The Local "Salad Bar" of Hate: Global Hegemonic Masculinity in Australia's Extreme Right

Article

The Local "Salad Bar" of Hate: Global Hegemonic Masculinity in Australia's Extreme Right

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Abstract

This paper examines a local manifestation of extreme right political mobilisation in Australia from the standpoint of Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) global hegemonic masculinity. Using Messerschmidt and Rohde's (2018) methods for analysing violent extremists' public statements, we examine public blog posts by "The Lads [sic] Society" to scrutinise the relationship between local advocacy for a white ethno-state in Australia and global hegemonic masculinities. The analysis finds that localised white nationalism is both a response to, and constituted by, the tensions of global hegemonic masculinity and is, in part, an attempt to reclaim localised white hegemonic masculinity in the face of a multitude of perceived global societal failures. Through the analysis, this paper contributes to Messerschmidt and Rohde's (2018) claim that various global hegemonic masculinities simultaneously coexist and compete, while pointing to how discursive processes continue to redefine masculinities at the local level. The paper also responds to a broader invitation to incorporate gender analysis into the study of extreme political movements, enabling a more critical understandings of the motivations and experiences of those that participate in them.

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Introduction

In her introduction to a special issue of *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, one of the world's leading terrorism journals, Alexandra Phelan (2023) invited scholars to incorporate more gender-sensitive analysis into the field of terrorism studies. Phelan (2023, 358) argued that "there is an […] important organizational dimension to the relationship between gender and terrorism, where extremist groups and networks can strategically utilize gender in order to mobilize, recruit, and enhance perceptions of organizational legitimacy". Despite this, gender analysis remains under-utilized within the field. This is more understandable when viewed from the context in which terrorism studies has arisen as a field.

The study of terrorism and violent extremist political movements has historically emerged from think tanks, government agencies, and policy centres rather than through the academy (Burke 2008). This reflects how violent non-state actors have tended to be viewed as threats to state security, with pragmatic concerns of maintaining the status quo trumping critical scholarship. This traditionally state-centric approach to research often focused on the point when a person or group was already radicalized to violent action (Horgan 2005; Toros 2008). Despite its state-centric roots, the field of terrorism studies is increasingly benefiting from broader academic disciplines turning their analytic methods and skills towards understanding the social dynamics within which extremist political movements emerge, are sustained, and decline.

In this paper, we aim to further encourage scholars of masculinities to engage in studying contemporary manifestations of extreme-right political movements. Many countries are experiencing a revival of extreme-right organization and activity, characterized by an anti-egalitarian, authoritarian, and nativist political agenda (Ravndal 2021; Ravndal and Bjørgo 2018). Within this political agenda, extreme-right movements tend to promote traditional gender roles based on the biology of "male" or "female" and treat any movement away from these as evidence of a moral decay so severe that, if left unchecked, will inevitably lead to the collapse of society.

While extreme-right movements have historically been more visible in Europe and North America, Australia has not been exempted. Indeed, an emboldened extreme right has re-emerged in Australia, particularly since 2015 when a heightening of the moral panic around the role of Islam within Western liberal democracies exacerbated a discursive environment conducive to the expression of increasingly extreme-right views (Peucker, Smith, and Iqbal, 2019). Since then, there has been a renewed effort by extreme right movements in Australia to publicly mobilize, recruit new members, and attempt to build a broader social movement in preparation for implementing some version of a white ethnostate (Stern 2019) in the future.

At times, some people on the fringe of these movements have attempted to accelerate that goal through acts of violence. The most tragic expression of this was when an Australian perpetrated the horrific attack on Muslims at two different mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2019, killing 51 people and causing both physical and emotional injuries to many more. Prior to his attack, the perpetrator interacted with The Lads Society on social media (New Zealand Royal Commission 2020).

The Lads Society was established in 2017 in Melbourne by former members of the United Patriots Front (UPF). It has been described as "a white nationalist organisation, emphasising brotherhood, community, and the benefits of a garage fight club" (Campion 2019, 12). The group operated from 2017 to around 2020, during which time it incorporated members from another extreme-right extremist group, Antipodean Resistance, and re-emerged as the National Socialist Network (Khalil 2021), an openly neo-Nazi group engaging in public stunts and criminality to promote its ideological cause. As with many extreme-right groups, the Lads Society promotes narratives and discourses of the global neo-Nazi agenda, including racism, white nationalism, and at times advocating for the establishment of a white ethnostate. During their period of activity, the Lads Society maintained a public blog, which we used to undertake the analysis for this paper.

We purposefully sampled the Lads Society due to its practice of only allowing men to be members and its physical location inside of a men's only gym, which exemplifies its focus on masculinity. Other white nationalist groups in Australia, including the National Socialist Network (NSN) and UFP are inclusive of women. Therefore, as we will discuss, this data set is unusual as it not only reflects a local manifestation of hegemonic masculinity but also one that specifically excludes women and non-hegemonic men from its physical and online presence.

