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The construction of masculinity in far-right attacker manifestos in the west: the reification of hegemonic masculinity and the use of 'the child' to mobilise others

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ABSTRACT

Far-right attacker manifestos provide researchers and practitioners with insights into the thoughts, beliefs, and motivations of their authors. However, a systematic analysis of the gendered ways in which these attackers construct and present their experiences and opinions has not yet been produced. This study fills that gap by analysing the presentations of masculinity across 19 far-right manifestos authored by men. Discourse analysis of terrorist manifestos can unearth where mainstream and extremist discourses coalesce: which elements are taken from the mainstream and embedded into extremist discourse, and what parts of extremist discourse are utilised by mainstream actors. Drawing on the theories of Connell, Firestone, and Laclau, I argue that the attackers in this study discursively construct themselves as men in reference to hegemonic ideas of what constitutes "the man" in Western society. They also attempt to justify their actions and mobilise others to do the same by appealing to "the (white) child" and the duty of themselves as (white) men to protect it. Women are almost entirely neglected in the manifestos, which reflects sexist attitudes surrounding women's agency and presence in society. This paper contributes to the understanding of hegemony and gender in far-right discourse.

Introduction

Traditionally associated with left wing radicalism, the manifesto has become increasingly synonymous with far-right attacks over the past decade, with far-right lone actors frequently accompanying their attacks with written testaments. These manifestos have a galvanising effect on other actors in the far-right (Berger 2019) and leave a discursive trail for researchers to follow, while contributing to the body of grievance literature amassed by far-right attackers and their sympathisers. Far-right attackers have themselves identified the manifestos of their predecessors as important for encouraging violence amongst their milieux (Ware 2020). Critical analysis of the discourse of far-right attacker manifestos can unearth where their narratives and grievances coalesce with ideas and topics in mainstream

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discourse. This paper presents an analysis of 19 far-right attacker manifestos that were all authored by cisgender men. All except the LAPD and Isla Vista attackers, who were Black and mixed heritage respectively,[1] were white. The findings of this study, while not generalisable to the entire far-right attacker population, speak to commonalities in the construction of far-right grievances across the West. The attackers studied here come from the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and Europe and these Western ideas of masculinity are seen reflected and exaggerated in the manifestos they wrote to accompany their attacks.

I employ inductive thematic analysis (ITA) (Braun and Clarke 2006) in combination with discourse analysis for this analysis. All manifestos referenced war, and all bar one manifesto discussed children. I was particularly struck by the way in which the men framed their grievances, the norms they appealed to in order to justify their actions, and the implicit references to hegemonic masculinity that were embedded within them. This intersection of mainstream norms around violence, war, children, and masculinity with the far-right attackers' use of these discursive constructions in their manifestos was chosen as the focus of the discourse analysis due to the novelty of these findings in the field. Every manifesto subscribed, in some way, to ideas of hegemonic masculinity in Western society. Efforts to do masculinity in line with mainstream norms of what makes a "man" a "man" were found throughout the dataset. Every manifesto, bar the Oklahoma City bomber's, talked about children, and the majority of manifestos employed a war framing when discussing why they committed their actions. These ideas of having children and waging war are traditionally masculine. The archetypal male is the father; the soldier. The far-right attackers in this dataset incorporate these ideas of masculinity into their narratives. I argue that the narratives that are constructed in the manifestos are ways of affirming, proving, and performing the masculinity of the author, in-line with current norms, hegemonic ideals, of what "the man" is.

I begin by introducing the discourse analysis of far-right rhetoric and manifestos, highlighting the lack of gender analyses in this area. I then introduce the theoretical foundations of the paper: the theory of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2005; Messerschmidt 2018), the feminist theory of Firestone (), and the discourse theory of Laclau (2005), I believe combining the study of the struggle for hegemony in discourse with the gender theories of hegemonic masculinity can reveal where signifiers in mainstream discourse that are not fully saturated with meaning can be taken by the far-right who then attempt to hegemonise these elements of discourse so that they are synonymous with far-right ideas. I then introduce the methods and the ethical considerations that were part of this project. The findings are then presented, grouped by theme into "women," "children," and "men." In the discussion, I relate these findings to the broader literature on analysing extreme expressions of mainstream norms around violence and masculinity, and the use of children by the far-right. I argue that the men in this dataset are influenced by mainstream norms of masculinity in Western society and that the idea of the child operates as a floating signifier in mainstream discourse. The far-right more broadly have attempted to use this floating signifier for their own ends, and the actors in this dataset use it to justify their attacks and attempt to mobilise others into action.

Discourse analysis of the far-right: from the extreme to the mainstream and vice versa

The field of discourse analysis of the far-right is vast. Wodak is perhaps the most prolific in the area with her extensive work on fascist and far-right discourse (Richardson and Wodak 2009; Wodak 2015), gender discourse on the far-right (Rheindorf and Wodak 2019), migration (Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2017), racism (Ruth and Van Dijk 2000) and right wing populism (Wodak 2019; Wodak, KhosraviNik, and Mral 2013). Far-right discourse coalesces with that of mainstream politics and the two influence each other (Brown, Mondon, and Winter 2021; Downes and Alfonso Bruno 2020; Edwards 2012; Rheindorf and Wodak 2019; Yılmaz 2012). The language of threat and insecurity used in mainstream discourse was replicated in the Norway attacker's manifesto and far-right attackers often act in response to the threats constructed in mainstream discourse and the implied necessity to respond to them through the "us" and "them" binaries that the latter create (Murer 2011). Mainstream political discourse can create a "rhetorical climate" for far-right violence where white supremacy becomes acceptable through the versatility of language that appears civil but has coded supremacist undertones that are understood by far-right groups and actors (Sanchez 2018). Conversely, the "genes to culture" shift – the shift in framing from "genes" (race) to "culture" – that has been seen in recent decades is the result of a hegemonic shift that started in the mid-1980s whereby the far-right changed the framing of their rhetoric to turn migration from a racial issue into a cultural one. This allowed mainstream right wing parties to take up the mantle of anti-migrant, anti-Muslim sentiment and use it for electoral gain. It is through these mechanisms that the extreme end of the political spectrum and the mainstream can interact and influence each other.

