Never Man Enough: Aggrieved Entitlement and Weaponized Insecurity in White American
Men

by
Riese "Ray" Sullivan

A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

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the requirements for the
degree of

Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Sociology
(Honors Associate)

Presented June 15, 2023
Commencement June 2024

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Riese "Ray" Sullivan for the degree of <u>Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Sociology.</u> presented on June 15, 2023. Title: <u>Never Man Enough: Aggrieved Entitlement and Weaponized Insecurity in White American Men.</u>

Abstract approved:_____

Dwaine Plaza

This paper examines the recent evolution of aggrieved entitlement and social fragility in young white American males and the subsequent violent backlash that certain individuals in this group have unleashed upon women, the LGBTQ community, Jewish people, Black people, and other socially vulnerable populations. Throughout the past decade, America at large has seen a sharp rise in ideological violence and civil division that runs concurrent to the proliferation of social media and technology throughout all layers of our society. Despite heavy resistance, many minority groups have enjoyed enhanced civil protections, representation, and acceptance as a result of progressive policy and contemporary social acceptance. However, under the looming specter of late-stage capitalism and widespread changes to economic and labor systems, a social divide has formed in the heart of white America- a divide best represented by Michael Kimmel's concept of "Aggrieved Entitlement." In essence, aggrieved entitlement is the anomie that individuals (in this research, Euro-American white males most often under age 30) experience when they face a lack of cohesion between their perceived status or "rightful place" in society and their ability to achieve said status. For many white, Euro-American men, this becomes a vector of fragility in which they feel threatened or insecure about their position within the perceived social hierarchy, especially when the privilege of hegemony is called into question. This paper will trace the hegemonic socialization processes that functions as a pipeline through which young, insecure white males are recruited by regressive communities centered in web organizations like 4chan, incels.co, countless cults of internet media personalities, and

subcultures like Men's Rights Movements, Involuntary Celibate (Incel) communities, and far-right extremist groups like the Groypers and the Boogaloo Boys. By examining all of these areas, I hope to provide policy suggestions on how to re-socialize and engage with contemporary socially maladapted and poorly socialized fragile young white Euro-American males who are vulnerable to indoctrination by these groups, so that they may better understand that they are not an "endangered species" who will lose their privilege and cease to exist, and the identification of root-causes and underlying sociopolitical issues that contribute to toxic, circular "logic" employed by these volatile mindsets.

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<u>Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Sociology</u> project of Riese "Ray" Sullivan presented on June 15, 2023.

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I understand that my project will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University, Honors College. My signature below authorizes release of my project to any reader upon request.

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Riese "Ray" Sullivan, Author

Never Man Enough: Aggrieved Entitlement and Weaponized Insecurity in White American Men

Background:

The cultural effects resulting from the rise of internet subculture and the expansion of communication methodology in contemporary society simply cannot be overstated. Our post-millennium society exists in a unique crossroads of both information availability and social connection- namely, never before has any society had the ability to establish, maintain, and grow social connections and generate social capitol like we can now with the advent of social media and the rapid expansion of internet and smartphone availability. Despite many issues with contemporary privacy concerns and noted biases in tech-based resources, Technological literacy is on the rise (Pawlowski, 2018), and our society's youngest members are enjoying the incredible ability to freely access both information and social connection, which again has never been possible on this scale before now.

However, in the so-called age of the internet, it is easier than ever to fall victim to radical content via misinformation and targeted exposure to emotionally provocative content. Any individual can create whatever ideal/belief based community they want, and will enjoy the benefits of constant connection and complete control of said community. Invisibly, moderators and administrators can cultivate the exact community they want- expelling and banning any who are not conducive to the values of the community being built. Through this, narratives are controlled and manipulated to present hyper-specific ideals and force group cohesion- even if those in the group would previously have not agreed with said ideals. Such is the nature of any community: When there is an in-group, it is far harder for any within to express any support for the out-group, lest they be expelled from the only community who "understands" them.

Through social media, it is easier than ever to cultivate said communities- especially when many who use social media have little to no information on how to judge sources or lack information literacy, thus opening themselves to manipulation, lies, and deception. For many young white Euro-American men, this is especially worrisome- in an era beset with economic, political, and social turmoil following the incredibly isolating COVID-19 pandemic and the increased civil unrest associated with it, many socially under-developed men have discovered this media, through which in-person/physical socialization becomes less incentivized, resulting in more virtual/social media time overall- which offers more access to the allure of fringe-individuals and ideals, as well as general feelings of negativity and negative well-being for those who consume said media (Nilsson & Jayaram, 2022) (Elseyad, 2021). Much of this comes from negative self-concept, jealousy, and obsessive insecurity associated with excessive internet and social media use.