In this paper, we argue that global hegemonic masculinity is an important theoretical lens for understanding far-right violent extremism. This paper first examines the trajectory of global, local, and regional hegemonic masculinities and their subsequent reformulations (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Messerschmidt 2018b, 2019), before turning to the criminological applicability of the concept. Following this, we examine research at the juncture between violent extremism and masculinities broadly, focusing on hegemonic masculinity. Next, we describe how we undertook our analysis and present the findings in view of the tropes of the villain, victim, and hero in the discourse of violent extremism. The final part of this paper outlines our argument of how the localized phenomenon of a violent extremist group, the Lads Society, uses gendered notions of hegemonic masculinity as a driving force in the recruitment and mobilization of individuals that connect to the global hegemonic masculinity of extreme-right violence. In examining how localized white nationalism is a response to, and constituted by, the tensions of global hegemonic masculinity, we find in the Lads Society an attempt to reclaim localized white hegemonic masculinity in the face of a multitude of perceived global societal failures. Reflecting how global hegemonic masculinities simultaneously coexist and intersect with the local, while pointing to how discursive processes continue to redefine masculinities at the local level, we find that

such local manifestations also vary within the Australian extreme right movement itself, as well as setting them apart from the global movement.

Global, Regional, and Local Hegemonic Masculinities

Connell (1987) theorized the idea of hegemonic masculinity which she further built in her work with Messerschmidt (e.g., Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, 832) stated:

> Hegemonic masculinity was distinguished from other masculinities, especially subordinated masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity was not assumed to be normal in the statistical sense; only a minority of men might enact it. But it was certainly normative. It embodied the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimate the global subordination of women to men.

The characteristics of hegemonic masculinity are not negative per se. Features include strength, competitiveness, assertiveness, confidence, and independence. However, the pursuit of hegemonic masculinity reinforces and recreates male dominance across all spheres of life, such as workplaces, homes, and public spaces (Connell 1987). The theoretical work underpins how hegemonic masculinity legitimates inequality. It affects singular interactions between people and is also embedded in micro- and macro-level structures of societies. The widespread acceptance of hegemonic masculinity as a blueprint for many societies has led to further theorizing in many disciplines and different global contexts.

The underlying concept was progressed in Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) work, where they identified the notions of global, regional, and local hegemonic masculinities. Messerschmidt (2018a, 144) encouraged scholars to "analyze empirically existing hegemonic masculinities and nonhegemonic masculinities" at these three levels. The authors further explicated the concept as a place-based notion that acknowledges and incorporates women's agency. The authors examined the idea of power and privilege as it interacts with hegemonic masculinity, emphasizing hegemonic masculinity as a pattern of hegemony and gender inequality.

Two basic tenets are central to hegemonic masculinity: relationality and legitimation. Relationality means that hegemonic masculinity "must always be seen as constructed in relation to various nonhegemonic masculinities as well as in relation to femininities" (Messerschmidt 2018a, 143). There is no hegemonic masculinity without its relationship to these factors (Connell 1995; Messerschmidt 2018a, 2018b). Legitimation concerns how the emphasis on hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity are about legitimizing the patriarchy and "ideologically legitimates the global subordination of women to men" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, 832). Hegemonic masculinity, then, is not a list of traits but rather a complex relationship that is bound in its connections with other gendered notions within a patriarchal society. The

updated concept creates space for examinations of structures both globally, regionally, and locally – singly and comparatively.

To use the term simply as misogyny (Roose et al. 2022) or "ideological misogyny" (Allison 2021, 126), as other authors have suggested, does not encompass the full understanding that hegemonic masculinity allows us in this analysis. Indeed, as Allison (2021) explains, there is a tendency to miscode ideological misogyny as right-wing only, rather than as local, regional, and global constructions of hegemonic masculinities in a variety of different violent extremist movements.

Previous research has used global hegemonic masculinity and its antecedent to analyze issues across disciplines such as education, media, sports, gender studies, psychotherapy, arts, geography, politics, and the law (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Messerschmidt 2018b). Criminology has spent decades cultivating an understanding of how masculinities, and specifically hegemonic masculinity, are linked to the commission of crimes (Allison and Klein 2021; Cossins and Plummer 2018; Deuchar and Weide 2019; Madhar 2019; Morris and Ratajczak 2019; Sollund 2020; Thacker 2019; Tomsen 2017).