This attempt to influence and shift mainstream politics is also seen in the discourse of far-right attackers, as well as far-right parties. Beutel (2019) showed that the Christchurch attacker was aware of the Overton window and was directly trying to change it by "eroding social taboos and stigmas of racism" through memes (Beutel 2019, 3). The shifting of discourse is not a passive phenomenon, but a deliberate technique from the far-right. Breitbart published an article in 2011 that stated "politics is downstream of culture," using Gramscian arguments of political change, and encouraged far-right individuals to attempt to shift culture first before they attempt to change political discourse, which is being done through the use of memes online (Meyers 2011). This culture shift is not an accidental effect of overspill of far-right views from the extreme, but is the direct result of a concerted, co-ordinated effort across many different platforms, from YouTube videos, blogs, Twitter storms, and mainstream actors on news stations (Barnes 2019; Roose 2019). It is therefore vital to analyse a range of far-right discourse from the more mainstream to the furthest extremes to understand where mainstream and far-right ideas coalesce.

The manifesto in far-right discourse

Analysing manifestos of far-right attackers gives us great insight into the beliefs, motivations, world views (Allchorn 2021; Beutel 2019; van der Veer 2020; Ware 2020) and emotions of the author (Kaldor 2021). Analysing manifestos as a body of literature can allow for common narratives across far-right actors to be unearthed (Allchorn 2021;

Berger 2016; Kaldor 2021; Ware 2020). It is also possible to see where far-right attackers are influenced by mainstream politics and the current political events that they find to be relevant to their narratives. Far-right groups and actors frequently discuss mainstream politics (Barnett 2015; Beutel 2019; Chebrolu 2020), and mainstream parties have a history of borrowing rhetoric and ideas from far-right groups (Downes and Alfonso Bruno 2020; Edwards 2012; Murer 2011). The interactions between mainstream right wing politics and far-right discourse are extremely important to understanding how far-right beliefs become normalised in society, which is why this study looks to the manifesto as a site to explore these connections.

Studies analysing multiple manifestos as a body of literature are scarce (Allchorn 2021; Kaldor 2021; Ware 2020), with deep dives on one manifesto being much more common (Barnett 2015; Beutel 2019; Chebrolu 2020; Edwards 2012; Fleming 2021; Macklin 2019; van der Veer 2020). Within this body of literature, there has been an analysis of the ideologies expressed within them (Barnett 2015; Berger 2016; Beutel 2019; Ware 2020), the construction of political identities by the authors (Barnett 2015; Beutel 2019; Edwards 2012), the relations between mainstream right wing discourse and far-right discourse (Beutel 2019; Murer 2011; Ware 2020), the narratives conveyed by manifestos (Beutel 2019; van der Veer 2020; Ware 2020), the conspiracy theories evidenced within them (Allchorn 2021; Marcks and Pawelz 2020; Rottweiler and Gill 2020; Rousis, Dan Richard, and Wang 2020), and how they justify political violence (Allchorn 2021; Barnett 2015; Berger 2016, 2019; Beutel 2019; Chebrolu 2020; Ware 2020). Work has also begun to emerge on the emotional processes involved in radicalisation as expressed in manifestos (Kaldor 2021), as well as comparative language analysis (Ebner, Kavanagh, and Whitehouse 2022). To date, only one paper has provided a gendered analysis of a far-right attacker manifesto: Vito and colleagues utilised the theory of aggrieved entitlement to argue that the Isla Vista shooter tried to perform his masculinity in socially sanctioned ways, and then resorted to violence when these means were blocked (Vito, Admire, and Hughes 2017). As the interest in far-right attacker manifestos has increased, the gendered analysis of this material is still limited to studies of one manifesto at a time. This paper analyses presentations of masculinity across a body of far-right literature to see where there are commonalities amongst these constructions. Despite this increase in the interest in manifestos, there is still a lack of analyses of the specifically gendered ways that manifesto narratives are constructed. This paper contributes to filling this gap by taking a critical feminist standpoint in analysing the ways in which masculinity is constructed across a range of manifestos authored by men.

Theoretical foundations: hegemonic masculinity, feminist theory, and post-marxism

Three main theories underpin the analysis of this work. The theory of hegemonic masculinity by Connell (2005) and Messerschmidt (2018); the feminist work of Firestone which addressed the oppression of children and women in society (); and the discourse theory of Laclau and his work on floating signifiers (2005). Introduced originally by Gramsci, cultural hegemony is the dominance of ruling class ideology so that ideas that legitimise, justify, and normalise existing social relations become "common sense" and unquestionable in society (Adorno et al.

