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To cite this article: Justin Bonest Phillips, Kiriloi M. Ingram & Kristy Campion (09 Aug 2024): Gendered Extremism in the Pacific on 4chan: A Mixed-methods Exploration of Australian and New Zealanders' Concepts of Women, Gender, and Sexual Violence on /Pol/, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, DOI: [10.1080/09546553.2024.2384044](https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2024.2384044)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2024.2384044>



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Published online: 09 Aug 2024.



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Gendered Extremism in the Pacific on 4chan: A Mixed-methods Exploration of Australian and New Zealanders' Concepts of Women, Gender, and Sexual Violence on /Pol/

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ABSTRACT

The association between 4chan and online extremist subcultures has seen increasing academic scrutiny—particularly following the 2019 Christchurch attack by a right-wing terrorist who frequented the anonymous forums. Gender-based extremism features as one (of many) critical subcultures that commands our academic attention, though few studies to date have sought to capture and assess the entire landscape of this phenomenon on 4chan's most notorious board: /pol/. Drawing on a pre-Christchurch attack dataset extracted from Papasavva et al. (2020), this study investigates how Australians and New Zealanders (ANZ) broadly conceptualize—and debate—women, gender, and sexual violence on 4chan's /pol/ board. We apply a mixed-methods approach, combining automated machine learning tools alongside expert qualitative analysis. Across nearly 300,000 posts and comments, we show how gender is constructed within this community, and the conjugal order they demand as a result. This order racially and sexually defines gender identities and norms, which are perceived as mechanisms to restore power and dominance to an ethnically and ideologically conforming in-group. Those that violate or disrupt the conjugal order are legitimized as targets of sexual, and gender-based violence. This normalizes far/extreme right gendered constructs across ANZ contexts in support of exclusivist far/extreme right ideological positions.

KEYWORDS

Extremism; gender; sexual violence; far/extreme right; 4chan; /pol/

Introduction

4chan (and other anonymous) message boards are well known for housing far and extreme right-wing individuals—some of whom have gone on to commit terrorist attacks.¹ Of the many 4chan boards, /pol/ (politically incorrect) is likely the most academically scrutinized, a board that is infamous for its white supremacist content.² Research on /pol/ has subsequently produced a wide array of contributions, ranging from examinations of prevalent textual narratives³ and visual analyses that connect memes with violence,⁴ to mapping extreme/far right subcultures on the platform and its ideological neighbors.⁵

Conceptualizations of gender arguably feature as a pillar in /pol/'s extremism, if not operate as a potent driver of some users' extremist motivations. In turn, researchers have dutifully sought to document how concepts of gender—and more specifically how women—are expressed on /pol/.⁶ These gender-focused studies are fewer in number, but they too contribute across various theoretical spaces: from research that maps the spread of the incel subculture across online spaces including /pol/,⁷ to

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broader examinations of the dangerous spread of misogyny on the board,⁸ and even explorations of how women themselves contribute on a platform—generally—hostile to them.⁹

Typically, these studies relevant to gender-based extremism on /pol/ have favored high level qualitative analysis. As a result, that work has been invaluable to better understanding specific instances of gendered forms of extremism on /pol/, both in images and text. In this paper we too look to contribute to that important body of work, though by complementing such sophisticated analysis with machine learning methods that reveal /pol/'s gender-based extremist landscape *en masse*.

Our study pairs natural language processing tools with expert qualitative analysis grounded in gender and extremist theories. We apply this approach to a case study of /pol/ posts and replies from Australian and New Zealand (ANZ) 4chan users. The geo-located dataset, extracted from Papasavva et al.'s open source archive of /pol/,¹⁰ spans nearly 300,000 posts running from 2016 to 2019. The current study's mixed-methods are then tasked with investigating how ANZ /pol/ users conceptualize (1) women—and by extension gender and (2) sexual and gender-based violence. For our quantitative analysis, we deploy the automated tools of word embeddings and topic modelling to identify (at scale) how trans-Tasman users discuss and understand these concepts.

To provide greater theoretical depth to those answers, we next offer a qualitative discourse analysis of relevant examples from this 4chan data—by “looting the conceptual toolbox,” to steal a phrase from Bill Dixon.¹¹ We draw upon the work of gender-based violence scholars, such as Evan Stark¹² and Hilde Jakobsen,¹³ who analyse the *meaning* of violence, or the logic that informs male-to-female violence as articulated by 4chan discussants. Furthermore, we examine the link between discussants' conceptualisations of gender and violence as they occur at the micro-level of their personal lives, family, and community, with a broader strategy at the macro-level to achieve their stated objectives. Finally, we assess these views against the backdrop of extreme/far right wing perceptions previously noted in other contexts.

Before proceeding, readers should note that the 4chan content reproduced in this paper is extremely offensive, and can encourage, glorify or support violence, abuse, racism, xenophobia, antisemitic, homophobia, right-wing extremism, discrimination, or hate speech. We have sought to minimize reproduction and amplification where possible.

Our findings suggest that discussions of gender and violence on 4chan occur within a broader existential struggle narrative. The combatants in this struggle are typically expressed as in and out groups. The in-group (who tends to be articulated as ideologically and ethnically compatible white people) faces decline—or even extinction, and often articulates various solutions to this crisis. The out-group (including white men and women with different sexual and moral values, immigrants, religious and ethnic minorities) are the cause of crisis, therefore justifying them as targets of violence—both sexual and otherwise.

ANZ 4channers routinely deconstruct in-group and out-group collectives into individual gendered identities (both masculinities and femininities), or gender representations. Discussants attach positive or negative gendered values and performances that either contribute to solutions or crises to masculinities and femininities, which in turn, distinguish each male and female representation as part of the in-group or out-group, a tactic similarly observed in religious extremists.¹⁴ A conjugal order emerges from these concepts of gender, whereby the very survival of the in-group depends upon the subordination of white women for reproductive purposes. As we demonstrate, threats to that conjugal order (e.g. immigration, promiscuity), and institutions deemed to uphold it (e.g. marriage), prompt justification for sexual and gender-based violence. Ultimately, such ideas also clearly further serve to reinforce and promote extreme right-wing ideology.