These hyper-masculine online groups are loosely organized under the umbrella of the "Manosphere," or an online subculture that is predominantly based in the presentation and perpetuation of hypermasculine ideology and white cultural hegemony (Ging, 2019). These communities espouse toxic, quasi-nationalist rhetoric and weaponize these young men's insecurities, most commonly by manipulating the fear of racial replacement, social emasculation, and loss of privilege to simultaneously provide a sense of empowerment and the identification of an enemy whom they can engage. This, in some sense, leads to a dehumanizing fear of the "generalized other," creating a targeted scapegoat to justify their perceived distress (Mead, 1934).

To seek a more robust understanding of the social construction of these identities, this research also examines how the rising prominence of these virtual communities have become

intertwined with contemporary meta-social policies and politics, such as the resistance to Critical Race Theory and the implementation of "discomfort" bills. Further, we trace part of the increase in this white supremacist ideology with the election of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States as well as in reference to the last half century of political dissonance, both events that provided these groups with a sense of validation and legitimacy (Katz, 2012).

While this media is often lambasted and shunned by society at large, the faces of this community- those like Andrew Tate, the Fresh and Fit podcast, and countless others in the Pick-Up Artist, Alpha Male, and similar hyper-masculine communities enjoy millions of socially alienated young followers who wish to emulate these radical personalities and align their values towards theirs in an attempt to achieve similar measures of success in this identity- namely through extreme wealth, constantly-visible privilege, masculine approval, and sexual success- namely through the dominance and subjugation of attractive (predominantly white) women. While many individuals may dismiss these figures and the toxic communities they spawn as simple contractions or "trolls," it is incredibly important to contextualize the rise of these communities and their effects on vulnerable young white Euro-American men as emblematic of deeper sociological issues regarding masculinity in contemporary society- and more specifically, white males between the ages of 16-30. Further, it is also vital to examine how the proliferation of social media has changed group dynamics across our society- as instant connectivity has become a reality, there is more of a focus on emulation and achievement due to the constant inundation of social interaction that social media brings. With constant connection and the desire to belong or be seen as relevant or successful, the constant comparisons between the perceived lives and successes of one's

peers can become a point of severe and constant insecurity. Further, cultural expectations and traditional roles like the 'Playboy" persona further compound this sense of failure and inferiority, providing these young men not only with a sense of social failure but a lasting sense of isolation and inadequacy. This is further compounded by feelings of inadequacy that originate from late-stage capitalist accumulation-based prestige, which further compounds this divorce between masculine success and personal inability to achieve and maintain said visible success.

This specific demographic has been chosen because it encapsulates a vast majority of the perpetrators of domestic terrorism and ideological violence in the United States- be it misogynistic, racist, homophobic, or political in nature- while also being the primary consumers of manosphere-based content. Previous literature has attempted to analyze the reasoning and beliefs that spurn these tragedies and have identified several important phenomena and theories to assist with explaining how these concepts are connected to established academic knowledge. Through this, two prominent concepts have come to dominate the metaphorical conversation: Hegemonic Masculinity and Aggrieved Entitlement (Myketiak, 2016).

Hegemonic Masculinity originates from R. Connell's works, which draw upon Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony to present a social framework wherein the socially-constructed concept of masculinity is policed through rigorous, widespread enforcement of emotional and social boundaries. Aggrieved Entitlement, posited by Michael Kimmel, touches on a existential fear based in losing one's "rightful place" in society, often through concessions to diversity or tolerance in a system which one views they have priority within. These concepts have greatly influenced the emerging field of critical masculinity

studies, and provide an excellent framework through which the ideals and beliefs of these radicalized individuals may be examined. However, despite the incredible findings that have been presented by researchers such as Katz and Hurts, there is still a notable gap in research between these social concepts and how they are perpetuated and negotiated in virtual spaces, the proliferation and spread of biased, oppressive, and vitriolic materials in these groups, and in how the growing cultural sense of insecurity in young white men is being co-opted by these communities for recruitment via the manosphere. Further, previous research has identified links between suicidality and a sense of ideological martyrdom in these populations, as well as numerous links to masculine identity, gun culture, and violent expression (Kellner & Katz, 2019).

This review and examination of these virtual communities will draw upon these theoretical frameworks while incorporating recent relative literature, while also examining both rhetoric and communication utilized by these communities in the virtual spaces they inhabit and the manifestos of mass murderers involved with these groups to highlight how these phenomena have come to affect contemporary American society.