In criminological research, many authors argue that men's pursuit of hegemonic masculinity is a factor in a variety of crime types. While hegemonic masculinity is not the sole influence in driving crime, it is a significant factor that aids in explaining why most criminal perpetrators are men (Collier and Walgrave 1998; Jefferson 1994; Messerschmidt 1993; Messerschmidt and Tomsen 2018; Newburn and Stanko 1994). It also helps explain why men not only commit more crimes than women but also more serious crimes. However, to consider hegemonic masculinity at just the individual level fails to acknowledge how it is embedded in all levels of society. These traits underlie our understandings of success, interactions and worth in realms from home dynamics to workplace structures to global politics. Understanding the concept as both micro and macro simultaneously aids in exploring crime from a variety of angles. This is reflected in the conceptualization of hegemonic masculinities as constructed at three levels: local, regional, and global (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Messerschmidt 2018b).

Hegemonic masculinity also has a long history of application in criminology because of its flexibility of analysis at multiple levels, with early appearances being made by Messerschmidt in 1993. In recent years, hegemonic masculinity has been used as a tool to examine, theorize, and explain crime, including but not limited to men's perpetration of family violence, sexual assault, involvement in gang behaviour, hate crimes against homosexual men and sex workers, young women in gangs, prisoners, the consequence of cycles of sexual abuse, honour killings in families, wildlife crime, and participation in youth crime (Allison and Klein 2019; Cossins and Plummer 2018; Deuchar and Weide 2019; Madhar 2019; Messerschmidt and Tomsen 2018; Messerschmidt 1993; Morris and Ratajczak 2019; Sollund 2020; Thacker 2019; Tomsen 2017). The concept also makes space to understand the interplay with non-hegemonic masculinities and how the legal system and state institutions reinforce hegemonic masculinity while also punishing it in marginalised men, specifically in the context of men of color (Messerschmidt and Tomsen 2018).

One crime that has rarely come under the scrutiny of gender theory, specifically hegemonic masculinity, is that of violent extremism. As with other violent crimes, the overwhelming majority of offenders in violent extremism are men. Based on the understanding of global hegemonic masculinities, examining violent extremism with a gendered lens will add to criminological and terrorism literature. The extension of that knowledge will better inform theoretical understandings of the reasonings behind violent extremism locally and globally. The next section will examine current understandings of the juncture between masculinity and violent extremism as it stands at present.

Masculinity and Violent Extremism

Masculinity and violent extremism have a close connection in the recent history of violent extremism. Masculinity has been noted as a serious issue in violent extremism. For example, Grant and MacDonald (2020, 368) state that:

> The Toronto "incel" attack in 2018, the Halifax Proud Boys protest of an Indigenous ceremony in 2017, and Donald Trump's presidential campaign and election victory in 2016 were key events in positioning the topic of masculinity publicly in new and unprecedented ways.

To examine this phenomenon, we first must agree that gender is a factor in the commission of violent extremism. While not attempting to essentialize men's experiences of hardship over those of women in similar circumstances, exploring how hegemonic masculinity relates to actual violent action (and not just ideologies that are often a product to excuse behaviour rather than what caused it), the element of masculinity in the research of violent extremism is necessary.

It is well documented that men are the main perpetrators of violent extremism (Hamm and Spaaij 2017; Kimmel 2018; Roose et al. 2022). This has been argued as a compounding factor alongside other variables, such as socioeconomic status, job availability and education. There is no list of factors that make up global hegemonic masculinity but rather it is a framework to examine how masculinity plays out in different times and spaces and ideologies while also relating it to other local contexts.

Kimmel (2018), a long-time scholar of masculinities,[1] explains how young men who join extreme right groups feel entitled to a sense of belonging and community, of holding unchallenged moral authority over women and children, and of feeling that they count in the world and that their lives matter. Experiencing threats to the lives they feel they deserve, leads these young men to feel ashamed and humiliated, which Kimmel (2018) calls "aggrieved entitlement", that is, entitlement that is thwarted and frustrated. He argues this leads some men to search for a way to redeem themselves as men, to restore and retrieve that sense of manhood that has been lost. Joining extreme-right organizations, Kimmel discusses, is a form of masculine compensation, an alternate route to proving manhood. Offering the promise of being able to "take back their

manhood", these groups leverage stereotypes of masculinity to manipulate despair into white supremacist and neo-Nazi hatred. White extremist groups wield masculinity to recruit and retain members, and to prevent them from exiting the movement (Kimmel 2018). Kimmel (2018, xv) downplays the notion of ideology and centres the notion of masculinity as the core of the extreme-right movement's rhetoric:

> Adherence to extremist ideology came rather late in the recruitment process. […] Their experiences of camaraderie and community with their brothers, their sense of purpose, of sacred mission, and their sense that their lives, as men, actually mattered in the world were far more salient motivations for both entering the movement and staying in it.