Given these empirical results, we argue Australian and New Zealand 4channers construct gender orders which are informed by a conjugal order that privileges heterosexuality, assumes that sex within marriage is consensual, and seeks to uphold female reproductive and domesticity roles within the family unit. Second, sexual and gender-based violence is articulated by 4channers as a mechanism to enforce and perform gender at the micro-level, and more broadly, a strategy to save the in-group transnationally. The conjugal order as expressed by

4channers thus informs a misogynistic gender order where sexual and gender-based violence in all forms functions to enforce a plurality and hierarchy of masculinities and femininities, thereby preserving and extending gender inequalities. As Nicole George contends, the policing of conjugal order can work to reinforce the idea that only those whose gendered behaviors are “correct” are worthy benefactors of protection, while those whose gendered behaviors are “incorrect” threaten the conjugal order.¹⁵ This renders the individual as not only unworthy of protection, but within the context of these 4chan discussions, as warranting the use of violence as retribution. Such outcomes represent an advancement in scholarly understandings of how gender is constructed in extreme online communities, and, further, how that concept is weaponised to shape, police and enforce gendered behavior.

Before discussing these findings in greater detail, however, we first turn to the key terms and literature that informs our study.

Key terms

Starting with the far/extreme right more broadly, we must first acknowledge that there remains no academic consensus on the phenomenon, though diverse milieus have clearly been subject to definitional debate since the sixties at least.¹⁶ For example, Cas Mudde describes common extreme right features as nationalism, xenophobia, racism, opposition to democracy, and support for a strong state.¹⁷ For others¹⁸ characteristics like ethnonationalism, the primacy of the goals of the nation over the individual, and opposition to self-serving elites are more accurate defining features. Indeed, more recent attempts to ‘reconstruct the concept’¹⁹ synthesize many of these points: such as authoritarianism, anti-democracy beliefs, and exclusionary nationalism.

This definitional dilemma is further heightened by distinctions between “far” and “extreme” rights (and to wit, the radical right). To some the terms are interchangeable, but others consider a distinction between those that support the democratic process (far right) and those that operate beyond it (extreme right), often through violence or nonconventional means.²⁰

We acknowledge these debates, though due to the nature of this study we opt to use the terms far/extreme right interchangeably. That is, our flexible terminology captures the full range of characteristics outlined above. On the one hand, we apply the term to extreme discussants who openly support nonconventional means—including explicit calls to violence. On the other, we also apply it to those who appear to support, promote or glorify far right ideology—such as expressions of exclusionary nationalism, opposition to democracy, and authoritarianism, in conjunction with (less definitional) far/extreme right-wing ideological beliefs noted elsewhere.²¹ The nature of such a large dataset requires such theoretical flexibility.

Moving to gender, we also acknowledge that gender and sex are not synonymous. While sex is one’s biological and anatomical makeup, this study defines gender as the characteristics associated with social expectations of what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman. The differences between what comprise masculinities and femininities are highly contextual and relational, evolving to meet the needs of the socio-historical and political context in which they are contained. Gender is therefore socially constructed with the purpose of achieving political ends.²² Social constructions of gender attached to one’s sex hold “that person accountable to society’s ideas of how” a man or woman should behave.²³ Gender is thus something that one does in the everyday, performing and reaffirming socially constructed expectations attached to sex.²⁴ Importantly, social constructions of what it means to be a man and a woman are not homogenous—far from it. Depending on the socio-political context, there can be a plurality and hierarchy of masculinities and femininities that are relational, resulting in hegemonic masculinities and emphasised femininities.²⁵ It is through this lens of gender being performative, socially constructed, and politically motivated that we look to examine 4channers’ conceptualisations of gender in Australia and New Zealand.

Literature review

This study unites three subfields of knowledge: (1) far and extreme right-wing constructions of gender (especially womanhood); (2) sexual violence in conflict and extremism more generally; (3) and extremism and sexual violence specifically associated with online forums and 4chan. We now briefly synthesize these three fields within the context of the current study.

The far and extreme right constructions of gender

Gender, often focusing on women, has been heavily researched in far-right contexts. Prominent among these studies is the ethnographic work of Kathleen Blee into women in the extreme right.²⁶ She challenges the idea that women in the extreme right are auxiliary participants rather than “political actors in their own right” and argues that gender can be a useful, if limited, category for analysis in the extreme right.²⁷ Women can be cast as archetypes of Whore, Mother, or Fighter rather than ideological adherents,²⁸ where their bodies are exploited or controlled in association with idealized gender and racial hierarchies. Arguments have also been made to suggest that women are involved in performance and promotion of extreme right social mores and ideologies.²⁹ Indeed, women play an important role online in promoting far right content.³⁰ This especially extends to ideologically motivated messaging around native women as victims of “non-native” male violence, indicative of the presence of misogyny and exclusionary chauvinism based in far/extreme right ideologies.³¹

Sexual violence in conflict and extremism

Drawing from Stark and Jakobsen, violence is gendered when it is used to hold a person accountable to the socially constructed expectations associated with their sex. For example, Jakobsen’s analysis of the “good beating” in Tanzania shows such violence enforces women’s compliance under social and cultural systems that dictate the expectations attached to her sex. This entails subordination to men:

To be able to beat is to be in authority and to be in authority is to be a man. Thus, beating to control is an enactment of being a man, of being the head of the house . . . gender is in both the act of beating and in the subordination that results.³²

Hence, we see gender-based violence as both the performance of gender and the result of that enforcement.

Gender-based violence also clearly links to sexual violence—what we define as the range of different sexually assaultive acts that takes away one’s ability to control intimate contact.³³ Even widely used explanations for sexual violence echo this important link. For example, typical biological arguments claim that men are driven by their testosterone and libido render women with the “responsibility of serving as sexual regulators,” a clear reflection of some constructed gender norms.³⁴ The imbalanced ratio of male-to-female sexual and gender-based violence within intimate partner relationships also further underscores the theoretical connection between sexually assaultive acts and the reproduction of gender inequalities.³⁵

Conflict-related sexual violence offers even clearer theoretical links between gender-based and sexual violence. Sara Davies and Jacqui True³⁶ maintain that sexual violence is an act of political violence, and in turn a product of gendered power relations, gender roles in society, and institutional power inequalities that reproduce gender stereotypes.³⁷ It follows then that sexual and gender-based violence is not an act of uncontrollable desire or opportunity (e.g. three-quarters of all rapists plan their attack).³⁸ Rather, once conceptualized as a weapon of war,³⁹ conflict-related sexual violence becomes highly organized and strategic.⁴⁰

Conjugal order is similarly deployed elsewhere as a conceptual justification for sexual and gender-based violence. We follow Megan Mackenzie⁴¹ and Nicole George’s⁴² conceptualisation of conjugal order as gendered and sexual behavior that is regulated and policed by formal rules and informal

norms and behaviors that work to uphold certain behavior for women and men, such as maintaining women's reproductive responsibilities. As George contends, the policing of conjugal order can work to reinforce the idea that only those whose gendered behavior is "correct" are worthy benefactors of protection, while those whose gendered behaviors are "incorrect" threaten the conjugal order.⁴³ This renders the individual as not only unworthy of protection, but in the extremist context, warrants the use of violence as retribution, to restore power, and to enforce gender. Our study contributes to this theoretical body of work by analysing the presence and utility of conjugal order in 4chan discussions of gender and gender-based and sexual violence.