Literature Review:

To begin, this paper will draw from Kalish and Kimmel's article *Suicide by mass murder: Masculinity, aggrieved entitlement, and rampage school shootings* (2010), which examines not only the trends of mass violence in American society over the past 50 years, but how the perpetrators of this violence have evolved with it. Whereas historically school shootings and mass violence were rare tragedies that either involved targeted vengeance or immediate retaliation, the modern occurrence of mass violence is predominantly associated with lone shooters targeting random or symbolic victims in a public setting, with the

expectation of suicide or death by police interference during their rampage. Importantly, Kalish and Kimmel also refrain from using psychological reductionist arguments, choosing not to focus on the mental health or speculation thereof in these cases in order to better focus on the sociological phenomena associated with these acts. Instead, the locus of analysis in this case is placed upon the gender identity of these shooters, as they are overwhelmingly committed by men. To explain this phenomenon, Kalish and Kimmel present the concept of Aggrieved Entitlement as a vector through which the action of suicide via mass murder is cultivated. Drawing upon social constraints and angst faced by all youths in our society, aggrieved entitlement is described as a retributive belief system in which men are socialized to avenge the emasculation they face through their perceptual experience as a man in American society- an emasculation that can be caused and fed by everything from fears of racial replacement, fears of feminist progress, fear of identity loss and social alienation, fear of relegation to a subordinate masculine status (like homosexuality) etc. In the cases presented by this essay, this sense of social emasculation is highlighted by the high levels of bullying and social ostracization faced by the perpetrators of these shootings, as well as their "outsider" status within their social environments. Further, a connection between male suicidality, achievement failure, and identity threat is presented as an additional factor that influences the mindset of Aggrieved Entitlement, which is compounded by a culture of glorified violence endemic to the United States. Further, socialization of young men often teaches them to respond to these threats with violence in order to prevent further victimization, strengthening associations with overcoming adversity through violent expression. In positing that the United States has a "warrior culture," the article further asserts that the suicide-via-shooting is, in many contexts, a form of "masked suicide," or a

suicide that society may view as acceptable or held in high esteem (such as a last stand in a military situation). Being that many of the more prominent mass shooters of the last few decades had some association or past membership within their nation's armed forces, this will be addressed at further length in the discussion portion of this essay.

To understand the gender dynamics, present within the concept of aggrieved entitlement, Kalish and Kimmel (2010) use common examples of bullying within American society experienced by multiple mass shooters to analyze the challenges they present to the budding masculinity of young men, using examples of "gay baiting" or sexuality-centered slurs or characterizations, experience with or exposure to racism, and ostracization that results in social isolation and exclusion. This sense of alienation feeds both the senses of victimization and superiority, which results in a heightened sense of shame and insecurity in these individuals. This overwhelming shame results in an acute sense of injustice centered upon one's feelings of wounded masculinity, which manifests itself in an obsession with what one feels excluded from, especially in reference to whatever barrier may be present that prevents them from achieving said status (the approval of one's male peers, sexual success, financial success, or ideological support). This joins the themes of shame and exclusion with the association of these failures to the misogyny, racism, and homophobia intrinsically tied to gender-centric bullying, further associating these groups with one's social rejection. Whereas Kalish and Kimmel's essay associates this aggrievement with an entitlement to commit retributive violence, this essay will associate the aggrievement from social exclusion and/or failure to the entitlement many young, white American males feel they are owed due to their conformity to traditional hierarchical standards.

In reference to traditional hierarchical standards, the pioneering works of Raewynn Connell (1982) offer an incredibly insightful look into hegemonic masculinity and how it is perceived, emulated, and policed in society. Beginning with studies that examined socially constructed gender and hierarchy in high-school aged Australian youths, Connel's *Gender and Power* presented the early concepts of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity, which became the groundwork for the later synthesis of these theories. Since the original publication, this theory has been broadened to a global concept and has been used around the world in analyzing how patriarchal systems create hierarchies of masculinity, and has gained considerable attention in the American analysis of masculinity as a whole. Much of these early observations were in respect to the historical academic concept of "the male role," and power dynamics presented by the gay liberation movement, which were compounded to reveal not only a hierarchy of masculinities, but one which has become normative in contemporary society. Hegemonic Masculinity is a relational concept which presents dominant and subordinate masculine identities, which are ascribed through conformity to "ideal" masculine traits. Further, those who receive the benefits from this patriarchal system without enacting its values are categorized as complicit masculinities, in which their silence and lack of resistance further strengthens the system. It is through this system that Connell posits that the ideological supremacy of men over women is legitimized, maintaining its structure not through force, but through "culture, institutions, and persuasion." As such, the definition of Hegemonic Masculinity is purposefully abstract, as it relates to the social institutions that maintain it rather than any specific identity or trait. This theory has been applied to many different sociological situations over the past few decades, from education to criminology- each finding unique and vital observations regarding the

construction of masculinity and how it affects the lives of those under its theological umbrella. However, there have also been some important critiques which Connell has chosen to address to reformulate her theory. Namely, much of the criticism that was addressed was in regard to the use of masculinity as a concept, especially the perceived lack of a unified identity, or its use as an essentialist concept. Connell responds by clarifying that the concept of masculinity in hegemonic masculinity is related to the hierarchy of masculinity and how it influences power dynamics between genders, and how the variations between masculine identities are not a refutation of hegemony, but rather differences in its manifestation in intersectional and differential situations.