In a recent book on masculinity and violent extremism, Roose et al. (2022) argue that gender, and masculinities in particular, contribute to young men joining these movements. The foundation of their argument is Kimmel's notion of aggrieved entitlement. Roose et al. (2022, 21) argue that young men who join these groups are seeking validation, hope, and meaning, perceiving they have been denied the "rewards and status they associated with manhood". Roose et al. (2022) contend that global hegemonic masculinity or toxic masculinity are not at the crux of violent extremism, but rather the misogyny of society and "normal" men who commit acts of violent extremism. Simply said, the authors claim that things like violence against women and sexist attitudes are present in mainstream society so masculinities in and of themselves are not exceptional in violent extremists (Roose et al. 2002).

While it is difficult to confirm, a significant portion of the extreme right appears to be made up of military veterans (Grant and MacDonald 2020). The leader of the Lads Society is reported to have a military background, which contributes to our understanding of masculinity in the current paper. Hegemonic masculinity's militant qualities form an important system of sorts for some individuals involved with the extreme right. Hegemonic masculinity is a set of ideals that are further exacerbated and encouraged by social institutions, such as the military which remains the blueprint of white power movements. Hegemonic masculinity is reinforced by military service members who position the feminine other as a threat to military effectiveness (Van Gilder, 2019).

The military ideal of hegemonic masculinity was a central feature during the January 6, 2021, United States Capitol attack, where QAnon supporters, Proud Boys, and members of the Boogaloo movement wore bulletproof vests (Kaiser 2022). Additionally, there have been several movements that discuss preparing for violence by using a military-type lifestyle. For example, in the National Socialist Network Handbook (2020), the author discusses how military exercises, haircuts and clothing are the modus operandi for a particular extreme right group in Australia. These are part of the larger project that contributes to the patriarchal nature of the movement.

The spectrum of white hegemonic masculinity is the rallying point of the extreme right. In its inverse, this means that feminism is the nemesis of the movement. Disparate groups are united by their hegemonic masculinity and its nemesis feminism. As Kaiser (2022) states in her work on political masculinities:

Three large movements have thus converged and become interconnected: incels and masculinists; conservatives, right-wing populists and right-wing extremists; and religious hardliners and fundamentalists. They share misogynistic and sexist views.

The extreme right encompasses other movements under its broader umbrella. For example, in recent years the term "incel" has been used to describe those who are involuntarily celibate. The first online incel community – Alana's Involuntary Celibacy Project – was created by a Canadian university student and used by people of all genders to share their experiences of sexual inactivity but now is seen as a continuation of woman-hating ideologies which are historically rooted in white heterosexual male domination (Lindsay 2021). The term incel, and those who claim the label, came to be synonymous with a specific type of hegemonic masculinity that accord society's deterioration to feminism, LGBTIQA+ rights and progressive human rights more generally around ethnicity and multiculturalism that is present in other right-wing extremist movements.

Ong (2020, 2) states about recent acts of violent extremism:

Right-wing extremists in parts of the West have put a spotlight on the growing ideological convergence between previously fringe movements and online subcultures, and more orthodox variations of the extreme right which is also fomenting violence, including the prosecution of a machete attacker in Toronto, Canada.

The case Ong (2020) refers to, where a woman was killed and two others injured, was the first time an incel was charged with terrorist offences showing the close relationship between these seemingly separate groups. This was not an isolated incident. Hofmann et al.'s (2021) study found that academics and security forces alike have noted a recent increase in acts of mass violence based on misogyny. For this study, they examined three specific cases of three misogynist terrorists: George Sodini, Elliot Rodger, and Scott Beierle. In finding there is a link between misogyny and violent extremism, a gendered approach to violent extremism highlights the importance of the ideological underpinnings of misogyny.

As another example of how masculinity has been subverted by violent extremism, it is necessary to look at changes in Jihadist violent extremist movements discussed in the literature. In the recent decade, there has been a shift towards a more global hegemonic masculinity that emphasizes violence. Deveci (2021) argues that changes in Salafist-Jihadist-Islamist masculinity brought on by the rise of ISIS have toppled the hegemony of Al-Qaeda. As an outcome of this change, ISIS has promoted a more violent and prouder hegemonic masculinity that reflects a movement bound in hegemonic masculinity.

The trend of identifying masculinity and misogyny as an integral part of violent extremism means that it is necessary to expand and apply the theories present in other disciplines, such as sociology and criminology, to examine this type of crime. Using the framework of global hegemonic masculinity allows researchers to contrast and

compare different actors and crimes more completely. We posit that using hegemonic masculinity theory allows researchers to detect nuances between masculinities globally, differences in the acceptance of roles for women, varying levels of "mainstream" misogyny in different contexts, and (in)consistencies within groups such as ISIS or the Proud Boys that are part and parcel of contemporary manifestations of violent extremism.

