understanding of different developmental pathways or motivations for adopting ideologies.

Implications for Exploring the Mechanisms of Emotional Coherence

One of the most salient ways that a CAMs analysis of particular emotions may be of unique value is its ability to facilitate understanding of the spread and maintenance of ideologies. As Thagard (2015) argues, “[a] case can be made that emotional coherence is the main mental mechanism governing people’s acquisition and retention of ideologies, producing such less-than-rational processes as motivated inference and fear-driven inference” (pg. 3). Thagard’s assessment of the importance of emotional coherence as an explanatory factor in the spread of ideologies is bolstered by Salmela and von Scheve’s (2017) theoretical argument: in combination with larger socioeconomic factors, the presence of collective, intergroup emotions of fear and shame are centrally explaining factors in the rise of right-wing populist ideologies. If these

claims are true, then better understanding how different ideologies interact with specific emotion regulation systems (on both individual and collective/intergroup levels) may be crucial in creating and implementing interventions that prevent or combat ideologies that foster bigotry and support for social inequalities. The unique use of CAMs in this study to explore collective affective structures in each groups' ideologies represents an initial path for a more in-depth examination of mental mechanisms and modes of inference as identified by Thagard (2015). The potential of this avenue of inquiry is reflected in the example I provided previously, demonstrating how the principle of emotional coherence within the social identity sub-system and emotion-specific sub-system of shame and resentment in r/TRP encourages socially intolerant beliefs.

Theoretical Implication Conclusions

The overarching thrust of this study's theoretical implications emphasizes the utility of using the ICAS/CAMs framework to examine ideologies. Some of the most salient aspects highlighted here result from the ICAS/CAMs focus on *relationships*, strongly bolstered by social identity theory and the construct of boundary objects (as explored in the Empirical Implications section). One of the most unique and important contributions from this study is exploring the relationship among different levels of ideology, or sub-systems of ideology, that allow for a more complex and nuanced understanding of how emotional coherence operates among various levels of cognition. Further emphasis on exploring different sub-systems might shed light on how ideologies either spread or do not spread across different groups of people, especially along the lines of collective identities. These insights can inform both research and clinical work: especially in clinical work with men.

Clinical Implications

There are potentially several useful clinical implications from this study; one of the most immediate clinical implications would be for clinicians working with men who are actively wrestling with some of the topics explored by these groups. Some of the most salient themes include: wrestling with their masculine identities or gender identity more broadly; the perceived indifference to men's suffering; reactions to male survivors of sexual violence or domestic abuse; being accused of sexual assault; difficulties making sense of male privilege or experiencing a heightened sense of stigma around being perceived as a man; resentment towards women, or precursors to that resentment (e.g., a sense of alienation, anxiety, or rejection by women, especially in the context of dating); or experience within civil courts in legal battles over child custody or paying child support. This section will include a brief discussion on some of these topics, starting with exploring how the findings from this study might inform work with gender more generally, but especially in men's gender identity development. From there, I will discuss a few salient issues regarding the clinical implications of sexual violence (from both sides of the victimization dynamic). Finally, I conclude with a brief discussion about the value of thinking about the impact of political ideologies more broadly within the context of psychotherapy.

Hegemonic Masculinity and Gender Identity Development

One of the most important clinical implications of this study stems from analyzing the relationships among beliefs about gender and the affective sub-system of shame and resentment. In particular, I believe that one of the main aspects of the appeal of r/TheRedPill is in its explicit theorizing about gender and how those beliefs are tied to sexual strategy. As social beings, our psychosocial development is typically laden with pervasive and subtle messages about gender, starting from a very early age; it is often the case that we develop our beliefs about

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gender subconsciously and implicitly through our gender socialization. I suspect that the explicit account of gendered dynamics professed by r/TRP (aided by its authoritative scientific veneer of evolutionary psychology) provides a very compelling and detailed map of what are quite commonly held assumptions about gender; these commonly held beliefs about gender and how those beliefs interact with global systems of power are detailed in Connell's (2016) work on hegemonic masculinity. While some of the more specific or extreme details of how these beliefs manifest within r/TRP might not be fully representative of the most predominant form of gender ideologies, it is instructive to understand these gender essentialist belief structures in their more extreme forms. Having a clear depiction and exemplar of an extreme expression of hegemonic masculine identity formation can help detect more subtle patterns of hegemonic gendered beliefs, which might help clients wrestling with their gender identities more generally.