Online forums, extremism, gender-based and sexual violence, and 4chan

Caron E. Gentry argues that white, Western misogyny has always characterized far-right extremism despite being historically overlooked in terrorism studies.⁴⁴ Our study builds upon the growing body of literature that analyses the nexus between online platforms, gender narratives, and misogynistic messaging promoting gender-based and sexual violence. For instance, Alexandra Phelan et al. explore gender ideologies and constructed gender identities in online forums in the United Kingdom and Australia to find shared misogynist perspectives that traverse both geography and the far-right ideological spectrum, including opposition to feminism, race-mixing, and positioning the LGBTQ+ community as sexual deviants.⁴⁵ Further, they show hegemonic masculinity (including female control, female compliance, anti-feminism), hyper-masculinity (the patriot "hero," appeals to hyper-masculine "brothers-in-arms") and toxic masculinity (male dominance, the "ideal man") as recurring narrative typologies across the far right. Veilleux-Lepage et al. employ feminist methodology to examine ideological gender constructs in extreme right and Islamic State women-only forums. They argue that gendered everyday practices in extremist movements are reinforced within these virtual communities, providing female supporters with a sense of meaning and purpose as part of the broader ideological movement.⁴⁶

Much of this recent research also focuses on the incel community. For instance, Lockyer et al. inductively examine over 1000 comments from online incel forums to argue that incels position their violence as ideologically motivated due to its misogynistic nature, thus warranting the incel movement as a terrorist threat.⁴⁷ Similarly, Zimmerman's critical narrative analysis of incel discourse in the "online Manosphere" reveals that incel rhetoric has evolved into a political ideology that justifies misogynistic violence.⁴⁸

Our paper is particularly inspired by the scholarly literature that unpacks the relationship between patriarchal and misogynistic gender orders, with the idealized socio-political and conjugal orders in which violent extremists seek to advance. For example, Joshua Roose et al. detail the processes by which violent extremist groups across the ideological spectrum leverage narratives of misogyny and masculinity already extant in society to shape internal processes, ideologies, and recruitment strategies,⁴⁹ while Roose and Joana Cook comparatively investigate jihadist, far-right and male supremacist ideologies—showing all three seek to impose extreme patriarchal political and social orders that are anti-feminist and in some cases, misogynistic, justifying violence against women and proponents of gender equality to enforce male supremacy.⁵⁰ Analysing gender constructions and misogynistic narratives espoused by Elliot Rodger, Alek Minassian, and Scott Beierle, Vink et al., contend that incel men construct a worldview where "women are considered less human than men, where women are expected to supply feminine-coded goods and services, and where men can take advantage of masculine-coded benefits and privileges."⁵¹ In the Australian context, Agius et al. find that overt masculinism and misogynistic violence underscore broader political and societal debates that work to produce and reproduce the far-right.⁵²

Jones et al. build on an emerging body of work exploring discourses of masculinity in neo-Nazi online communities by employing a multi-layered research design that quantitatively analyzes key-word co-occurrences on Australian neo-Nazi Telegram Channels, with a qualitative analysis of 624 related posts.⁵³ Specifically, they assess the "natural" gender hierarchy constructed by Australian neo-

Nazi groups. This hierarchy situates strong and white masculinity as supreme and responsible for protecting vulnerable white women and girls from inferior, weak, and deviant men. Our study seeks to add to this important body of work by examining a unique dataset derived from 4chan's /pol/ board in the Australian and New Zealand context. Furthermore, we focus specifically on constructions of women and by extension gender, and explore how and why gender-based and sexual violence is discussed in relation to constructed gender identities.

Extreme internet subcultures, and indeed the nativity of hate speech online⁵⁴ has long been the subject of social science research. 4chan is one of the more scrutinized of these online spaces, a noted source⁵⁵ of misogynist, racist, and antisemitic content produced by a largely white, young, male demographic on its anonymous boards.⁵⁶ Though 4chan's community hosts an array of small extreme forums, /pol/ is perhaps the most infamous for its abundance of far/extreme right content.

We should also note that 4chan—indeed even /pol/—is not exclusively extreme, with some of its more socially acceptable content going on to influence mainstream culture.⁵⁷ The wider public concern is that 4chan's meme culture embeds racist and misogynistic messages within or “alongside all of those harmless and fun and funny images.”⁵⁸ In turn, such white nationalist content may be amplified by unaware participants (both in and outside 4chan).

Our paper focuses on more explicit far/extreme right messages and their broader meanings, however. The examples to come reflect an ideological foundation of fascism (as we will argue), embedded in content ranging from antisemitism, through to demographic conspiracy theories, misogyny, and racialised gender identities—a point echoed by Cathrine Thorleifsson.⁵⁹ The board's conversations in turn build and strengthen far-right identities, while directing anger at new (and old) out-groups.⁶⁰ 4chan also sits prominently as a recruitment space, where extremists deliberately seek to “red-pill” visitors.⁶¹ Humor turns out to be an ideal carrier for these “awakening” efforts, making such extreme messages potentially more palatable.⁶²

Ultimately these messages also have coincided with—and inspired—real world violence. Brenton Tarrant features as one such well-known example, a follower of the site from a young age. Gender-based violence however is our primary focus in this paper, and so Elliot Rodger, the Isla Vista attacker, offers the obvious starting point. Though some debate exists over whether Rodger actually posted on 4chan,⁶³ there's little question that Rodger and his attack is praised and celebrated—in some circles—on 4chan's anonymous boards. Idolized as a “saint” and “hero” among the involuntary celibate community,⁶⁴ 4chan ‘incels’⁶⁵ regularly echo such views⁶⁶—encouraging others to “pull a Rodger” and commit more gender-based violence.⁶⁷

Chris Harper-Mercer appears to be the first to follow this call to violence. Though his motivations were unquestionably mixed, the Umpqua Community College terrorist predominantly targeted women during his attack in 2015.⁶⁸ Harper-Mercer's manifesto clearly points to Elliot Rodger as one such inspiration for his attack, relaying many of the same gender-based extremist views as the Isla Vista terrorist a year earlier. More relevant to the current paper, Harper-Mercer allegedly made the effort to warn 4chan users about his upcoming attack, prompting strategic advice from (presumably likeminded) posters looking to help the attacker succeed.