Methods

In this paper, we use the methods outlined by Messerschmidt and Rohde (2018), as discussed above, to examine narratives espoused at the local level by the extreme right in Australia, specifically from the website of the Lads Society. We purposely sampled this group for analytical purposes due to its notoriety as integral to the evolution of the extreme right movement in Australia. The Lads Society is particularly important in the movement of the far right in Australia for several reasons. Firstly, it was the only group that exclusively allowed men and further clearly signalled this choice by being physically located in a men's only gym. It is a literal localised physical manifestation of the movement. Secondly, it was an early attempt by the movement more broadly to attract men without fully identifying themselves as neo-Nazis and rather as Islamophobic in their recruitment attempts.

We examined the totality of the blog posts (n = 13). The shortest blog post was 27 words, while most of the blog posts were between 500 and 1,500 words. One of the blog posts also contained a video interview with the leader of the Lads Society. While seemingly a small sample, the length and in-depth nature of the content enabled robust qualitative inquiry.

We have chosen to use the methods deployed by Messerschmidt and Rohde (2018) due to their applicability to narratives of violent extremist ideologies and global hegemonic masculinity, as described by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005). Using their methods gave us a clear roadmap of how to examine localized hegemonic masculinity phenomena within the larger global context. Their analysis focused on public statements made by Osama bin Laden that examined and theorised a discourse of jihadist global hegemonic masculinity. Messerschmidt and Rohde (2018) initially collected the speeches of Osama bin Laden to examine similarities to those of US President George W. Bush. They coded the speeches using the categories of villain (one who engages in evil practices), victim (one who is harmed, injured, or killed), and hero (one who is protective, courageous, and noble).

Their analysis first examined the notion of the villain as those who engage in evil practices. In the authors' analysis, the villains in Osama bin Laden's public statements are "Crusader-Jewish" or the "Judeo-Christian alliance" (p. 668), specifically the countries of the United States and Israel. The analysis highlights Palestinian occupation and the unjust nature of the violence perpetrated by the US and Israeli governments on Palestinians.

The victim is the next category examined. The victim is harmed, injured, or killed by the villains. In the words of Osama bin Laden, the land of the umma, which is Arabic for the worldwide community of Muslims, has been invaded and "her" honour and blood spilled. The umma is the "metaphorical feminized victim" that the villains attack (Messerschmidt and Rohde 2018, 671).

Lastly, the heroes are protective, courageous, and noble figures in Messerschmidt and Rohde's analysis. In the narrative of Osama bin Laden, the heroes are himself and other jihadists fighting to protect the umma. The discourse of heroes from Bin Laden includes the holiness of young male martyrs and the need for a "defensive Jihad" from young Muslim men to stop the villains who are attacking the Muslim people and states (Messerschmidt and Rohde 2018, 672).

After detailing these categories, Messerschmidt and Rohde (2018) employed open coding of public statements to analyze gendered qualities and relationships to the three categories. They found that the speeches contained stories, characters, and clearly defined relationships. A similar methodological approach to another violent extremist group, the extreme right, can add to the understanding of local hegemonic masculinity while holding the nuances of place (Australia) that Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) emphasize as crucial to the analysis. By theorizing the extreme right, other geographical spaces and violent extremist movements can be explored for similar or dissimilar patterns at both the global and local levels.

We initially read the Lads Society blog posts to ensure there was a continuity of content that could be analysed using this method. After affirming this, we coded the speeches by villain, victim and hero as discussed above. We then followed Messerschmidt and Rohde's (2018) methodology of open coding for gendered qualities and relationships between the three actors.

It is important to note that while we are examining the ideology of extreme right actors based on the methods of the ideologies of Jihadist violent extremism, using Messerschmidt and Rohde (2018) as a guide, the significant difference between these groups is that young men of colour may be disenfranchised due to racism and oppression within a majority white state, such as Australia. Young men who participate in the Islamist violent extremism movements are reacting in part to increased negative state action against a specific group of people, such as the police targeting of Muslim men, as well as global events such as wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Roose et al. 2022).

Extreme right extremists are reacting not to oppression or violence, but rather against the opposite—the state's "leftist" positive actions to support multiculturalism and minority rights, such as support for same-sex marriage, the increase of women's rights and the advancement of brown and black people into positions of power in the workplace and the government. It is crucial to remember that despite the reaction to governmental and social change, the extreme right movement has seen alliance with government agents such as the military, police officers and politicians (Van Dongen et al. 2022). This is not surprising due to the systemic racist systems that are integral to more affluent white state power.

Analysis

Archetypes of villains, victims, and heroes are tropes known to the average reader and highlighted in English literature writing such as Joseph Campbell's (2008 [1949]) seminal work. An understanding of this has been applied to the extreme right in various ways, including Nilan's (2021) warrior myth of the extreme right. Similar prototypes exist within the narratives of extreme-right actors. Our attempt here is not to categorize definitively each individual but rather to examine similar arcs and actors in the discourses of the extreme right while also reflecting how the far right in Australia legitimizes inequality through its pursuit of hegemonic masculinity.