Drawing upon these theoretical frameworks of gender, the intersection between hegemonic masculinity and aggrieved entitlement is traced through these concepts and embodies a deep, cultural wound that is suffered by many individuals across the United States. While these concepts cannot and should not be used to fully explain or pathologize the epidemic of mass violence the United States has faced with growing frequency over these past few decades, they do provide a worthy base of knowledge which can be used to analyze the writings and expressed beliefs of the individuals who perpetrate them. Drawing upon 27 publicly available "manifestos" or documents left by mass shooters, Pfaffendorf and Davis (2021) performed a computational textual model using Structural Topic Models to analyze these articles and compile similarities and social conditions that may have influenced their actions. Drawing upon earlier literature, this article contends that these manifestos can be used to examine the psychological and cultural processes related to this manner of gun violence, as well as the threats, violence, exclusion, and compensation regarding their masculinity. This is further compounded by shifting social landscape, which in recent years

has greatly contributed to fears of replacement (See discussion for "The Great Replacement") in some white males. Additionally, myriad themes were identified between the documents, with emphasis on masculine overcompensation, social exclusion, troubled home lives, and racialized status threats being prime factors relating to their decision to engage in violence and destructive interpersonal behaviors. These acts, defined in this research as "events where an attacker or attackers use one or more firearms to strike multiple victims in a confined and populated area, choosing their victims at "random," (Random in this case meaning little to no personal connection to victims- their choices of which groups to attack are often anything but random) are typically lone-actor, but often involve internet communities or group communications in modern events (see No Lone Wolves in the discussion). Importantly, the authors also choose to analyze these events in a sociological context vice a psychological one, choosing not to focus on the mental illness or perception thereof but rather the common sociological phenomena these individuals share.

Finally, to round out the literature which will be used in the discussion, one selected example of these extremist manifestos will be examined using the topic models established by previous literature as well as the legacies these individuals have left in their wake to draw parallels between their motives and experiences to highlight how these individuals were slowly radicalized and/or involved in these communities.

Elliot Rodger's manifesto has been widely discussed and analyzed by social scientists since the 2014 Isla Vista massacre, in which the "supreme gentleman" (as these communities would come to refer to him, referencing a line from his manifesto) killed 7 and injured 14 others, culminating in his suicide before his arrest (Myketiak, 2016). Throughout his manifesto, Rodger often writes about his hatred for women and sexually successful men,

often noting his virginity and perceived lack of desirability from women as barriers towards his social acceptance, success, and reason. He speaks at length about his early experiences in school and the isolation he faced as a "reject" or loner, despite never displaying the motivation to seek and maintain employment or education, constant struggles with motivation, addiction to online games, and frequent bullying (perceived or actual). Over the years, his aggression towards the "injustice" of being single and being rejected by women compounds with long-term social isolation and an under-developed understanding of the world, resulting in a deeply obsessive hatred of women and the men "they chose over [him]." Notably, he has numerous strained relationships with his family resulting from his obsession with his virginity and hatred of women, especially in regards to his stepmother (and his father, whom he had a very strained and distant relationship with, despite seeing him as the embodiment of what he desired.) Interestingly, he presents multiple sections regarding his distaste for people of color, especially African Americans, viewing them as a hypermasculine subordinate group who were taking his romantic prospects from him, echoing a sense of innate superiority. This obsessive injustice collecting culminates in him planning his "day of retribution," where he planned to take revenge against those who he felt were sexually liberated or had strong sexual prospects (the reason his massacre originally targeted sororities) or made him feel insecure about his own failings (he discusses killing his younger brother due to the "romantic success" he thought he would find when he was older. The manifesto ends shortly before the massacre began, where he uploaded multiple YouTube videos regarding his reasoning before he began his rampage. This manifesto was chosen specifically due to its impacts on contemporary society, as this was the incident that brought

the term "Incel" to the mainstream, which further contributed to Rodger's "canonization" by the incel community and the inspiration it directly provided other mass murderers.

Through this literature, we may now begin to draw comparisons between the socially-constructed realities of gender and identity while simultaneously using the actions and words of these violent perpetrators to trace the underlying phenomena that influences them. Perhaps the most important note regarding this research is that while these social commonalities may be traced between perpetrators of mass violence, these selected cases are in no way completely representative of the culture of mass violence in America, nor do these phenomena encapsulate all young white men in America. Rather, these examples provide an excellent opportunity to examine the influences of hegemonic masculinity and the consequences of aggrieved entitlement in recent American History.