Alek Minassian represents another link to gender-based violence and 4chan. Similarly inspired by Elliot Rodger to pursue an “incel rebellion,” the 2018 Toronto van attacker ultimately murdered 11 people in his—self-professed—contribution to the incel cause. Minassian's social media post claiming responsibility for the attack effectively speaks for itself:

Private (Recruit) Minassian Infantry 00010, wishing to speak to Sgt 4chan please. C23249161. The Incel Rebellion has already begun! We will overthrow all the Chads and Stacys! All hail the Supreme Gentleman Elliot Rodger

4chan therefore features as an important venue for exploring both incel views, and the terror it can inspire. One of the few papers to comprehensively examine this nexus between misogyny in the far/extreme right, 4chan extremism, and women was by Boris Milanović, who found that Serbian 4chan discussants represent women as unfit political tools, unfit members of society, and unfit intimate partners.⁶⁹ Milanović's contribution is also particularly valuable methodologically in that it represents

a geographic case study of how /pol/ users converse in gender-based extremist language. The limited nature of the case study (i.e. small sample size) provided Milanović with the option to qualitatively extract these frames by “reading every single post.”⁷⁰ In this way, Milanović research adds to the wealth of qualitative research in this space, and the restricted nature of the case study provides a depth of analysis that eludes other work that tends to generalize out of anecdotal and isolated examples.

Australia, New Zealand, and our research questions

We too recognize the potential value of gender-based extremist research on 4chan, packaged in the case study format. The current paper contributes in that space, though we look to develop this approach further in a few important ways.

First, our geographic area of expertise involves extremism in Australia and New Zealand, and so our paper is understandably restricted to this trans-Tasman region. As the following will demonstrate, this type of geographic restriction is methodologically necessary given the large sample size, but the region also provides its own theoretical value.

As two settler societies in the Pacific, Australia and New Zealand both grapple with similar social and political issues and share a common historical “sense of family”⁷¹ that largely defines the relationship between the two nations and their people. Socially, the two nations are strikingly similar, with a collective Western sense of social norms and cultural expectations. From a more immediately relevant perspective, they also share an extremist 4chan-related connection, given Tarrant was born and raised in New South Wales and inflicted his terror on worshippers in two Christchurch mosques. In fact, as Champion and Phillips argue, far/extreme right groups from both nations share—and publicly express—similar values, and understandably seek to strengthen ideological (and physical) ties across the Tasman.⁷² Our first research question therefore looks to develop our understanding of ANZ extremist discourses, in this case specific to conceptualizations of gender:

RQ1: How do ANZ 4channers on /pol/ conceptualize women, and by extension gender?

Given the literature above, we also believe that assessments of gender-based extremism on 4chan need to more deeply look at how violence is theoretically expressed as a form of coercive control, with structural and symbolic underpinnings.⁷³ Such conversations, we argue inform a misogynistic gender order where sexual and gender-based violence in all forms function to enforce a plurality and hierarchy of masculinities and femininities, thereby preserving and extending gender inequalities.⁷⁴ These norms develop and encourage a conjugal order that privileges heterosexuality, assumes that sex within marriage is consensual, and seeks to uphold female reproductive and domesticity roles of the nuclear family. Through these theoretical foundations we offer our study’s second research question:

RQ2: How do ANZ 4channers conceptualize sexual, and gender-based violence?

Methodology

To answer these two research questions, the current study examines data from Papasavva et al.’s existing published academic dataset (a collection of nearly 135 million /pol/ posts).⁷⁵ We trim that 4chan data to run from June 2016 to March 13, 2019, 48 hours prior to Tarrant’s attack. We do so to avoid coloring our gender-based extremist analysis with—geographically-influenced—responses to the Christchurch attack.

Given that ANZ focus, the dataset was further geographically isolated via 4chan’s geolocation feature, which automatically geotags posts and replies with country flags based on the originating IP address. While 4chan permits VPN usage (which can be used to bypass geolocation features), some users deploy these VPNs to engage in bannable offences

thereby "often" making these tools unavailable to other users permanently.⁷⁶ For this reason, and the added technical hassle of using a VPN for an already anonymous message board, researchers often assume 4chan users' geotags offer an accurate representation of their geographic location.⁷⁷ The mere fact that users mention Australia or New Zealand over 130 thousand times in our refined dataset lend further justification for this assumption. Moving beyond geolocation concerns, we ultimately extracted over 5 million posts from Australians and nearly a million posts from New Zealanders during this time period.

To address our research questions we deploy a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both big-data quantitative methods alongside expert qualitative readings of /pol/ content. The advantage of pairing such methods is that we can complement machine learning findings (i.e. at mass scale), with the depth of theory-informed discussion that only qualitative analyses can offer. Indeed, cutting-edge research in extremism has recognized the promise of similar mixed methods, machine learning approaches.⁷⁸ For our quantitative analysis in the current study, we use natural language processing tools to investigate (quantitatively) how our topics of interest are discussed on the platform. This automated machine learning method is valuable for its ability to examine language across the whole dataset, allowing us to simplistically reveal how ANZ /pol/ users discuss these concepts (of gender and violence) at scale.

We start this quantitative phase of our paper by constructing word embeddings (via Facebook's fastText) to identify and examine important relationships between two keywords critical to this study: "woman" and "rape." This technique places words in a multidimensional space that can then be assessed mathematically for certain relationships. For our purposes, the nearest neighbor method is useful because it connects words that appear in similar contexts via simple geometric algebra. In fact, embeddings are particularly valuable in this endeavor, because they also dimensionally co-locate words that are misspelled. This is not only a result of the (nongrammatical) internet forum environment, but also a deliberate act of users in this space attempting to mock, resist, and attack others.

We next isolate /pol/ posts and replies that specifically reference these keywords (i.e. "woman" or "rape") or their top nearest neighbors for further analysis via the Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) topic model algorithm. Indeed, a similar keyword-specific approach has also been used successfully to isolate hostile gendered discourses on other platforms for deeper qualitative analysis.⁷⁹ We complement this approach with topic modelling here—a process that automatically categorizes text. Via this procedure, topic models were separately applied to conversations relevant to "women" and its nearest neighbors (approximately 250 thousand posts) and "rape" and its nearest neighbors (approximately 50 thousand posts). Examples are offered below to help contextualize each category in our topic models. The quotes incorporated in the following sections are selected for their prominent (or relevant) keyword use, general topic representativity, and more broadly for potential theoretical insights.