While we apply the three categorical archetypes of villains, victims, and heroes, we recognize that Messerschmidt and Rohde's (2018) examination of hegemonic masculinity for the violent Islamist leader is on a global level whereas our analysis of the Lads Society and the extreme right movement focuses primarily on the local level. Therefore, they are not directly comparable, nor is it our objective to attempt such. However, the theory of hegemonic masculinity provides insight into the convergences and contrasts between the Lads Society, a right-wing organization in Australia, and Osama bin Laden's violent Jihadist narrative. As discussed above, our analysis follows the pathway of Messerschmidt and Rohde (2018) to compare localized examples of global hegemonic masculinity in the narratives with the Lads Society, as an example of the extreme right movement in Australia.

Villains

The villains of the extreme right are "the government" and white people who condemn the views of white supremacy.

> [Government] would certainly be regulated…the bureaucrats would become involved in breaking apart what we're doing very very quickly. [The government] would change laws that would not be in the interest of our community to try and break apart what we're doing and you know they would do things in the future when we have our own housing communities, when we are all living together, when we colonize a suburb which is part of our intention, they would certainly be like looking to diversify that suburb specifically they will target us they'll put community housing full of refugees in our area.

The villains are not portrayed as a masculine force as we see within Bin Laden's speeches. Instead, they are trivial and irresponsible, too weak to stop the force of white supremacy. These villains are decisively placed in opposition to the hegemonic masculinity that is found within the group. As the founder of the Lads Society stated in an interview on the Lads Society Blog:

> [The] only harassment we're really getting is from like low-level councillors and you know some state bureaucrats and there's really not much that we could do about you know

council bylaws and stuff anyway so it's not something that we need to waste time money and energy on.

Despite the power of the government to disrupt, the Lads Society perceive that these efforts will be to the advantage of extreme right violent extremists. Another blog post states:

[There are also] useful idiots of the system so you've got people that are politically inclined opposite to what our belief is and they act as you know a fifth column in themselves that undermine the sovereignty of the nation.

This new form of discrimination [against white people] works in our favour as it will continue to divide Australia into two separate states (at least) each with its own financial, educational, infrastructure institutions and maybe even governments...The divide needs to happen as the Nation is in complete Chaos.

The villain of the extreme right movement is certainly not as neatly defined as Messerschmidt and Rohde (2018) describe in their analysis of Osama bin Laden's speeches. Instead, the villains are a proposed gender-less mass of "useful idiots". The idiot villain in the extreme right story does not have power or make the rules, as ascribed by hegemonic masculinity. The villains are not individual men, such as then-President George W. Bush in the case of Osama bin Laden's public statements, but the non-hegemonic masculinities and femininities that have eroded the society as a whole.

In the extreme right writings, villains are positioned as weak and ineffective with no real power. While acknowledging power with one hand, the hegemonic masculinity of the right, takes away that power with the same breath, unable to acknowledge that they are being affected in any way by the actions of the state and individuals within it. They hint at being victimized (or at least affected) by non-hegemonic masculinity and femininity that are embodied by the weak state and the progressive left. In the wake of this victimization, they must rise as heroes, which reflects the relationality of hegemonic masculinity. Additionally, while legitimizing themselves as the future, they are in direct opposition to non-hegemonic masculinities and femininities that are espoused by these weak villains which legitimates inequality throughout society.

Victims

The victim is both a society that has failed in its dominant patriarchal power and the movement itself, which is attempting to right this failure, but not individuals within the movement who are the proud heroes of times past. This is illustrated in the following blog posts:

There is an active attack against white homogeneous society and the reason for that is because…we're actually organizing.

There is the States' "hate speech" law, which in Victoria states that you can be charged for pretty much anything that the authorities deem "racist", law that of course has been created to be used against Europeans, and is designed to prevent any public discourse about the well-coordinated replacement of our people via immigration, "planned parenthood", feminism and mainstream media propaganda.

> [Young white men] can see the writing's on the wall and they can see that it's like then we're never gonna afford a home…they will work for some dead-end job you…and they're in all this debt like the whole thing is set against them. They'll never be able to you know breed until they're 40…we debated what the cause of our downfall was…This stagnation of wages requires dual income households and the corporatisation of women who would otherwise be mothers in order to achieve the same standard of living as the generation before.

The victim, then, is young white men, and not the women and children who remain unmentioned by the Lads Society. It is such a "man's world" that extreme-right violent extremists can only vaguely imagine a future that includes women—at present there is no space for femininity except as adjacent to hegemonic masculinity and ideas of heteronormativity. Further reflecting this relationality to femininities, women are spoken about as subordinate, that is, as accessories to men's patriarchal idealist futures. In a blog post, the author expresses these notions of women in the context of the movement:

> Often we have been asked, "Why don't you allow women to join your group?" In fact, we do allow women to join our group, just not single women at this stage. Our mission is to create strong, honourable and healthy men, this is not the ends in itself but a means to an ends. Strong Men create strong Families, strong Families create strong Communities and strong Communities make strong Nations.