METHODS

To carry out this research, I will be relying on non-representative observation-based examinations of social media posts and platforms (Twitter, Facebook, Online Forums, etc.) and secondary literature associated with these communities to look for patterns in messaging and how it is used to manipulate and further socialize this group of disenfranchised young men. While there is no specific registry or database to find these communities en-masse, decades of historical information regarding these communities may be found by following the trails left by their participants. To build a frame of analysis, I began by employing a deductive approach to examine four prominent, publicly available text-based manifestos left by individuals who completed or attempted domestic terroristic actions after 2010, as this decade marks the rise of both contemporary social media and the epidemic of mass violence which plagues the modern social reality of America. Further, each of these manifestos were

selected due to their prominence following the actions of their authors, and how their actions have contributed to the greater phenomenon of mass violence faced in contemporary society. To begin, Elliot Rodger's manifesto was chosen as the basis through which the analysis would begin due to its academic and cultural prominence. Following this, cursory web searches were conducted in tandem with the literature review, revealing a direct link between Rodgers' manifesto and violence and the actions of Alex Harper-Mercer, another Incel who provided a much shorter manifesto before committing mass murder, where Rodger was directly mentioned. This is one of multiple men who have directly cited Rodger as the inspiration for their violent actions, and the only one of these individuals who left a manifesto that has received considerable attention, due to Harper-Mercer posting on 4chan directly before committing his crimes.

This link was further expounded through the discourse surrounding 4chan and other related counter-cultural or web-based community hubs following the 2016 presidential election of Donald Trump, wherein a great deal of media focus was placed on their communities and their dangerous rhetoric after multiple instances of violence and far-right mobilization such as the Unite the Right Rally were tied to memes and community organizations that originated on sites like 4chan, reddit, and misinformation campaigns across multiple social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Through this discourse and related investigations, multiple perpetrators of mass violence have been directly linked to individuals who frequently used these boards and engaged with the anti-progressive content housed within them (Glaser, 2019) (Staff, 2023). This link rose to global prominence following the Christchurch Mosque Shooting of 2019, wherein Brenton Tarrant killed over 50 in an Islamophobic massacre, which was livestreamed on Facebook after he posted his

anti-immigrant ecofascist manifesto to 8chan. The memes and rhetoric used within Tarrant's

manifesto are identical to ones that originated on these websites, further strengthening the

direct links between these actors and these communities.

From there, I followed the websites these individuals mentioned by name or through

heavy association, finding communities like the 4chan's /r9k/, /pol/, and /b/ forums, 8chan,

puahate.com, a forum created by individuals who became disillusioned by the culture of

"pick up artistry," the incel "wiki," or a common source informational forum created by

individuals in the incel community, and numerous social media forums dedicated to these

groups specifically, like reddit's now banned r/incels and r/braincels communities. While the

specific focus of their obsessive hatred changes from group to group, their justifications of

their actions and the reasonings behind their violence are frighteningly similar. As such, I

created a sampling frame of these websites, then proceeded to check them at a bi-weekly rate

over the course of a six-month period.

As my analyses of these communities deepened, I began to code the rhetoric

employed by these websites and their participants by two criteria: "Beta Barriers," in which

the participants in these communities commiserated over the various criteria they believed

prevented them from achieving the goals or social success to which they feel entitled, and

"Weaponized Insecurity," phenomena in which individuals felt alienated and dehumanized

by their lack of success or opportunity to "belong" in contemporary society, and develop a

deep sense of anger, betrayal, and rage towards the individuals who do belong.

The key difference in this coding is that Beta Barriers represent an inability to engage

with or participate in hegemonic masculinity, creating a sense of inability or "subordinate

masculinity" which becomes a sense of identity in these men. The communities which

espouse a disdain for these barriers often employ rhetoric which villainizes the systems which these individuals cannot conform, but also places this blame for this lack of ability to conform onto individuals or groups which these groups believe are directly working towards their "oppression," like Feminists, Leftists, or individuals who seek to "destroy" this hierarchical system. This coding scheme was used to annotate trends through my analysis in which users or individuals made posts regarding their subordinate social status, musings regarding one's perceived social inequality, jokes against "lesser" people, or any content that presented social progress as an attack on white culture or as an erosion of social norms.