2012). Connel's theory on masculinities utilised the concept of hegemony to propose that there is a hegemonic masculinity that employs, justifies, perpetuates, and normalises male dominance as well as the correct way of being a man in society (Connell 2005). What is positioned as hegemonic masculinity is different between and within societies and varies across time and place. Different ways of being a man are valorised at different points in history as well as in different places across the globe, and different subcultures within societies can have their own forms of hegemonic masculinity that their members will try to perform, though these are still influenced by mainstream norms in wider society (de Boise 2014; Lockhart 2015). Hegemonic masculinity in contemporary Western society valorises traits in men such as stoicism, physical prowess, bread-winning ability, heterosexuality – and the accompanying discreditation of women, feminine men, and feminine-coded behaviours and objects – and the ability to use violence (Connell 2005; Messerschmidt 2018). The men in this study found ways of expressing and affirming their masculinity in their manifestos in ways that adhered to hegemonic masculinity in Western society. Ideas of emasculation (the loss of one's power and status as a man amongst men) were found frequently throughout the dataset: Muslim and Black men being more sexually prolific than the attackers as white men, lack of sex with women, and the state encroaching on individual liberties. Through the symbolism of the child and the framing of war, they were able to construct a masculinity that fulfilled hegemonic norms about what an ideal man should be, and to use this to reassert themselves as men against forces that experienced as emasculating.

I take as a theoretical premise the argument of Firestone that the linking of women and children that is frequently seen in discourse ("women and children") happens because women and children are oppressed together through the same mechanisms (Firestone 2015). Childhood is a socially constructed phenomenon that is culturally and temporally dependent – the modern Western construction of childhood is different to that of modern constructions in other countries and cultures, and the modern Western construction of childhood is different to that of even a few decades ago (Ariès (1960) 1973; Firestone 2015). Firestone argues that the current iteration of childhood that was contemporaneous to her writing in the 1960s is one that serves the needs of patriarchal capitalism and is oppressive to both women and children. Laclau's (2005) discourse theory is then used to understand how "the child" functions as a floating signifier. Floating signifiers are signifiers that do not have a fixed meaning and are free to move across discourses and contexts. They can be used by the far-right or other political activists to provoke emotional responses, galvanise support, or disrupt existing discourses in which that floating signifier is embedded. In Laclau's work he argued that "the people" and "the nation" are two important floating signifiers in political struggle. I argue that "the child" functions similarly. References to the child provoke a strong emotional effect on their audiences due to the discourse that "the child" is currently embedded in: one of innocence, purity, and a need for protection. These discourses around protection of the child are used by the far-right to mobilise their support base. The need to create more (white) children also forms a basis in much white supremacist organising. Attempts to galvanise supporters and to recruit more followers have especially been seen in reference to the recent far-right backlash against events such as "Drag Queen Story Hour" where far-right groups have

launched counter protests against the events (Empson 2023), as have "gender critical" feminists (Bartosch 2023), in the name of protecting "the children."

By combining the feminist work of Firestone that shows childhood to be a discursive construction for the oppression of younger people and women with the discourse analysis of Laclau, I will show how "the child" is a floating signifier which the far-right attackers in the dataset aim to fill with their own beliefs about childhood. The far-right attackers take from the modern construction of childhood the ideas that the child is rightfully dependent on their parents, is not deserving of autonomy or agency, and exists as an extension of their parents, and add to it their narratives of purity in the context of a race, or "culture" war against their perceived outgroup. Firestone argues that developments to children's rights since the Middle Ages have not come out of benefit to the child in their own right, but to serve the needs of patriarchy and capitalism by creating an additional proletariat class that acts as a labour source and consumer. While Firestone's analysis undoubtedly needs some updating to the 21st century situation of the child, this paper is not the place for it. Instead, I take from the analysis the idea that the concept of the child is socially constructed and will take the form that is most useful to the needs of the current political landscape. As it is socially constructed, "the child" functions as a floating signifier and can be contested by actors who wish to give it a meaning that is politically useful to them.

Discourse analysis of gendered topics: an inductive approach

My intention for this study was to approach the content with as few expectations as possible. I did not have a research question when I began reading the content; my intention was to read the content, to code as much content as possible, rework these codes into themes, and then to consider which themes seemed most fruitful for further analysis. My theoretical interest in feminist criminology, gender theory, and post-Marxist discourse theory, as well as my own positionality as a white transgender man and academic researcher, provoked my interest in the gendered aspects of the manifestos. To this end I found the masculinity applied to the constructions of war, and the use of "children" as a mobilising aspect of discourse particularly interesting. The men in this study are responding to events that they perceive as emasculating through violent means that are normalised in society as an appropriate response for men to take to reassert their masculinity against emasculating threats. By this I do not mean that their murderous attacks are normalised, rather I mean that they are "overconformists" to masculine norms that see violence as a legitimate response to emasculation (M. S. Kimmel and Mahler 2003, 1440). These attackers are also engaging in a discursive struggle to embed the notion of "the child" into a far-right discourse which mobilises and justifies violent action in the "protection" of children.

Ethical considerations

An ethics application that included GDPR considerations and my wellbeing as a researcher was submitted to the Swansea University School of Law's ethics committee for approval. As the study involved searching for, downloading, and reading what can be considered terrorist content from the Internet, which is illegal in the UK,

additional guidance was sought from the Welsh Extremism/Counter-Terrorism Unit (WECTU) at the request of the ethics committee. Ethical approval was granted on the basis that security measures suggested by the WECTU for the collection, storage, and analysis of the data be adhered to throughout the project. A condition of the ethical approval for this project was that I would contact the University's Wellbeing Services if I found myself unduly affected by the content of the manifestos, which turned out to not be necessary. I took proactive mental health measures which included strict time limits on the amount of time spent reading the content, not engaging with any research after 5pm, and maintaining regular socialising and exercise. Content was searched for and downloaded in a secure room on campus, stored on an encrypted memory stick, and accessed from the memory stick only while disconnected from the Internet.