In addition to being familiar with work on hegemonic masculinity, understanding the concept of hybrid masculinities can help clinicians better understand the complex relationships between different kinds of masculinities and hierarchies within those masculinities. As r/TRP can be thought of as representing a more hegemonic version of masculinity, rhetoric within r/MR has been identified in previous studies as representing "masculinity in crisis" (Schmitz, & Kazyak, 2016) or as a "hybrid masculinity" (Ging, 2019). While hybrid masculinities represent a divergence from hegemonic masculinity in various ways, the concept of hybrid masculinity allows for an understanding of how gendered power dynamics can adapt and shift in ways that may appear to subvert traditional gendered hierarchical relations while reinforcing them (which can help us to distinguish from behaviors that do challenge patriarchal relationships). Clinicians working with men, especially as the content may relate to their gender identity development, can benefit from having a better grasp on these complex social dynamics and how to help men (and

people of any gender!) to better deal with some of the myriad of challenges that they face as emotional beings in an often aggressively gendered social world.

Men and Sexual Violence

Male Survivors of Sexual Violence. Several important clinical implications from this study are specific to male survivors of sexual violence. As identified in the content of both r/ML and r/MR (though with significantly different framing and emphases), male survivors of sexual violence face different sets of challenges in the face of sexual victimization than their female counterparts. These claims align with findings from recent literature on sexual violence against males (Lowe & Rogers, 2017; Navarro & Clevenger, 2017), which remains an under-researched area despite an increase in attention to it in the last decade. As Young, Pruett, and Colvin (2018) note, some of the paucity of research on male survivors of sexual violence may be related to complex social stigmas connected with gendered stereotypes, as well as more formal institutional factors such as legal definitions of rape (which vary across local and national levels) or differential funding for services or research focusing on the needs of male survivors.

While there are numerous similarities that survivors of sexual violence face regardless of gender (e.g., dealing with shame, guilt, or confusion, or fear of not being believed or taken seriously), there are different sets of challenges facing male survivors in the aftermath of their victimization relating to gendered social expectations and beliefs. Hegemonic gender beliefs can be considered compatible with Rape Myths, commonly defined as “prejudicial, stereotyped or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists” (Burt, 1980, p. 217). Rape myths, in general, serve to justify and sustain social norms that tolerate and enable sexual violation and add to the secondary victimization of survivors. As Turchik and Edwards (2012) argue, the vast majority of research on rape and rape myths focus on male perpetration and female victimization, and the

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prevalence of rape myths specific to male rape has been historically marginalized. They identify male rape myths as specifically related to the following beliefs:

(a) men cannot be raped; (b) “real” men can defend themselves against rape; (c) only gay men are victims and/or perpetrators of rape; (d) men are not affected by rape (or not as much as women); (e) a woman cannot sexually assault a man; (f) male rape only happens in prisons; (g) sexual assault by someone of the same sex causes homosexuality; (h) homosexual and bisexual individuals deserve to be sexually assaulted because they are immoral and deviant; and (i) if a victim physically responds to an assault he must have wanted it (pg. 211-212)

Turchik and Edwards argue that male rape myth acceptance is compatible with and aligns with rape myths more generally and ties these beliefs back to hegemonic gendered beliefs that see men as powerful, aggressive, and heterosexual. They discuss some of how male rape myths specifically are “not simply present among a minority of individuals, but are embedded within our laws, language, policies, media messages, and even within our training and education” (pg. 220), reflecting the insidious and prevalent messages that our clients are likely encountering regularly.

The dynamics of how these gendered expectations and beliefs about rape tend to have some specific interactions with male survivors of sexual violence, resulting in different sets of challenges for clients in their recovery commonly seen in female survivors of sexual violence. Some issues revolve around gendered expectations of rape being considered a “women’s issue,” fear of homophobia, and threats to their sense of masculinity and identity (Javaid, 2016).

Sivagurunathan, Orchard, MacDermid, and Evans (2019) identify a few salient features relevant to male Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) survivors in their decision to seek support or disclose, such as concerns about a) “the vampire myth” (i.e., the belief that males who were sexually abused as children will grow up to become abusers themselves), b) being perceived as being more likely to become a predator, c) how their abuse may have impacted their sexual identity or preferences, or

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d) how they might be perceived as less masculine or “less of a man.” They also explore how male CSA survivors’ socialization as men can make it difficult for them to seek help due to expectations to be strong, protect themselves, and not discuss their emotions, which are themes that are commonly discussed within r/ML.