Weaponized Insecurity, in contrast, relates to these individuals' self-centered psychosocial distress originating from their inability to conform to or find success in contemporary society. Much of this is based within a personal sense of failure, or an inability to perceive their distress or marginalization as a result of institutional deprivation rather than the actions of specific groups of the "prioritization" of those they believe hold subordinate identities. As such, this form of rhetoric is centered in an anomic sense of rage, isolation, and a mutual dehumanization of both the individuals and the society they face. This can become a deep sense of resentment that further justifies their discontent and resistance. This coding scheme was used to highlight instances of targeted or suggested violence against populations, sentiments of anti-establishment organization, expression of a need for revolution or social reorganization, association of violence with power, and posts displaying anger or racism towards minority populations.

During these analyses, I made inferences and observations regarding the cultures and rhetoric that these websites used in constructing not only their community and interpersonal dynamics, but their construction of in/out group dynamics which defined their organizations.

During these examinations, I refrained entirely with engaging with any individuals belonging to these websites, and simply anonymously browsed the newest posts, popular posts, the changes and state of the rhetoric at different points of time, and collected publicly available archival information like "best of" collections and repositories of "evidence" that supports their worldviews.

It is important to note that examples of this rhetoric are not widespread on these websites, as their purpose is not specifically to facilitate these individuals, but offer these spaces as a "bastion of free speech." As such, the examples of this rhetoric are not a constant throughout the sites, but concentrated in specific threads or spaces within them. These are the metaphorical openings to this pipeline, as these individuals serve as voices and anchors through which these individuals can identify and commiserate. As these individuals with similar thoughts, feelings, and values gather, they often create external communities around their specific dynamics through programs like Discord, a group-chat program. These external environments are often invitation only preventing further analysis unless access is granted by in-community individuals.

Another important note regarding these observations is that as many of these communities are steeped in controversy, media attention, and legal issues due to the terroristic actions and socially unacceptable behaviors. As such, many of these communities are in constant states of flux and re-branding due to their near-constant need to find new hosting options, evade bans, and avoid the deletion of their content. This makes sustained observation difficult without direct engagement with the individuals who participate in these websites, as it is hard to keep up with and record specific examples of this conduct as such. However, through databased information, historical posts and records retained by outside

individuals (often used as humor or to highlight the worrisome nature of their discourse), a trail is left for deeper analysis. Using these observations, we begin to form a reference through which these phenomena may be effectively addressed and understood.

DISCUSSION

Through examination of these communities, rhetoric, web information, and theories, a key aspect of this research may be identified: Each of these white Euro-American men believes they are facing off against a society which has cast them aside, most often due to their failure to achieve a respected masculine status (sexual success, financial success, respect from other men, romantic attention from women) or in order to accommodate the "opposition," most often feminists, people of color, non-dominant religions, or individuals in support of progressive policy. This mindset, often a result of injustice collecting, a criminological concept in which individuals obsess over the perceived injustices or sleights that they have faced from key individuals or populations, contributes to an individuals' obsessive vendetta against these populations. This phenomenon is most associated with white Euro-American men due to the disproportionate rate of the perpetrators of these attacks fitting this demographic, likely as a result of white hegemonic socialization practices throughout these cultures. This is also highlighted through the frequency and mode of these ideologically-motivated attacks, as these occurrences of mass-violence as they are defined and analyzed here are most commonly associated with global-western cultures like the United States, the UK, and Oceania. Each of these nations has suffered from this form of masculinized violence on a broad scale, a trend of violence which has increased sharply in recent years.

This trend forms what this research identifies as "The Beta Barrier," or the perceived threat to one's place in the hierarchy of masculinity that manifests as a perceived monolithic barrier between one's current subordinate status and the status one feels they deserve. In essence, this is the primary source of one's social aggrievement: For involuntary celibates, it is their inability to find sexual success. For nationalists, it is the loss of one's culture or norms. For the insecure, it is an imminent replacement in some form. In all cases, the phenomenon is manifested as an insurmountable force which keeps these individuals in a subordinate status due to their inability to overcome it, and becomes a focal point for one's obsessive anger. Compounded with America's culture of retributive justice, this aggrieved entitlement among white Euro-American men can become a source of empowerment in these extremists due to a strong cultural emphasis on revenge and protective actions, which serve as a justification for their violent resistance. Further, the American traditions of meritocracy contribute to feelings of insecurity in individuals who cannot surpass their Beta Barrier, as this failure can be perceived as a complete inability to improve their situation or standing, further debasing these men and motivating a sense societal rejection.