Collection of data

To limit the number of times far-right content is downloaded from the internet, researchers are encouraged to share datasets. Fifteen of the manifestos utilised here were thus obtained from the first author of a study of threatening language use by violent and non-violent individuals (van der Vegt et al. 2021). A further four were searched for and downloaded from the Surface Web.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were devised using the definitional boundaries identified below. "Terrorist" and "extremist" are loaded terms carrying imperialist, colonialist, and racist baggage which there is not sufficient space to unpack here. I opted to use the term "far-right attacker" to describe those in this dataset after feedback from reviewers to avoid reifying the definitional criteria or valorising their actions. All the men in this study committed an attack, many of which have been designated terrorist by various bodies, and all the men in this study justified or explained this act using political language that was on the right of the political spectrum as per the definitions below. The reason for using such broad definitions was to create a large dataset so that it could be seen if there were commonalities and/or differences across far-right discourse, both of which would have been meaningful findings.

Definition of far-right attacker

Many definitions of the far-right begin with Bobbio's (1994) definitions between right wing and left wing which centre around attitudes towards equality (Bjørgo and Aasland Ravndal 2019; Carter 2018; Pirro 2022). Right wing views are those that hold that inequality is a natural and fundamental part of human existence, and therefore should not be interfered with via state intervention (Bobbio 1996). For those on the far-right, this belief is "characterised by authoritarianism and nativism" (Bjørgo and Aasland Ravndal 2019, 2).

Definitions of manifesto

I used the definition of manifesto from Kaati et al.'s 2016 study of lone actor manifestos which considers any written communication that accompanied an attack that attempted

Table 1. Manifestos in the dataset by date with word length.

Attacker	Date	Word length
Murderer of Dr Britton and Dr Barrett	29/07/1994	7,309
The Unabomber	1978 – 1995	35,478
Oklahoma City bomber	19/04/1995	425
(Centennial) Olympic Park bomber	27/07/1996	5,778
Knoxville Unitarian Universalist Church attacker	27/07/2008	1,051
US Holocaust Memorial Museum attacker	10/06/2009	82,736
Austin suicide attacker	18/02/2010	3,198
Pentagon attacker	03/04/2010	6,157
Discovery hostage attacker	01/09/2010	2,227
Norway attacker	22/07/2011	364,822
LAPD shootings attacker	03–12/02/2013	11,351
Isla Vista attacker	23/05/2014	107,663
Charleston Church attacker	17/06/2015	2,444
Umpqua Community College attacker	01/10/2015	1,588
Christchurch attacker	15/03/2019	16,566
Poway synagogue attacker	27/04/2019	4,322
El Paso attacker	03/08/2019	2,361
Halle synagogue attacker	09/10/2019	1,566
Buffalo attacker	14/05/2022	46,021
Mean:		37,003
Median:		5,778

in some way to explain or justify the action to be a manifesto. This meant any targeted attack motivated by an ideology was included.

The final dataset

Using the inclusion and exclusion criteria, to be included in the dataset there had to be a written piece of communication accompanying a violent, targeted attack committed in the furtherance of an ideology (Kaati, Shrestha, and Cohen 2016) that can broadly be considered far-right in its nature (Bjørgo and Aasland Ravndal 2019). Table 1 shows the word lengths of the manifestos, as well as the date perpetrated for historical context.

Data analysis

The steps of inductive thematic analysis (ITA) as laid out by Braun and Clarke (2006) were followed. Even in inductive analysis can researchers not free ourselves of our own theoretical outlook (Braun and Clarke 2006). I have identified my theoretical commitments above and these would have undoubtably influenced how I analysed my data. Nevertheless, I did endeavour to have my coding be data-driven, and it was not until after I had coded the data and formulated these codes into themes that I began to use theory to interrogate the themes. In line with the process of ITA, I gave each manifesto equal attention while coding and the coding process involved coding as much of each manifesto as it was possible. This reading of the dataset produced an initial codex of 298 codes, which were then refined into 85 higher themes (see Table 2). For example, "illuminati" and "cultural Marxism" were grouped together under the broader theme of "conspiracy theories."[2] This method is similar to the work of others analysing far-right discourse (Dignam and Rohlinger 2019; O'Malley and Helm 2022; Tetrault 2022; Vallerga and Zurbriggen 2022). The codes came either from actual words used in the manifestos,

Table 2. Themes present in the dataset.

Ableism	Death	Hedonism	Masculinity	Rape
Anti-Blackness	Democracy	Hispanics	Mainstream discourse	References
Anti-Hispanic racism	Ecofascism	History	Melting pot	Religion
Anti-government	Emasculation	Homosexuality	Men	Research
Antisemitism	Emotionality	Human nature	Military	Revenge
Awakening	Emotions about attack	Humiliation	Minorities	Revolution
Betrayal	Encouragement	Ideology	National identity	Self-defence
Birth-rates	Enemies	Immigration	New society	Sex
Capitalism	Entitlement	Incel ideology	NGOs	Solidarity
Children	Environment	Individualism	Out-groups	Superiority
Classism	Europe	Infamy	Paedophilia	Tactics
Conspiracy theories	Equality	Injustice	Police	Taxation
Corporations	Fairness	Instructions	Purity	Terrorism
Countryside	Family values	IQ/Intelligence	Race mixing	Trump
Cowardice	Fatphobia	Justifications	Racial awareness	Violence
Cult of the individual	Forced into action	Leftist enemies	Racial segregation	War
Culture	Gender	Leftist thought	Racism	Women

Table 3. Keywords used to search for themes.

Theme	Children	War	
Keywords	Baby	Attack*	Fight*
	Babies	Battle	Infantry
	Child	Battles	Infantrymen
	Children	Battled	Infantryman
	Childless	Battlefield	Soldier*
	Childlessness	Battlefields	War
	Childrearing	Battleground	Warfare
	Childhood	Battlegrounds	Warring
	Infant	Battleline	Warrior*
	Infants	Battledress	
	Infanticide		
	Offspring		

or summaries of ideas. For instance, Isla Vista attacker and Umpqua Community College attackers' long discussions of how they were not able to have girlfriends was coded as "girlfriend (lack of)" and then placed under the broader theme of "emasculation."