Another area where the unique facets of hegemonic gendered stereotypes impact male survivors of sexual violence relates to a significant area of focus for r/MR surrounding stereotypes that preclude women from being considered perpetrators. This area of concern within r/MR is reflected in the research on male survivors of sexual violence; however, in contrast with an emphasis in r/MR, the research exploring this also examines the experience of male survivors whose perpetrators were male as well. As Sivagurunathan, Orchard, MacDermid, and Evans (2019) note, the gender of the perpetrator can impact male CSA survivors’ willingness to disclose in complicated ways. They identify how male survivors with male perpetrators often face complicated reactions to concerns about homophobia or survivors who identify as gay or bisexual who face doubts or concerns about how their history of abuse may impact their sexual identity or preferences. On the other hand, they note that males with female perpetrators might be more unwilling to disclose their abuse in part due to problematic tropes about the “older woman introducing the younger man to the world of sex” often framed as desirable, or reactions that dismiss the capacity of men/boys to be raped or taken advantage of by a woman. In conclusion, while there is a somewhat myopic focus on this limited gendered stereotype within r/MR in comparison with the more complex exploration on gendered stereotypes and more inclusive focus on survivors of sexual violence found in r/ML, there is clear evidence behind the problematic nature of this stereotype for the harmful impacts on male survivors of sexual violence.

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There is a growing body of evidence to support that there is far more complexity in the gendered dynamics of sexual victimization, with higher rates of male victims and female perpetrators than had previously been assumed (Turchik, Hebenstreit, & Judson, 2016). Simplistic and rigid assumptions of male perpetration and female victimization are rooted in hegemonic gendered norms, which as r/ML often (and in my estimation, correctly) points out, hurts people of all genders.

While grappling with the entrenched gender beliefs about interpersonal power dynamics in working with males who have experienced sexual victimization is often difficult enough, these issues can be even more challenging for clinicians to grapple with when it comes to working with men on the other side of the sexual violence dynamic, who face accusations of perpetrating sexual violence.

Men Accused of Sexual Violence. This study has several possible implications for clinicians working with men who have been accused of sexual violence. Many of those discussions are beyond the scope of what can be addressed in this section. One area most highlighted by the findings in this study is how competing ideological systems relate to sexual violence, who tends to perpetrate it, and how they define “victims.”

The role of gender or sexual ideology in the perpetration of sexual violence is likely just one of many complex contributing factors. Given the intensity of focus on sexual violence (or the dismissal of charges of sexual violence), ideology seems to contribute to either the perpetration of sexual violence or at least the enabling of a culture that tolerates it. As Hanel (2020) articulates, the existence of “hermeneutical gaps” can occur between peoples’ experiences of interaction, resulting from how sexist ideology distorts our conceptions of sexual violence.

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Hanel differentiates between the philosophical concept of “hermeneutical injustices” from “hermeneutical misfirings” as “having one’s significant experience obscured from the collective understanding without being hermeneutically marginalized oneself” (pg. 4). Hanel argues that grappling with the complexities of preventing sexual violence necessitates us to take a problem seriously that Alcoff (2018) identifies, where perpetrators can genuinely experience their victims as “inviting the encounter, as not being harmed by it, or even enjoying it” (p. 56), which she then argues is “only because of their socialization within rape cultures” (p. 57). Further, Hanel (2020) argues that “some men may fail to understand their actions due to the underlying sexist framework that distorts what counts as sexual violence by, for example, persistent rape myths and correlated stigmatisation of victims” (pg. 1). There is overwhelming evidence from this study to suggest that these sexist frameworks are operating to various degrees and influencing the ideological development of members in both r/TRP and to a lesser but still significant degree in r/MR.

Within the context of this research study, the centrality of a belief in an “epidemic” of false rape accusations for both r/TRP and r/MR may in part be a reflection of some of the complexities the dynamics of these “hermeneutical gaps” playing out on a broader social scale; especially as ideologies form and define themselves in relation to each other within larger ideological eco-systems (e.g., r/TRP and r/MR defining themselves *against* feminism, but r/TRP differentiating themselves from r/MR). Critical venues of prevention would benefit from research into the various motivations and mechanisms that lead to individuals adopting more sexist frameworks that endorse common rape myths (such as have been explored in r/TRP ideology) versus ideologies that explicitly identify and contest rape myths (as seen in r/ML). In the meantime, some clinicians will inevitably experience the challenge of working with clients

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who face accusations of sexual harm and grapple with the many complex choices involved in helping their clients deal with such circumstances. It seems possible that there are people accused of sexual violence who do not have a framework to understand how their actions caused harm, who would react to accusations defensively and in ways that would deny or minimize the harm that they may have caused. However, as Hanel concludes, acknowledging this possibility does not negate the possibility of and necessity to hold them responsible.