This is present in the manifestos as well, as Rodger relates his romantic struggles to a rejection from society at large and became obsessed with the reasoning they used to explain their lack of success- focusing on their physical looks, how "judgmental" women are, and how women prefer "chads," or individuals with "alpha male" presentations. Others, however, are more concerned with the concept of losing European culture to miscegenation and immigration of people of color, viewing them as invaders seeking to change the status quo of the western world. Further, his obsession with declining birth rates in western countries were inspired by a fear of losing the ability to foster white children, signaling further insecurity for

justification of his attacks. Finally, it is also important to analyze similar phenomena emerging from "non-Western" cultures, namely in the "Hikikomori" and "Otaku" subcultures, defined through their excessive social exclusion, fixation with virtual and artistic media, and increased rates of suicidality and maladaptive social behaviors (Sachs-Ericsson, 2000) (Teo & Gaw, 2010).

These perceptions are often influenced by constant negative self-comparison to the generalized "other" they believe to be preventing their ability to achieve success or stability, creating a further sense of self-generated subordinate identity and aggrievement towards these communities. As previously noted by Holdsworth & Morgan during their studies of young adults transitioning from parental homes, the perception of the "other" at this time strongly influences the identity negotiation and selfhood for young adults, highlighting how these comparisons influence an individual's narrative or understanding of their experiences (2007). This assists in forming a sense of weaponized insecurity, wherein an individual uses their narrative and experiences to justify their aggrievement and irrational resistance to said "other," and often appears throughout the works on individuals in these radical communities.

Taking special note of these cases, Pfaffendorf et al. have previously examined a group of 27 manifestos attributed to perpetrators of mass violence, finding that across this sample, topics of masculine overcompensation, ritualistic responses to exclusion, and racialized status threat (2021) were identified as issues that contribute to these individuals' motivation to perpetrate these attacks. Upon examination, there is a salient cross-community concern regarding fears of cultural replacement that is endemic to this population- one that manifests in resistance to whomever the aggrieved populations feel is actively threatening their existence. Recent years have seen special emphasis in the "Great Replacement Theory,"

a conspiracy held by individuals of white identity which holds that the U.S. government and popular society are collaborating on a cultural upheaval that would replace the "rightful place" of cisgender, heteronormative white males in the hierarchy of privilege with populations of individuals who are perceived to be directly antithetical to their continued status. Most commonly, this is tied to immigration resistance and racial discrimination, as this movement began upon the conspiratorial idea that immigrant populations were being introduced to the United States to disrupt industry and replace white culture from the ground up, subverting the status of white individuals and removing them from whatever power they associate with the white identity. Further, this can be modified to encapsulate any population that presents insecurity in these men- for the Incel crowd, this is associated with the common racial origin as well as belief that American feminism as an institution seeks to destroy and dismantle the "rightful" traditional roles of men through total emasculation of society, and often connect these fears to the LGBTQ+ community due to bias and mistrust. Notably, while there has been much discussion of the pervasive effects of great replacement theory in contemporary sociological academia, much of it deals with specific examples or the debunking of this line of thought vice the generalized fears of replacement that occur in these populations. As such, this culture of fear and insecurity must be addressed as an intersectional cultural issue with multiple vectors of manifestation.

In speaking of cross-cultural fears and insecurities, it would be impossible to overstate the impact of the last two decades of "accountability culture" and generalized socioeconomic change in these populations, as well as the myriad ways in which social media have impacted the social landscape we now exist within. As such, it is vital to mention the issue of the "Male Role Model," or more accurately, the lack thereof. In the age of

"Twitter mobs" and the #MeToo movement, countless past male role models have been challenged by criminal allegations and proof of their misconduct reaching popular scale through social media influences. While the lack of contemporary role models is not necessarily a new concept, it is important to analyze how this popular resistance to sexual assault misconduct and the decidedly feminist conduct of openly challenging these attacks have challenged the status quo for men in America. Simultaneously, the villainization of popular feminism and mistrust of leftist influence have combined to create a culture of resistance to these accountability movements, signaling a support for the traditional gender binary and a resistance to meaningful change. In an era where role models are becoming harder to identify, many of these men have chosen to fully resist this culture of accountability and have provided support to organizations and individuals who challenge these movements to protect and signify their status, generating further support for these regressive communities and mistrust of marginalized peoples.

In speaking of the contemporary influences of social media, it is vital that special focus be given to the unique socioeconomic and political phenomena that have given prominence to this culture of insecurity (Brooks, 2015). While this rise in weaponized insecurity and aggrieved entitlement has gained cultural prominence in recent years, popular sociological thought has been analyzing the intersectional social factors that have influenced this unique population in our society both directly and indirectly. As such, previous research has related these populations to late-stage capitalistic strain, as many of these individuals exist in medium-to-lower socioeconomic situations and face shrinking opportunities for employment, training, or social fulfilment. This simultaneously is compounded by the American meritocratic tradition and the advent of social media, which has allowed these

populations to be constantly exposed to the success and happiness of others while they suffer from the effects of economic and social strain. Further, social media's pervasive influence have allowed these individuals to create and maintain their own communities, wherein their insecurity is regularly compounded by vitriolic discourse among participants, widespread obsessive self-loathing, misleading academic publications and scholarly data, and countless other examples of phenomena that is used to further dehumanize these men.