Inductive thematic analysis requires that every occurrence of a theme be considered in the analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006). To do this, the manifestos were entered into AntConc, a free corpus analysis tool. Keyword lists were devised for each of the themes to be investigated further (see Table 3). Asterisks were used as a wild card where the subsequent characters following the asterisk could be any alphabetical character, including no character. The keyword lists were devised based on readings of relevant passages from each manifesto and selecting words relevant to the theme (such as "attack", "child") in a way that covered all passages but did not introduce irrelevant mentions into the dataset. Tests were performed with each keyword to check that only occurrences that were relevant were included (for instance, "war*" was originally used to find instances of "war*", "warring", and "warrior", but was excluded when it returned "warm" in addition). All occurrences of the themes were then subjected to discourse analysis, the results of which is detailed in the following section.

Findings

The three key findings relating to children, women, and men are laid out below. Strikingly, there was very little space in the manifestos dedicated to discussing women in their own right. Where women were discussed, it was in relation to the men they were associated with, or through the ability of most women to bear children. Even the attackers who were primarily motivated by anti-abortion-related grievances did not spend much time discussing the women who were seeking abortions. Rather, they were more focused on what they considered to be the babies the women were carrying, and the doctors (all male in this context) who were performing abortions. Only by the attackers who were motivated primarily by grievances relating to their inability to have sexual relations with women were women discussed extensively. The other two main findings, that of the way that the authors constructed themselves as men in ways that took from and reaffirmed hegemonic norms about masculinity in society, and the use of children as a floating signifier to attempt to mobilise others in their fight, are then discussed. These two findings are focused on for two reasons. Firstly, because they were seen in all bar one (in the case of the use of children) or all manifestos making them a common point of discourse meriting further investigation; and, secondly, because of the lack of analysis in the wider literature of these themes in far-right attacker manifestos. This is especially true of the analysis of the construction of children, to which no prior research has been dedicated. With a dataset consisting of several hundred thousand words, a great many themes could have been explored. Women, men, and children are focused on due to the spread of these ideas across (nearly) the entire dataset, or, in the case of women, their conspicuous lack of attention.

Women as vessels, motivators, and enemies: the relative neglect of women as discursive subjects

The Isla Vista attacker is guided in his attack by his hatred of women and the men who sleep with them, but he also expresses that he is undeserving of women. He writes about becoming "rich enough to be worthy of them," showing an ambivalence of reverence and misogyny. He is expressing the common sexism of desiring the object of a woman, but despising her agency and autonomy. Towards the end of his manifesto, the Isla Vista attacker's views towards women become calculatedly fascistic:

> Women should not have the right to choose who to mate with. That choice should be made for them by civilized men of intelligence. If women had the freedom to choose which men to mate with, like they do today, they would breed with stupid, degenerate men, which would only produce stupid, degenerate offspring.

He advocates for the selective breeding of men and women so that only people with desirable characteristics may mate. He envisions a world where women are to be kept in concentration camps and artificially inseminated so that men cannot have sex with them, as this would be unfair on the men who were unable to have sex with women if women had free choice. The Isla Vista attacker's inability to perform masculinity to the hegemonic standard through having sex with women results in a desire to prove his masculinity in

other ways that constitute the hegemonic ideal: being able to wield violence and defend one's name and legacy (Scaptura and Boyle 2019).

The Norway attacker holds similar ideas about women and reproduction, in that he believes these matters should not be left to women. He writes about "the creation of a network of surrogacy facilities in low cost countries and basically 'outsource breeding'" in his discussion of how to solve the problem of "birthrates"– that the birth rates of Muslim immigrants are higher than that of white Europeans. The Norway attacker acknowledges that many Western women do not want to have large families and that tax incentives are unlikely to change this, so he proposes outsourcing breeding to developing countries as a cheap way of increasing the white population in Europe. We can assume by "low cost countries" he means the global South, thereby combining his racism and sexism to advocate for the intense exploitation and oppression of women from these countries. The Norway attacker's racism does not prevent him from thinking that women from "low cost countries" should be used as surrogates for the children of white women. Here the linked oppression of women and children is made obvious, in order to breed more white children it is necessary to either have consenting white women, or to exploit women of colour in poorer countries. Children become a means to an end for increasing the white population, and women (and especially women of colour) become the production line that facilitates this.

The discursive oppression of women and children happens together in the manifestos, often during discussion of sexual reproduction, but also through the symbolic linking of women and children seen in mainstream society. In the Isla Vista's manifesto he writes "In order to kill [my half-brother], I would have to kill [my half-brother's mother] too" during his discussion of killing his younger brother. The oppression of children is blurred with that of their mothers in this quote: in order to fulfil his patriarchal desire to protect his legacy from his younger brother, his step-mother must also be sacrificed. Throughout the dataset, many attackers discuss women's choices of who they have sex with overwhelmingly in disparaging ways that are sexist, racist and/or classist. Women's sexual and reproductive autonomy is a site where the men in the dataset take issue. The Umpqua Community College attacker writes "Black men have corrupted the women of this planet" and the Charleston Church attacker considers the white women who have sex with Black men to be victims who "can be saved" from their decisions. These two quotes rob women of their agency and construct women to be helpless beings incapable of making decisions for themselves: it is time for the men to step in to save them, to control the reproductive process to protect white women, ensure white babies, and therefore protect the future of the white race.