It is not acknowledged that a pregnant person is needed to "create" these strong families, in fact it's men's strength and masculinity that creates families, surpassing even the biological notion of needing a uterus for these children. Instead, the hegemonic masculinity of the extreme right is so powerful, it can produce its own families, like Athena springing from Zeus' head in some sort of immaculate birth that requires none of the trappings of biological conception. In order to prove that the world in which they are fighting for is the right one, they must place themselves as opposed to femininities which, due to its nature of a male-only group, is particularly reflected in the Lads Society.

Heroes

The heroes are the young men who perform a particular type of hegemonic masculinity, akin to what Bin Laden glorifies in his speeches. Reflecting the legitimation of the

patriarchy, the theme of the warrior comes up in multiple blog posts, most clearly in the following quotes:

> As Europeans, we come from a line of explorers, inventors, great leaders and warriors. We descend from a people that have created everything of significance in our modern way of life, yet we have been reduced to nothing but slaves that are accepting our own replacement, and the laws that have been instated to prevent us from defending our future.

The heroes, despite their so-claimed noble beginnings, have fallen to their weakest point due to oppression and modern life. Once again, we see the call to young men to reclaim power and fight for what is right in the world. As reflected in this quote, those who do not fight are just slaves embodying non-hegemonic masculinity which they must position themselves relationally against to prove they are indeed the heroes. However, the point here is that white extreme righters are not being oppressed. Nor can they even claim a victim that needs protection beyond their own white male hegemonic masculinity.

In this quote, triumph lies in being brave and intelligent and ready to battle for the cause:

> What we must do differently this time is realise that we must embody the old ways. We must not be of Chad or Sperg[2] alone, but that every man must take the best qualities of both and live the 14 words, becoming the Warrior Poet, the Scholar Athlete, the Freeman, the Übermensch, the Hyperborean...

This narrative reflects the extreme right's recruitment interest in physicality, but also makes the claim that there is a need for the dual talent of learned and scholarly. This point is in direct conflict with previous quotes about the perils of education including "Marxist view points" and "feminist teachers" who represent non-hegemonic masculinity and femininities. The hero, while the clearest figure in extreme right discourse, is also simultaneously at odds with other narrative strands.

Discussion

Mirroring the findings of Messerschmidt and Rohde (2018, 673), the Lads Society has embraced the "gendered mythical fable" of the villain, victim, and hero to promote ideals of hegemonic masculinity and therefore gender inequality within Australia. While quite different from Osama bin Laden's construction of the same hegemonic masculine archetypes, the writings of the Lads Society add to and further endorse the narratives of white supremacy in a global setting. The promotion of extreme right violent extremism relies on masculinity and misogyny in order to recruit and mobilize individuals to its broader cause.

The extreme right movement in Australia has effectively taken the grassroots organizing of the 1970s and used it to proliferate its ideology of hegemonic masculinity.

They have taken ideologies and intertwined them with the world movement of fascism and, as with other factions, a type of "think global, act local" approach. This place-based approach is reflected in Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) and Messerschmidt's (2018a, 2018b) calls for global hegemonic masculinity to be analyzed on the localized level.

Global hegemonic masculinities simultaneously coexist with the local. The villain in the extreme right story is a varied and amorphous being that, in a way, the extreme right chooses to fill with a cornucopia of ideologies to not alienate recruits from its true ideal: hegemonic white masculinity is superior to anything else. The multitude of ideologies that cast a wide net for recruitment have been talked about as a "salad bar" (Kupper and Meloy 2021; Office of Director of National Intelligence 2021; Soufan Center 2021) of ideologies when discussing North American extreme right violent extremists. Also known as mixed ideology (Comerford and Havliceck 2022), hybrid ideologies (Norris 2020), fused extremism (Koch, 2022), conspiracy smoothie (Klein 2020), and "choose your own adventure" extremism (Braddock, Hughes, and Miller-Idriss 2021), the term "salad bar ideology" describes how people who subscribe to ideas of white supremacy pick and choose what political and religious ideas fit their own narratives. These ideologies that inform the beliefs of people within the movement may "overlap, converge or…even in some cases contradict" (Soufan Center 2021).

In Australia, these same themes remain where one chooses their villain from a "salad bar" of hate. The discourse of the Australian extreme right shifts and absorbs political issues such as anti-vaccination or same-sex marriage. As an example, during the same-sex marriage plebiscite in Australia in 2017, some extreme right groups morphed their message from anti-Islamic to discussions and posts around the plebiscite that were homophobic and anti-gay marriage (Peuker, Smith and Iqbal 2019). After the plebiscite, this topic once again faded to the background in the discourse of the extreme right (Peuker, Smith and Iqbal 2019).