If we take seriously the possibility that sexual harm is, at least sometimes, a result of these hermeneutical misfirings by people who have caused sexual harm despite their conscious awareness, mental health clinicians are likely to be in the front lines of dealing with the consequences of both sides of the equation. This conflict may be especially salient for clinicians working directly with the legal system and convicted sexual offenders. However, considering the difficulty of many survivors of sexual violence in the legal system and the low conviction rates, it is perhaps less likely for those with more nuanced and complex accusations of violation to end up in the legal system. Instead, clinicians are more likely to see these cases in the context of college and university mental health systems, where sexual violence continues to be a pervasive problem (Fedina, Holmes, & Backes, 2018). Being aware of the existence of these ideologies, particularly r/TRP (which promotes rape mythologies) and r/MR (which frames men as the victims of women's unchecked power to accuse men of sexual assault and destroy their lives), may be useful for clinicians. Some men may be looking for support to deal with the psychological and social repercussions of being accused. Being connected with those ideologies may prevent meaningful reflection on the implications of their behavior in favor of facilitating an ideology that engages in competitive victimhood. Additionally, clinicians may find Hanel's articulations of a framework that understands these unintentional harms resulting from

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hermeneutical misfirings as a useful tool for helping to frame and explore what these accusations mean to clients, to better deal with the potential moral injury they face, and the challenges they are likely to endure in regulating emotions and self-concepts. The r/ML positioning toward this dynamic is particularly instructive, as one member articulates: “know that while some mistakes can never be undone, you are not doomed to keep repeating the same mistakes.”

Ideology in Therapy

An emphasis on understanding our clients’ political ideology, in general, can be of significant benefit to our clinical work in numerous ways. Teasing out someone’s understanding of how the world works; where they see themselves as fitting into that world; who has the power to do what; who they identify with or define themselves against; and what they consider their social or moral responsibility often makes up the natural content of clinical work, though we may not always think of these questions as belonging to the domain of the “political.” Understanding someone’s political ideology, especially as it relates to their social identities, is invaluable in trying to understand the plethora of ways they conflict intra- and inter-psychically.

Certain ideological strains may influence people to be more or less likely to engage in therapy and influence how effective the work will be. For example, there are numerous examples of members in r/ML encouraging others to go to therapy, which is directly tied to their beliefs about their conditioning as men within society that wrongly discourages them from learning about and expressing their emotional responses. Conversely, as r/TRP conceptualizes men as naturally less emotional than women, there may be a significant motivation for adherents of r/TRP to avoid therapy if it undermines their self-concept as a man. On the other hand, perhaps some others may be drawn to therapy to “get their emotions under control” and help them live up to their idealized expectations. Regardless of a client’s specific ideological beliefs, very few, if

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any of us, ultimately live up to our ideological values in our daily lives, so one's ideology is by no means an ultimate predictor of their behavior or totalizing summary of someone's internal experience. This conflict in how often our daily lives and behaviors diverge from our political values is significant, not just in influencing who may or may not come to see mental health clinicians and help-seeking behaviors more generally, but can inform some of the barriers and challenges clients may face in being able to use the resources we offer to them.

More specific to this study, clinicians working with men — especially men who may be grappling with some of the issues discussed above — can benefit from an awareness of some of the main talking points, vernacular, and rhetorical framings of the issues within the ideological communities studied. While this study examined only three online male-issue-centered communities, only two (r/TRP and r/MR) are considered a part of the larger “Manosphere,” which also include other ideological groups such as Incels, Men Going Their Own Way, or Pick-Up Artists (Lilly, 2016). Some of these other Manosphere communities and some other Alt Right communities that focus more on other social issues than gender (e.g., anti-immigration, racial exclusion) share similar talking points and lexicons. Having familiarity with the language commonly used in these communities may help clinicians pick up on the salient language a client may use to prompt clinicians to keep an eye out for how their political ideologies impact their emotional regulation and interpersonal relationships.