A brief note on our use of examples is required here before proceeding. Publishing exact quotes, even from publicly available data (such as in this study), presents an ethical dilemma. For example, posts on social media might contain (or link to) identifying material—a reason why elsewhere we merely describe instead of directly quote Facebook content.⁸⁰ The added layer of privacy from an anonymous message board (like 4chan) helps alleviate this confidentiality concern to some degree, but we nevertheless remain vigilant about disclosing potential self-identifying information within these quotes. This blanket of anonymity, and the specific prospect of threat to researchers, justifies a waiver for the typical ethical need for consent from those we study, including for the use of exact quotes within.⁸¹ Like Jones et al., who struggle with this same ethical issue, we ultimately agree reproduction in this case serves a "greater social good" and is therefore necessary.⁸²

These examples therefore help inform the qualitative aspect of our project. Here, by employing a discourse analysis drawing from the theoretical foundation outlined above, we look to identify overarching narratives within these posts that expose meaningful insights into our research questions. Again, this is critical because while word embeddings and topic models can help us understand what is being

discussed, they do not necessarily explain how content is being conveyed (e.g. sentiment and tone), nor the deeper—theory informed—meanings behind these discourses and their potential intentions (e.g. sarcasm, covert language, etc.).

Machine learning results

To quantitatively address our research questions, we first extracted nearest neighbors for two relevant keywords: “woman” and “rape.” Table 1 outlines a brief selection of the two keywords and their nearest neighbors, alongside their cosine similarity score (0–1); that is, dimensional neighbors increase in similarity as they approach a cosine score of 1. As the Table shows, even this brief collection underscores the wide variety of words with dimensional similarity to “woman”—in some ways reflecting the diverse ways that women are discussed on the platform.

Beyond the obvious synonyms and typos, this abridged selection of nearest neighbors also outlines deliberate misspellings (i.e. mocking language) and slangs that offer quite a bit of initial insight into ANZ conceptualizations of women and sexual violence. For example, the term “femoids” is used to dehumanize women (i.e. female humanoid) via concerns over race, intelligence, and sexuality—

Table 1. Selection of nearest neighbors.

Keyword	Cosine similarity	
	Woman	Rape
Betaboys	0.58	0.34
Bitches	0.59	0.39
Bushpig	0.6	0.29
Chick	0.7	0.31
Childbearing	0.6	0.35
Childrape	0.53	0.61
Consent	0.44	0.55
Cumslut	0.66	0.49
Damsel	0.65	0.33
Daughters	0.55	0.57
Femanine	0.6	0.35
Femcels	0.56	0.31
Feminists	0.56	0.42
Femoids	0.53	0.47
Gangrape	0.41	0.75
Hambeasts	0.66	0.28
Harlots	0.6	0.38
Homemaker	0.66	0.31
Housewife	0.67	0.28
Hypergamy	0.61	0.34
Impregnated	0.61	0.55
Invader	0.37	0.54
Lady	0.66	0.31
Lezzer	0.61	0.31
Mother	0.62	0.46
Promiscuous	0.51	0.42
Prostituting	0.44	0.55
Rape	0.48	1.0
Rapists	0.41	0.72
Roasties	0.57	0.4
Rotherhams	0.3	0.64
Schoolgirls	0.41	0.54
Slut	0.73	0.47
Tradwife	0.61	0.25
Vaginas	0.53	0.45
Whoreish	0.57	0.4
Womxn	0.58	0.55
Wymens	0.54	0.42

language unsurprisingly spotted emerging from the incel community.⁸³ Conversely, “womxn,” and “womynz” (not included) represent deliberate attempts to misspell some feminists’ desire to remove the word “men” from women,⁸⁴ thereby rejecting the feminist-encouraged term while mocking it:

I’d honestly prefer a judge who sympathises with falsely accused men and actually looks at evidence, instead of an agenda judge who automatically “BELIEBE WOMYNZ” and sentenced all accused men to 6 million years on the basis of hearsay alone. October 3, 2018 (AUS)

... fuck your jewish racemixing pic. I love azns but I’d never breed with one. More than 50% of white womynz voted for Trump so fuck anyone who calls our women whores. March 27, 2017 (AUS)

That final quote serves as an important segue into our next point. On the one hand, the author derides women much like we have previously established (i.e. as objects worth derision e.g. “whores,” perpetrators of racemixing, etc.), but on the other the author expresses ownership over white women as “ours.” In a simplistic sense, the results in [Table 1](#) emphasize this conflicting notion of ownership vs. objectification and derision. Keywords that are expressed as attacks on women see high cosine similarity with the keyword “rape” (e.g. “roasties” 0.4; “slut”: 0.47; “vaginas”: 0.45). Keywords that display far more positive views of women see much lower cosine similarity with the keyword “rape” (e.g. “housewife”: 0.28; ‘tradwife’: 0.25; etc.). Put another way, word embeddings hint that Australians and New Zealanders exhibit notable variations in how they express threats of sexual violence on the platform (i.e. RQ2).

We next used topic analysis to categorize two types of relevant discussions among ANZ 4channers. [Figures 1](#) and [2](#) display comparison clouds of those topic analysis results. Words closer to the center indicate primary differences between topics, with colors separating the categories.

[Figure 1](#) displays the topic analysis for all posts on 4chan that mention women (i.e. “woman” or “women”), or the keyword’s nearest neighbors (e.g. “slut,” “tradwives,” etc.)—roughly 250k posts. Our topic model diagnostics suggest that six categories best describe all the discussion of women on the platform, though we have limited the figure to four (more) relevant topics. In turn, the graphic in [Figure 1](#) visualizes the ways in which Australians and New Zealanders conceptualize women (and by extension, gender) via this relevant discourse (i.e. RQ1). Take the largest category: Namecalling. Here 38 percent of all women-related discourse is dedicated to insulting others. Whether describing other (posters) as virgins, or insulting various women as roasties and whores, the language in this category uses women, their anatomy, and sex as a means of attacking and demeaning others. Given the nature of the board, this is not particularly surprising, though there is still unquestionably relevant material to be found in this category:

No we’re in this mess because all the dumb cunts had kids and the smart cunts didn’t . . . As Abbott said we need ‘women of calibre’ breeding. We really need a eugenics program. June 17, 2018 (AUS)

As the figure shows, ANZ 4channers are also clearly concerned with perceived race mixing (17 percent); alongside debating gender roles (25 percent); and contesting ideological (13 percent) conceptualizations of women. Ideology, for example, features venting about the perceived corruptive effects of feminism and other ideologies:

All of the ideologies of the left from feminism through to multiculturalism and trans/gay rights have all been championed and led by the jew. Flip over a rock and you will find kikes scuttling out of the light. They really are the enemy of mankind. August 29, 2018 (NZ)

... the whole of Europe needs to recreate the social conditions that lead to the baby booms of the 50s and 60s, aka ditching feminism and going back to traditional families. But feminists who have a stronghold in government and the media would much rather let Europe burn than go back to the way things used to be. July 9, 2016 (AUS)

Extremist calls—both explicit and implicit—for authoritarian-like institutional change similarly feature in gender roles discussions (25 percent).