While redefining masculinities at the local level, we find that the manifestations also differ from the global movement. The Australian extreme right is by its very nature a "working man's" ideology. The Australian extreme right values are focused on hegemonic masculinity of white maleness that is entrenched in the ideas of "European" cultural nationalism rather than in the deep political and religious divides that are present in the extreme right in the United States (Castle and Stepp 2021). The movement is primarily led by and recruits white men with relatively low educational attainment and socio-economic status (cf. Kimmel 2018). It promises them power in the solidarity of separatism from the broader society, as if they are a disenfranchised group. For example, the leader of the Lads Society constructs and encourages the notion that the government, Marxists, LGBTIQA+ people, and feminism are the villains while at the same time arguing these groups are weak and have no power. This reflects the notion of hegemonic relationality to other groups despite its seeming contradiction, as the following blog posts illustrate:

It is difficult (sic) to debate those whose minds are in Chaos - The leftist, marxist, globalist, liberal or conservative etc because most are not physically capable of understanding their own contradictions… the Marxist will advocate for both the promotion of the LGBT or feminism whilst simultaneously the promotion of Islamic migration and Islamic cultural retention which is of course antithetical to the promotion of the LGBT or feminism.

This corporatisation (feminism) creates a below replacement level birth-rate of the European population, a complete lack of population growth, whilst simultaneously trying to create a welfare state as all democracies are destined to become.

This localized expression of white nationalism is a response to, and constituted by, the tensions of global hegemonic masculinity. The Lads Society attempts to reclaim localized white hegemonic masculinity in the face of a multitude of perceived global societal failures.

The use of violence is a distinct factor in the discourse. Far-right movements celebrate and validate the use and omnipresence of violence within the struggles for a white ethnostate and as part of its hegemonic masculinity. Some examples in the Lads Society include:

Morale is not your happiness, it is your willingness to fight. Our fight at this stage is in creating our own world…Your higher purpose in life is this fight, against yourself at first, then the world. Our journey is never ending, we must conquer all of space and time.

We can not delay with half-measures. We are facing racial extinction. Political and economic systems can be resurrected, but the death of a race is forever. There is nothing more significant than this struggle. This is the "To be or not to be" of our people. This is our land. It belongs to us in every way conceivable, if only we fight for it. It must be ours, totally ours, or White Australia will die. Know this Truth and live it and we will triumph. Hail Victory!

The narratives encompass chaos and everyday violence that is heroic and masculine and which challenges a "weak multicultural" Australian government. There can be no argument by the Lads Society without positioning itself in relation to all forms of non-hegemonic masculinity. Without something to subjugate under the white patriarchy, there is no movement. The local legitimation of hegemonic masculinity that is reflected in the broader global discourse of extreme-right violent extremism remains the constant thread throughout the writing.

Throughout the paper, we have sought to show how the particular form of hegemonic masculinity constructed in the Lads Society's writings offers an example (albeit not without internal contradictions) of the legitimation and rationalization of gender inequality through the depiction of a superior/inferior hierarchical relationship between villains, victims, and heroes. Those who are considered weak, trivial, and irresponsible – most notably governments, civil servants, leftists, LGBTIQA+ people, and feminists – are discursively subordinated to the white men in the movement who

are overcoming oppression by reclaiming their power and fighting for what is right and just. We see here strong similarities with the warrior myth of the extreme right (Nilan 2021). This depiction of a superior/inferior hierarchical relationship in turn justifies acts of everyday violence and discrimination that sustain and reinforce systems of power and inequality in Australian society.

In conclusion, further research should be undertaken into empirically existing hegemonic masculinities within far-right violent extremism to continue to examine their construction and contextual variations in different geographical areas and sections of the larger movement to tease out their heterogeneity. This addition to the literature will aid in further understanding global and local movements while simultaneously considering how to shape future interventions of individuals involved in these groups, such as further education in gender roles. Lastly, we suggest that any program focusing on disengagement from violent extremism must also address these gendered implications.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Notes

1. This seminal work cannot be ignored despite the unethical actions and speech of the author, including sexual harassment, homophobia, transphobia and sexism. Co-Author Cochrane includes this footnote because they believe that naming the ethical challenges of citing abusers is a part of academic resistance.
2. Slang terms to describe hyper-masculine males.

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David Kernot received the PhD degree in political science and international relations from the National Security College, Australian National University. In Australian National University, he examined linguistic markers of cognitive decline in people, including depression and anxiety and focused on identifying mathematical tipping points that might indicate self-radicalization in lone actor terrorists. He is currently with the Department of Defence, Defence Science and Technology Group.