Two attackers in the dataset are motivated primarily by anti-abortion-related grievances, but the positions of the women having abortions are largely absent from their narratives. The murderer of Dr Britton and Dr Barrett refers to "the mothers" arriving at the clinic in the context of his own arrival time, and then never mentions them again. The Olympic Park bomber never talks about the people carrying the foetuses he wishes to save; the only mention he makes to women's rights or feminism is when discussing the beliefs of the "abortion mill" workers. He writes, "These people hate life, and they see maternity as a disability, placed upon women by nature and used by men to keep women in subjection." In this quote, he is still not talking about women, he is talking about the opinions he believes the staff at the clinic have about women. Embedded in the quote is

a rejection of body autonomy and a rejection of the idea that carrying children can disadvantage women to the benefit of men. The anti-abortion attackers' engagement with the people carrying the children does not extend beyond this.

The men in the dataset see war as their duty, not the duty of women. However, women still appear in their ideals of war. While the following quote from the Norway attacker about how to encourage white Western men into war against Muslims and liberals may seem alarming, it is not so different from attitudes towards women and war that have been present in the West for centuries:

> Sexy projections of females sell and inspire, in peacetime and during war. There will primarily be men taking most of the risks so it should be a priority to appeal to a broadest selection of European males . . . Resistance leaders of larger networks should also arrange photo sessions with female patriotic models to use in online marketing/recruitment campaigns.

Western militaries are aware that "sexy projections of females sell and inspire": think of the women who were sent out to Vietnam to entertain the GIs. Even today, models award men with motor racing trophies and are routinely used in advertising in a sexualised manner. It may seem shocking to see this written so bluntly by a far-right attacker, but the viewpoint is concurrent with mainstream actions and attitudes towards war and women. Women have a clear role to play in the constructed war against different out-groups, by functioning as either inspiration for the male fighters or vessels to carry the next generation.

Beyond these aspects, discussion of women is conspicuously lacking in the manifestos. Only the Umpqua Community College and Isla Vista attackers dedicate any significant space to their opinions on women. Instead, there is a much greater discussion of children with "the child" taking on significant meaning in their narratives, as well as their constructions of themselves as men. This neglect of women shows that the roles and positions of women are not the primary concern of these men. Besides the Umpqua Community College and Isla Vista attackers, the grievances these attackers have are primarily to do with the actions, perceived or real, of the men of the outgroup. This dismissal of the role of women in these grievances speaks to the implicit sexism underpinning their beliefs: women do not constitute an existential threat to the existence of the white race because they do not believe women capable of doing so.

Children as a mobiliser to action and a symbol of the father

The men in this dataset use the child in a number of different ways: to "prove" their world view, explain their motivations, and justify their actions. The child is something to fight for, a weapon in the racial population war, and evidence of a man's masculinity, and therefore also evidence of his lack thereof. The child is a thing to be created, protected, or destroyed in the furtherance of the ideology. Only the Oklahoma City bomber did not mention children in his manifesto. For the men who do mention children in this dataset, children are not whole beings in their own right, but a way for the adults who create them to continue the white, Christian, European society they desire. Children become a tool, a weapon, discursively created to serve the militaristic and patriarchal needs of the father.

A number of the attackers understand fathering children as a vital role in the war against their out-group. The Unabomber, the Norway attacker, the Christchurch attacker,

the Poway synagogue attacker, and the Buffalo attacker all express this belief in some way. The Norway attacker writes "I had two choices. Create a large family (3–5 children) or completely focus on my tasks as a part of the European resistance movement." Children have become a weapon in this quote; they constitute one of the two ways that it is possible to partake in the (perceived) war against Muslim immigration to save Europe. Likewise, the Poway synagogue attacker writes "There are three roles that must be played in this revolution. Those who spread the truth, those who defend the race, and those who continue the race (having children)." The Christchurch attacker asks himself "[i]f you believe we need to correct the white birth rates, why didn't you start a family and do it yourself? Because if we do not destroy the invaders first, our own birthrates [*sic*] will mean nothing" a sentiment which the Poway synagogue and Buffalo attackers agree. None of the men here consider the role of women in procreation when they pose these options to themselves; women's agency is a completely neglected factor. As seen previously in the Findings, women are not considered.

The Norway attacker shows this attitude when he writes "[t]here are only two logical steps for people my age; have as many children as possible and prepare for Phase 2 or 3 or fight now in Phase 1. I chose the latter." The Unabomber also, with his "revolution" framing, believes that "[r]evolutionaries should have as many children as they can". By encouraging members of their in-group to have as many children as possible, they turn these children into weapons in the war of "birthrates." This war of "birthrates" is constructed against the emasculating force of an out-group male that is more sexually prolific than him. The ways of fighting in this war are through being soldiers or being fathers; both these ways allow the men in the dataset to act out their masculinity in a way that conforms to hegemonic ideals in society. In their imagined war narrative, the men can become soldiers whose actions are meaningful for their perceived in-group and the furtherance of their ideology, thus enabling them to become men in the way society values. This is the definitive linking of war and masculinity. The Poway synagogue attacker believes that having children is a means of fighting in the race war: he combines traditionally masculine ideas of violence and sexual prowess in the furtherance of far-right ideology.

Children are also used to symbolise threats to the autonomy of parents. When discussing the state encroaching on civil liberties, the Unabomber fears that the government may, in the future, deem "[people] who spank their children" as criminals. The Unabomber is expressing the belief that spanking children is the right of the parents; children are not seen as autonomous beings but as an extension of their parents. In this way, the (imagined) threat of the state to infringe on parents' liberties to spank children is a threat to their autonomy, one that must be resisted. The Pentagon attacker writes "The imperative to defend the freedom of conscience must lead us to eliminate the role of the government in education, and leave parents and communities free to raise their children as they see fit." Children are not autonomous beings with their own intentions and their own best interests in these quotes, but a site for either parents or governments to show their autonomy. The threat the Unabomber and the Pentagon attacker see as posed by the state (influenced by liberals and leftists) to the parent's "right" to decide how to discipline the child turns the child into a battleground for autonomy and agency. Children are a site of freedom for the adults in their lives, and the threat to this freedom contributes to their narratives of why violent action is an appropriate response.