Its like you never heard of white slavery before. Muslim invaders spent hundreds of years taling white women, particularly blue eyed blonds from southern europe. Mediterranean europe and the arab world share the genetic mark of the muslim on europe rape campaign . . . December 24, 2017 (AUS)

. . . Europeans have raped each other in the past, thus resulting in children. The point is that a child of European on European rape is just another European – there’s virtually zero chance of dysgenics. But a non-european on European rape resulting in a child is going to be an abomination. August 24, 2019 (AUS)

Well yes subhuman niggers like you have to rape them to get your way. Soon there will be no liberals left to save you from the Muslim holocaust Europe will unleash upon you. November 14, 2017 (NZ)

The culture (24 percent) category of sexual violence discourses often fixate on how the West—incorrectly—defines rape and how other (non-European) cultures perpetrate this violence. Again, exceptions to this narrative persist though:

Islam =/= Christianity. There is no aspiration for virtue in Islam. Islam is a religion of vice . . . Rape of kaffir women is an essential part of their religion. August 11, 2017 (AUS)

Because it’s in the genes m8. It’s a biological race thing, they are a primitive people unable to perform to modern civilised norms . . . In our society, by our racial norms, those things are crimes which land you in jail. Hence jails are an Aboriginal baby sitting service, around 50% of the jail population is Aboriginal, yet only 3% of the general population is (in NSW). July 27, 2016 (AUS)

Bring norse women, the ones that haven’t been raped by niggers. Ours are trash. January 1, 2017 (NZ)

Finally, the nation-focused (21 percent) category covers many of the same themes outlined above, this time through the lens of an imminent threat posed at the nation/state level. Here Australians and New Zealanders express concerns about Western countries and the decline of their own:

. . . the TRUE niggas from Africa secretly sneaked in through rafefugee program. Here is a chart about how many rapist and murderer we imported every year: [URL REMOVED]. The 2012–2013 spike was caused by boat people. December 14, 2017 (AUS)

Somalis are the lowest tier of life on the planet. Even here in New Zealand they commit a lot of rape and murder/ violence. Don’t let your lack of experience fool you, they are fucking scum. October 25, 2017 (NZ)

This imminent threat, in association with common XRW refrains, tends to include anti-immigration content, with reference to prominent demographic conspiracy theories such as the Great Replacement. To some discussants, African and Middle Eastern refugees were the focus, along with indicators of antisemitic conspiratorial beliefs about Jewish domination and control of governments.

Qualitative analysis and discussion

Turning now to our qualitative analysis and discussion, we offer six brief theoretically-grounded arguments that help us develop a more sophisticated answer to the current study’s research questions—i.e. RQ1: How do ANZ 4channers on /pol/ conceptualize women, and by extension gender?; and RQ2: How do ANZ 4channers conceptualize sexual, and gender-based violence?

In-group/out-group macro-narratives

ANZ 4channers situate discussions around sexual and gender-based violence within broader narratives that depict an existential struggle between an interpellated in-group who is framed as in need of saving and as the bearers of solutions, and an out-group who is the cause of crisis. Such a strategy is common across violent extremist propaganda.⁸⁵ Though minor disagreement exists, the in-group is generally constructed as ideologically and ethnically compatible white people, while the out-group is framed as immigrants, religious and ethnic minorities, as well as white men and women with opposing sexual and moral values.

For example, these conversations routinely portray white people in Australia and New Zealand as being “seized” and overrun by immigrants. One 4channer writes:

Listen to me. New Zealand and Australia are fucked. It's hard to explain but basically we are importing hundreds . . . We are anti freedom, anti guns, anti free speech and very pro feminism,

while another writes:

Better \neq tolerant. Tolerance is what is driving every single western country through the fucking mud.

Both 4channers continue to propose a solution to this crisis. The first goes on to state:

For these reasons I plan to leave my families farm that has been in the family for 150 years . . . I am making tracks to the land of the burger. Free speech, the 2nd amendment, and a cabin in the woods in a white state await me. I cannot wait. June 11, 2018 (NZ)

The second discussant reminisces on a historical past as being a solution to the current crisis:

The white Australia policy was a beautiful thing especially since the crime was so low and we weren't being invaded by terrorists. September 21, 2018 (AUS)

Other 4channers directly link immigrants to crisis:

The quickest and easiest solution is to gas them, but unfortunately such proposal has to go through parliament and unlikely to be approved. So I guess we have to suffer at the moment, December 14, 2017 (AUS)

[We are] rapidly becoming non-white. Auckland which 1/3rd of NZs entire population, is a white minority, and dropping fast . . . There isnt really a future for Whites in NZ at this rate. March 13, 2017 (NZ)

While immigration concerns predominate, Indigenous peoples also see similar out-group narratives. That is, Māori and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are consistently referred to by 4channers as posing an existential threat to the in-group. Here sexual violence (and violence generally) is a typical persistent threat from the out-group, and even a conceptually legitimate weapon wielded by the in-group:

For example:

our niggers killed, enslaved and ate the moriori then started living on their land and now they say they are the natives of NZ. the moriori are a perfect prediction of what is/will happen to white people. July 20, 2017 (NZ)

. . . There are no maoris. They were all raped so their bloodlines would never progress. The niggers all live in slums over here . . . In the south we have white pride marches and national front rallies . . . the only cunts letting niggers inside are worthless trash girls with weak father figures anyway. They are all subhuman, thats why we dont allow them in the south. April 16, 2017 (NZ)

While another echoes this condemnation in the Australian context:

[Aboriginal people] are quite literally more animal like than human. They do commit horrible acts of rape and murder and violence, but none of it seems premeditated . . . It's all crimes of opportunity and impulse . . . Nearly all of them live with white people, depend on white people and have white family. So they scream about Muh Racism, Muh Land, Muh Benefits. August 29, 2015 (AUS)

In Australia, aboriginals (remember, smallest brain size) make up only 2.5% of our population and nearly 30% of our prisons. They also have a free ride through life; Free education (this includes a free ride through university), high welfare payments, etc. Yet they still somehow do nothing but get drunk all day, rape women, get arrested, and blame da white man. December 18, 2015 (AUS)

Attaching the out-group to crises offers audiences a simple explanation of the existing world order, where the in-group is existentially threatened by the out-group. This can potentially motivate audiences to align themselves with the collective in-group identity and reject members of the out-group.