Through exposure to these sources and this discourse, the construction of these individuals' realities is greatly influenced by the web-cultures that they participate in, often resulting in these individuals becoming even more obsessive regarding the "Beta Barrier" they face. Through constant exposure to the so-called "dark truths" (or baseless claims of social conspiracy and cultural exclusion for these men) these communities follow, these men ruminate over the perceived likelihood that they will never be able to overcome these barriers to masculine respect, social acceptance, or personal success. As these communities further espouse baseless, incendiary rhetoric designed to further accentuate the misery they fixate upon, this sense of insecurity can be further weaponized not only by the macabre examples of previous mass murders, but by the expressed support of the toxic communities they inhabit. For the few who go on to perpetrate these terroristic attacks, this mindset quickly becomes a justification for violence, often in the name of "preservation of traditional (often expressed as a white-dominant) society."

Finally, in analyzing the attacks attributed to these communities and subcultures, it is important to address two additional factors of special note: These attacks are often viewed as enacting justice or retribution upon the populations that are associated with the attacker's insecurities, and many of the individuals who commit these attacks have either some

participation in or an idolization of Military "hero worship" culture. These are addressed here together due to their prevalence in American society, as well as the rates at which these concepts can be directly linked to the attacks these individuals perpetrate. Many examples can be found, even through cursory examination, of perpetrators of these mass violence events who have had some connection or service within the military. Further, it is also of special note that a majority of these individuals did not complete their service (or even make it through initial training) due to adjustment and social issues, signaling an idolization of military culture and the masculine privilege afforded by service and the continued inability to attain it, possibly deepening their insecurity. This is further compounded by the connection of these attacks to a form of retributive justice, which originates from the same basis as the American Justice System at large. In essence, this culture of retributive justice and the idolization of "justified" violence are both theological staples of these communities, further enhancing both the potential for and subsequent justification of violence.

CONCLUSION

In some ways, these regressive communities are emblematic of long-standing social issues endemic to white Euro-American society and culture. From the economic ills and shrinking industry associated with late stage capitalism to the glorification of violence and retribution in media, the cultural landscape of America has become tumultuous, especially when combined with the divisive state of contemporary politics. As more individuals become isolated through the lack of sufficient opportunity, exposed to regressive and extremist communities, and marginalized by the algorithmic state of social media, these communities will continue to grow and resist any form of meaningful change. In order to effectively combat these communities and provide interventions for individuals who have fallen into

their recruiting "pipelines," special focus must be given not only to web and tech-based literacy programs designed to assist individuals with identifying misleading and dangerous content, but in a sweeping change to opportunity for men society-wide. Addressing these communities begins with addressing white American masculinity and its socialization practices at its core- through resisting hegemonic masculinity and the hierarchies of masculinity it creates, we may begin the first steps to liberating man from the chains of patriarchal demand and the rigid policing of their identities.

Further, in order to address these issues on an effective systematic level, myriad policy-level interventions may provide effective strategies in overcoming this negative socialization. Namely, many of these men suffer directly from long-standing issues stemming from near-complete social alienation and their ability to socially construct their realities based on virtual spaces. The dominant cause of these issues can be seen in their traditionalist socialization and their inability to reconcile their existence within it. Existing recommendations of this nature stress the importance of direct engagement with these individuals (Tomkinson, Harper, & Attwell, 2020) as a means of guiding them towards social rehabilitation. Further, a great deal of focus must be granted to vocational and social rehabilitation programs geared towards individuals with low skills and low opportunity, as their alienation often prevents their ability to achieve meaningful forward progress in their lives. Further, many of these white Euro-American men have little ability to express their beliefs and values in a manner that can be parsed and renegotiated, often facing immediate rejection or social injury due to their inability to comprehend social cues. Finally, much of these issues are developed in primary schooling settings, which all but end with the individual's completion (or failure to complete) said education. Better post-secondary

education and occupational opportunities, when combined with effective rehabilitation strategies, are the greatest tools through which these alienated communities may be addressed.

With effective rehabilitation and positive re-socialization practices, these men may be able to move away from their negative values through meaningful personal advancement. However, it is also important to note that these individuals are not "victims" by any sense due to the lack of actual harm or wronging experienced by these communities, but rather a symptom of greater sociocultural distress. The simple greatest hope for these men is to convince them that their endless pursuit of traditional masculine success is a fool's errand- and that accepting that they will never be "Man Enough" to meet the impossible standards and expectations of patriarchy is the first step into ascending beyond the systemic oppression it relies upon.

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