"The child" is a floating signifier, one which the attackers in this dataset attempt to place into their far-right discourse in order to mobilise others. They are attempting to create, in the signifier of "the child," the inherent and ultimate belief in a vulnerable being that needs to be protected from external racial forces by white defenders. The use of "The child" is emotive, making it a prime candidate for a rallying point around which these actors can hope to galvanise support. The conceptions of the child in modern society are heavily moralised, influenced by Victorian and Romantic notions of innocence and purity. The men in this dataset have taken pre-existing norms about childhood and children and worked them into their own frameworks. This is common amongst neo-Nazi and fascist ideologies; the white woman is the birthing apparatus of the nation, and the white child is its future. Frequently throughout the manifestos the men argue that there are two roles one can play in the war against the outgroup; either by taking the fight physically to the enemy with an attack, or by reproducing to outbreed them. When they discuss this, they also discuss their reasons for why they have chosen (or been forced into) the role that they have taken on. This militarisation of the act of having children is a way for the men in the dataset to combine the masculinities of fatherhood and knighthood in a way that affirms their own masculinity as being closer to that of the hegemonic ideal of Western society; it proves them as "real men" who can be both fathers and soldiers. The men in the dataset have constructed a version of reality in which they are able to interject in a way that allows them to realise their masculinity through hyper masculinised notions of fatherhood and war, thus resolving feelings of emasculation imposed by the outgroup. The idea that the Other is winning the war, culturally, racially, numerically, and physically, is emasculating, and this is redressed in the narratives constructed in these manifestos.

Men at war: the dependence on hegemonic masculinity in far-right attacker discourse

The men in this dataset discursively construct themselves as effective combatants in a war against their enemies in a way that conforms to hegemonic ideals about masculinity in the West. In every manifesto, each man presented himself as a soldier in a story of a war. By using a war narrative, attackers are able to frame their actions as self-defence, or as a counter attack, positioning the Other as the aggressor and themselves as victim. Self-defence is the only accepted justification for violence in our society and this idea is what attackers are relying on when they use these narratives (Marcks and Pawelz 2020). The war these men believe themselves to be engaged in is not real, and because the war is not real, the men who invent it are able to construct it in such a way that they can be active and autonomous combatants within it. They identify what actions and events constitute enemy attacks, and they decide what actions they can take that would be meaningful in response. For all of them, this took the form of their attack against a meaningful enemy target in their framing (Black people, Jewish people, women, attractive men, traitors, and so on). This construction allows them to be active agents in the war, it facilitates the performance of their masculinity in a way that is accepted and valorised in mainstream society: by that of being a soldier.

The three men who do not use the war-related words from the keyword search (see Table 3) still employ a militaristic masculine framing, either through a revolutionary lens or in their discussion of weapons. The Austin suicide attacker's primary grievance is with the

US government's taxation system. He feels oppressed and persecuted by the tax system, but he does not frame it as a war. Instead, he states that "[n]othing changes unless there is a body count" and hopes that his action will be enough to cause the people of the US to "revolt", or at least contribute to the fatalities that will eventually lead to the people of the US revolting. The Unabomber frames his bombing campaign as part of a "revolution" against the industrial system, not a war. Nevertheless, he clearly believes himself to be engaged in a form of long-term battle. The Halle synagogue attacker's manifesto consists nearly entirely of discussion of weapons: it is extremely combat driven, despite not containing the keywords. He writes about not choosing a "soft target" and states that "if every White Man [sic] kills just one, we win" clearly implying a war that white men are engaged in against Jewish people. He is in a war, without making explicit reference to the war he may be fighting.

"White men will not let God's creation be corrupted and destroyed by the Jew without a fight. Remember your honour White men." This quote from the Poway synagogue attacker shows him appealing to traditional hegemonic masculinity; he is imploring other white men to understand that their duty is to fight Jews. Honour, masculinity, pride, violence, and Christian values are combined. He later writes "Anyone who denounces violent self-defence against the Jew is a coward"; he is encouraging others to fight through appeals to masculinity and proving his own in the process. The Charleston Church attacker does similar, making an example of the coward to show that he is not one: "[t]o me it represents nothing but scared White people running. Running because they are too weak, scared, and brainwashed to fight." The Charleston Church attacker is talking about white people who "flee" to the suburbs due to the amount of Black people living in cities, rather than stand their ground and defend the cities as white spaces. Being "weak, scared and brainwashed" constitutes an emasculated state of the men who have lost the ability to fight and defend themselves and their land, as is expected of men if they are to perform their masculinity in a hegemonic way. He proves his masculinity through being unlike these unmasculine men. The Buffalo attacker, too, calls upon a traditional soldiering form of masculinity when he writes "[m]en of the West must be men once more" when he encourages supporters who read his manifesto to take up arms and act as he has. He later writes "[s]trong men do not get ethnically replaced" referring to the "great replacement" conspiracy theory that white people are getting systematically replaced by people of different races who are having children at a higher rate than white people. The implication is that, currently, white men are weak: if they were stronger, they would not be being "replaced" by a more sexually prolific out-group. The implication that the out-group is more sexually prolific than them speaks to an emasculation of the white race that is being sexually out-performed by men of other, implicitly lesser, races. The response to this is to have more children, to prove the virility of their race.