Constructing a gender order

Gendered narratives are also central to these discussions. Here ANZ 4channers construct “good” and “bad” masculinities and femininities that are either part of the in-group or the out-group—a phenomenon observed elsewhere in violent extremist propaganda.⁸⁶ Indeed, such propaganda tends to divide (in and out) group identities into individual gender identities, or gender representations, that comprise a gender order strategically constructed to advance the objectives of the violent extremist.⁸⁷ This is achieved by attaching positive or negative gendered values and performances that either contribute to solutions or crises respectively. The “good” masculinities and femininities whose behavior is deemed to be “correct” contribute to solutions and saving the in-group, while “bad” masculinities and femininities comprise the out-group and are directly responsible for the demise of the in-group. The construction of gender representations aims to demonstrate to audiences and potential supporters how to and not to behave. While performing gender “correctly” in the everyday ensures belonging to the in-group, transgressing your gender warrants punishment and banishment to the out-group.

Take the following, where one 4channer explicitly articulates the central role Western men need to play in saving the in-group:

western males need to uncuck themselves and retake western civilisation. there needs to be a widespread religious resurgence with a return to civic morality, marriage and parent-regulated sexuality, feminism and multiculturalism need to be abolished, racism needs to be made okay again, and the political and education institutions need to be purged. it needs to start at the individual. expecting some rat bastard you vote in to fix anything for you is completely hopeless given the endemic corruption and intractability of our political system. i dunno how to go about any of this, but i don't believe it's via our democracy. July 17, 2017 (AUS)

This type of gendered conceptualization places emphasis on the individual at the local level by explicitly stipulating the gendered roles and responsibilities that should be assumed in the everyday. Alternative methods for men to restore their power are also floated, however:

MGTOW [Men Go Their Own Way] is reactionary to all that bullshit mate. It's pump and dump white seed into white girls, and make them pregnant. Sure it isn't ideal, but marriage at the moment. MGTOW is an essential temporary solution to the current problem, and when men get their courage, dignity and power back, then MGTOW will have outlived it's use, and hence needed to be stopped in favour of traditional marriage institutions, that will be put in place by these men. August 12, 2016 (AUS)

Consistently, these discussions demonstrate a plurality and hierarchy of gender, and within that is the ordering of masculinities to construct a male hierarchy. While women are typically portrayed as subordinate to men, they are also—paradoxically—often framed as having *too much* agency where their behaviors are subordinating white men whose power should be restored and dominant. Gender is therefore also a relational contrast,⁸⁸ and when that order is reversed (e.g. women are stronger than men) or broken (e.g. both white men and women are weak) a crisis emerges:

Since White women are never physically threatened by White men their reptilian female brains instinctively register their men as weak, and therefore unattractive. When women are surrounded by cowardly men, these women will inevitably fill the power vacuum with other men. They will despise their own men and actively seek to kill and replace them. Western sluts want to be incubators for big scary thugs, and white men are not that. So, import them – Refugees welcome! When women pave the way for Islam and welcome refugees, that is presumably because women want Islam and refugees. They do not want freedom, democracy or equality, because they are attracted to subservience and domination. Now come the Muslim hordes; barbarians who treat Western women like the whores they are. Finally, someone is here to pass their feminist gambits and fulfill their primal desires to be subdued and dominated. Feminists will do anything to defend such men. A woman can only really love a man who can subjugate her. White men will be exterminated and white women will be stripped, beaten, raped, and auctioned off to Muslim men. Women will simply just submit to what they perceive to be the winning side and their bodies go to the highest bidder. White women have a war bride mentality - they act like war booty because that is precisely what they are. March 4, 2019 (AUS)

Conjugal order

Traditional marriage, and with that, reproduction through the conjugal order is framed by ANZ 4channers as being the solution to their in-group crises. For example, one Australian poster blames lazy white men who refuse to procreate:

The true problem going on with white demographics is the millions of men that would rather sit in front of their screens instead of impregnating a white womb because of white women being leftist, sexual active and /or unattractive ... The majority of the white male population doesn't procreate. Perhaps this is why white nationalists get so annoyed at the small race mixing demographic – because they are the only white males actually laid in this day and age. The real problem are white nationalist males that refuse to give up their r9k standards. March 13, 2017 (AUS)

Other posters take a more explicitly violent stance:

... I will provide the solution: impregnate women continuously so they have no energy to talk or move, March 17, 2019 (AUS)

Fix western civilisation in three easy steps: Legalize marital 'rape'. Illegalize divorce. Ban gay marriage. The rest of the problems will fix themselves. October 9, 2017 (NZ)

These proposals all claim that the institution of marriage guarantees men access to women's bodies. To borrow directly from Megan Mackenzie, the conjugal order expressed by ANZ 4channers therefore "involves bestowing men, through the institution of marriage, with a significant amount of power over, and access to, the labor of women."⁸⁹ Hence, the hegemonic masculine models conceptualized by ANZ 4channers consistently portray the control and ownership of women as a signal of power and male ascendancy, which is tied to saving the in-group. It follows that the breakdown of conjugal order is directly linked to insecurity and disorder—posing an existential threat to the nation.

The conjugal order legitimates sexual and gender-based violence

As Nicole George suggests, "the policing of conjugal order may reinforce the idea that worthy feminine recipients of protection are only those whose behavior is generally deemed to be dutiful, docile and rightful and hence nonthreatening to the conjugal norm."⁹⁰ Indeed, in-group representations are clearly identified as worthy of this protection by ANZ posters. Conversely, though, out-group gender representations threaten this conjugal order, which warrants the use of violence as retribution, to restore power, and to enforce gender.

It therefore comes as little surprise that out-group female representations are portrayed as promiscuous race-mixers who compromise their "white" purity and subsequently undermine and desecrate the authority and property assured to "white" men.⁹¹ For example, one discussant states:

'no white guys asked me out' better flush my genes down the shitter then' Fucking roastie logic. June 6, 2018 (AUS)

Often, sexual and gender-based violence is articulated by 4channers as solutions to punish these women and enforce their conformity to "correct" gender roles. Importantly, however, these conversations also offer a method to restore power to men:

thot culture (i.e. female promiscuity) is definitely part of that problem ... Thot-rape should be a legal sport. It already is in Europe (if ur a mudslime). We just need to extend it to white men. if ur not a thor, u will not get surprised-sexed. Problem solved. April 3, 2018 (AUS)

In this light, sexual and gender-based violence is thus the performance of masculinity as well as the enforcement of (proper) femininity.⁹² Sexual and gender-based violence among these posters is therefore framed as "restorative, [and] a means to reclaim the power that he believes is rightfully his."⁹³

While white women who threaten the conjugal order are portrayed as desecrating themselves through race-mixing and promiscuity, perceptions of crisis are also increased by portraying out-group male ethnic minorities as rapists. As Mackenzie argues, the violation of patriarchal norms which “Define women and children as property of men, heterosexual sex within marriage as sacred, and the control of women as a signifier of power and masculine identity,” results in rape creating disorder by “desecrating the authority and property assured to males, as well as violating established norms relating to the family.”⁹⁴ The demonstration of these narratives on 4chan serve the concomitant purposes of (a) justifying or endorsing sexual and/or gender-based violence; while (b) reinforcing ideological norms common to extreme right wing ideologies.