Emotional Ideology. Perhaps one of the most central ways in which this study and an emphasis on ideology, in general, may be useful for clinicians is the emphasis on the interaction between political ideology and emotions. In one study examining the relationship of emotional ideology with alexithymia (Edwards, Micek, Mottarella, & Wupperman, 2017), the authors define *emotion ideologies* as “individualized conceptualizations and beliefs about emotions and

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emotional experiences” (pg. 257). Emotional ideologies include societal norms and expectations, appraisals (e.g., of validity, controllability, or acceptability), or beliefs about appropriate responses (e.g., expression, suppression, acceptance). Making explicit these emotional beliefs is a central component within Emotional Schema Therapy (Leahy, 2002), and a better understanding of the complexity of beliefs around emotions can be invaluable to clinical work.

The benefit of working more explicitly with emotional ideologies and how those interact with our political ideologies can extend beyond our direct work with our clients if we also consider the broader interpersonal and political impacts. This impact may be especially important when considering how rules may differ across social identities (e.g., gender, race, class, age). Ideally, we should aim to work with our clients in ways that can potentially challenge larger social prescriptions that maintain unjust social hierarchies.

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Appendix A

Glossary

Alpha Male: a term used primarily by r/TRP to describe a man who is socially dominant and attractive to women.

AWALT: “All Women Are Like That,” referring to hypergamous, meaning that they are constantly looking to

Beta or Beta Male: a term used primarily by r/TRP, and used in opposition to that of an “alpha male.” The following definition is taken from r/TRP’s Glossary:

Traits of provision: either providing resources or validation to others, women (and perhaps men). Beta traits display low value to women if they are are put on too strong or too early in meeting- giving without equity. Beta can be used to describe individual behaviors, as well as people who have an overwhelming amount of beta properties (opposed to alpha).

Blue Pill: a term used by r/TRP, typically referring to feminist or progressive beliefs. The following definition of the Blue Pill is taken from r/TRP’s Glossary:

From The Matrix and its sequels. The path of conformity with Society’s expectations; the state of being unaware of the problems engendered by society.

CAM: Cognitive Affective Map, the main methodological tool of the Ideologies as Complex Adaptive Systems framework.

CV: Competitive Victimhood.

Game: a term used primarily by r/TRP, used to describe principles and rule that are designed to increase attraction.

Gynocentric: a term used mostly by r/TRP, but sometimes by other members of the Manosphere; describes a society dominated by females, showing preference to women and girls.

Frame: a term used mostly by r/TRP to describe psychological stability and dominance. The following definition is taken from r/TRP’s Glossary:

The context in which something is perceived. Maintaining frame is often cited as the most important aspect of Alpha behavior.

Hypergammy: a term primarily used by r/TRP. The following definition of hypergammy is taken from r/TRP’s Glossary:

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The instinctual urge for women to seek out the best alpha available. This is marked by maximizing rejection (therefore women are the selective gender).

ICAS: Ideologies as Complex Adaptive Systems.

IVC: Inclusive Victim Consciousness.

Incels: Short for “Involuntary Celibate.” An online group within the Manosphere

Manosphere: an online cluster of ideological groups focused on men’s issues. A shared rejection of feminism unites them. Examples of groups within The Manosphere include The Red Pill, Men’s Rights Advocates, Incels, Pick-Up Artists, and Men Going Their Own Way.

ML or r/ML: refers to the Men’s Liberation subreddit (r/MensLib).

MR or r/MR: refers to the Men’s Rights subreddit (r/MensRights).

MRM or MRA: Men’s Rights Movement or Men’s Rights Advocate.

OP: short for “Original Post,” meaning the first post in a discussion thread.

POC: Person of Color.

PUA: Pick-Up Artists. A community of men dedicated to learning “the art of seduction” in order to increase their opportunities to have sex with women.

SJW: Social Justice Warrior. A pejorative term used to ridicule someone as being overenthusiastic about social justice.

SMP: Sexual Marketplace. A framework that r/TRP uses for discussing sexual strategy using economic principles and fundamental assumptions about evolution and the biological differences between sexes.

SMV: Sexual Market Value. A term primarily used by r/TRP to describe one’s value within the sexual marketplace.

TRP or r/TRP: refers to The Red Pill subreddit (r/TheRedPill).

Ressentiment: a term used by Salmela and von Scheve (2017) to describe the psychosocial mechanism of the transformation of negative emotions (such as fear or insecurity) through “repressed shame into anger, resentment and hatred towards perceived ‘enemies’ of the self and associated social groups, such as refugees, immigrants, the long-term unemployed, political and cultural elites, and the ‘mainstream’ media” (pg. 1).