Reinforcement of extreme right-wing ideology

As our examples reflect, ANZ discussants also promulgate or perpetuate the defining features of far/extreme right ideology: authoritarianism, opposition to democracy, and exclusionary nationalism.⁹⁵ Authoritarianism is implicit throughout the analyzed posts, with opposition especially to civil liberties such as personal choice in sexual partner, and freedom of personal/political beliefs and plurality (such as feminism and other moral/sexual mandates). Authoritarianism is further demonstrated through the vision of good society⁹⁶ represented by the mandates around conforming gender order, identities, and values in support of an (often imagined) traditional past.⁹⁷ Indeed many of the quotes above justify their arguments through one of the central programs of the far right: that is, to strengthen the nation through a return to “traditional values” and ethnic homogeneity.⁹⁸ Opposition to democratic principles is unquestionably present in these posts as well. This manifests in opposition to the principle of human equality, including among genders. In far-right ideologies generally, all people are not considered equal, and this is reflected in 4chan posts with reference to sexually non-conforming people, who are seen as deserving of punishment or death: multicultural societies; LGBTIQ+ peoples; and biracial couples. They further oppose basic rights typically guaranteed in democracies, such as the right to liberty and security of person, evidenced—if nothing else—by pro-rape sentiment.

By far the strongest sentiment on 4chan relating to the far/extreme right subculture is that of exclusionary nationalism. This manifested as opposition to immigration, and articulation of people from other cultures as “rapefugees,” racism and xenophobia, Islamophobia, and antisemitism. The general opposition to multiculturalism, seemingly on a racial basis, and support for eugenics, is further indicative of the extreme right-wing nature of some ANZ 4chan discussants. This is in pursuit of a racially segregated and ethnically homogenous societal ideal, controlled through authoritarian mandates on permitted gender identity and sexual practice, at the expense of personal freedoms, liberty, and equality of peoples. The orientation of these 4chan themes positioned in the far/extreme right provides further ideological context to the conceptualizations of gender and sexual violence within the milieu. It also serves as a poignant reminder as to the essentiality of ethnic homogeneity, “racial” futures, and exclusionary nationalism to ideations of far/extreme right futures. The far/extreme right ecosystem on 4chan may further serve to promote or normalize misogynist conceptualizations of a gender order, reinforce or extend ideological constructions of gender inequality, and endorse or legitimate sexual and gender-based violence in ANZ communities to serve ideological ambitions.

Conclusion

In this study we examined nearly 300 thousand relevant 4chan posts and replies from Australians and New Zealanders. Using natural language tools and qualitative readings of the texts, we sought to better understand ANZ concepts of women and by extension gender (i.e. RQ1), and sexual and gender-based violence (i.e. RQ2). We conclude that gender and violence discussions occur within narratives depicting an existential struggle between an in-group and outgroup: with the latter supposedly inflicting the crisis. With reference to RQ1, we suggest that these in-groups and out-groups are racially identified and highly gendered, providing proscriptive and normative standards for

masculinity and femininity. In-group masculine identity is defined by dominance, control, ownership, and power over women and children, while feminine identity is sexually, politically, and behaviorally mandated and controlled in the service of a “white” racial future. These gendered performances and institutions comprise a gender order that is framed to restore power, security, and stability to the ethnically and ideologically conforming in-group through “right” and “wrong” social performances that serve as a “policy of gender regulation and control.”⁹⁹

With reference to RQ2, we suggest that to uphold the gender order, sexual and gender-based violence is not only warranted among ANZ posters—it is encouraged and celebrated. Ultimately, these ideas also collectively further serve to reinforce and promote extreme right-wing ideology. Such promotion normalises far/extreme right gendered constructs in ANZ contexts. It also endorses, legitimizes, and in some cases champions sexual and gender-based violence in the service of far/extreme right ideological ambitions, related to racial homogeneity, exclusionary nationalism, and heterosexual dominance.

These findings informed our central argument that Australian and New Zealander 4channers construct misogynistic gender orders that are informed by a conjugal order that privileges heterosexuality, assumes that sex within marriage is consensual, and aims to uphold the institution of marriage as well as female reproductive and domesticity roles within the family. Further, this conjugal order as expressed by 4channers endorses sexual and gender-based violence to enforce a hierarchy of masculinities and femininities, thereby rewarding those whose gendered behaviors are “correct” while punishing those whose gendered behaviors threaten the conjugal order. Such results theoretically and empirically contribute to the growing body of literature emerging on gendered narratives espoused by the far and extreme right, in Australia, New Zealand, and ultimately beyond.

Future research in this area has any number of potential avenues, and so we offer a few starting points for those interested. For one, in the current paper we have explored how gender is conceptualized via isolated discussions of women; a focus on men might uncover similar valuable insights.¹⁰⁰ It is also clear that the enforcement of the conjugal order (i.e. via sexual violence) appears to contradict the commonly held notion that the out-group are perpetrators of sexual violence—such a blatant ideologically inconsistency likely demands further investigation. Finally, in our estimation this complementary mixed-methods approach can not only be applied successfully to additional extremist-related theoretical explorations of this 4chan data, but also is suitable to a much wider variety of other extremist datasets.¹⁰¹ Our hope is that this contribution has not only helped further understanding of online gendered extremism, but has also potentially sparked greater interest for future research via similar methods.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Data availability

The data generated and analyzed within the current study was extracted from Papasavva et al.’s (2020) public dataset (<https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2001.07487>, available from: <https://zenodo.org/record/3606810>). The Java and R code used on this data for our study is available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Ethics approval

This research was approved by the Division of Arts, Law, Psychology & Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Waikato (Project FS2022-22). The Committee did not require the study to seek informed consent as participants may constitute a threat to researchers.

Funding

This work was supported by the Royal Society Te Apārangi under a Marsden Fast-Start Grant [MFP-UOW2106].

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