The Isla Vista attacker, too, shows his masculinity through his violent acts of war. "Finally, at long last, I can show the world my true worth" he writes, showing how after spending his whole life being emasculated (as he understands it) by women who slept with others instead of him, he is able to prove his masculinity by enacting violence upon those who have wronged him. For the Isla Vista attacker, these are the women who would not sleep with him, and the men with whom they were sleeping. The Isla Vista attacker shows us with this quote that he believes by enacting his "Day of Retribution" he will

prove himself to the world. The Isla Vista attacker frequently refers to himself as a "supreme" or "beautiful" "gentleman" throughout his manifesto, and he believes he will prove this about himself to the world through his attack. In a response to the emasculation he has felt from being rejected by women, he attempts to claim his masculinity through his violent retribution where he proves himself by exerting physical violence on others, despite his inability to have sexual relations with women.

The Unabomber and the LAPD attacker express feelings of emasculation in their manifestos which they overcome through their attacks. The Unabomber believes that the modern man has lost his freedom: "[p]rimitive man, threatened by a fierce animal or by hunger, can fight in self-defence or travel in search of food." In modern times, all these survival activities are mediated and restricted by the government and corporations. The Unabomber's feelings of emasculation are exposed as he laments not being a self-sufficient man; the government is an emasculating force as it takes man's means of self-sufficiency from him and makes him dependent on means that are regulated by the state to sustain himself. The linking of the LAPD shootings and masculinity comes from the words of the LAPD attacker himself. The LAPD attacker perpetrated his attack in response to what he interpreted as an affront to his masculinity when he was not believed by his superiors, and later in court, about a workplace incident. The LAPD attacker believed that this act of not believing him constituted an attack on his name, and therefore himself as a man, as "[a] man is nothing without his name." He writes, "[t]hat's what this is all about, my names." For him, the act of discrediting his name constitutes a threat to his manhood and is therefore responded to with an act of violence against the LAPD to clear his name and thus reclaim his status as a man.

The Christchurch and Buffalo attackers frame war as a man's duty and obligation. This quote from the Christchurch attacker comes from the section "The radicalisation of Western men", and appears as a near exact copy and paste in the Buffalo attacker's manifesto:

> The radicalization of young Western men is not just unavoidable, but inevitable. It should come as no shock that European men, in every nation, and on every continent are turning to radical notions and methods to combat the social and moral decay of their nations and the continued ethnic replacement of their people.

The Christchurch attacker views the defence of the white race as a man's job and is invoking ideas of paternalistic violence to explain men's actions. The white nation becomes an extension of the white people under attack from the Other; it is the duty of the white man to defend them. It speaks to a paternal nationalism, "their nations", "their people". The man, the father, the soldier; it is his job to come to his people's defence.

The men in the dataset place their action in a war narrative in a way that enables them to perform masculinity closer to hegemonic ideals in society. Throughout the dataset, mainstream ideas of masculinity are embedded in far-right narratives: the man as protector (of the race and nation), as physically strong, as capable of violence, as responsible for the wellbeing of his family. Constantly the male attackers use these violent conspiratorial narratives as means of regaining masculinity against emasculating threats from the Other. The men in the dataset use the masculine framing of war to affirm, prove and assert their masculinity towards hegemonic norms. Higher birth rates of the outgroup is an emasculating phenomenon because it shows the male Other to be more sexually prolific than the white man. Women not having sex with the attacker is emasculating as sexual relations with

a woman are an inherent part of hegemonic masculinity in the West. A war is constructed against these emasculating forces as this is a way for the men to act out their masculinity in a way that conforms to hegemonic ideals in society, but does not require any real action to be taken by another. In their imagined war narrative, the men can become soldiers whose actions are meaningful for their perceived ingroup and the furtherance of their ideology, thus enabling them to become men in the way society values.

Constructions of men and children in western society

Seventeen of the attackers in this study were white, one was Black, and one was mixed heritage. The attackers were based in the US, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, but despite being geographically dispersed, there were no significant differences in their understandings of the common themes of fighting a war against an outgroup and having children as a means of fighting this war. Ware (2020) found in his analysis of six manifestos that white supremacists internationally believe themselves to be culturally European and to be fighting to defend European culture even when they themselves are based in New Zealand, Australia, or the US. These commonalities speak to an international construction of grievances shared by white supremacists in the West that have embedded in them Western norms about masculinity. Not only were the men geographically dispersed, they were also varied in their motivating ideology. Many were white supremacists, but some were motivated by anti-abortion ideology, others by a far-right environmentalism, and others by incel beliefs. The commonality of the use of children, the construction of a war narrative, and the sidelining of women reflect mainstream norms around masculinity, oppression of children, and sexism which are seen across borders in far-right Western discourse.

This study was a gendered one and so did not look to analyse the racial components of the grievances and discourse. However, the majority of these attackers were white and their whiteness is inherent to understanding their grievances as white supremacists. Not all the men in this study were motivated by white supremacism, but those who were made appeals to white victimisation and self-defence that can be understood through the lens of white thymos (Ganesh 2020). The rage, anger, and indignation felt by the white supremacists at supposed white victimisation as the result of migration and higher birth rates of people of colour was a mobilising factor for them, and something they appealed to when writing their manifestos hoping to influence others. This white thymos is entangled with their masculinity which adds another stressor to their rage, anger, and indignation as they experience these grievances as double threats: first to their white race, and second to their duty as white men to protect it.

There is extensive scholarship on the links between masculinity and violence, including violence as a means of proving one's masculinity (O'Malley and Helm 2022; Scaptura and Boyle 2019; Segalewitz 2020), violence being a gendered response by men to their masculinity being threatened (Kalish and Kimmel 2010; Pyke 1996; Vandello et al. 2008), and violence being one way, amongst others, for marginalised men to express frustration at mainstream society (Miller-Idriss 2017). The broader literature on hegemonic masculinity has found that men can and do respond to threats and affronts to their masculinity with violence (Ging 2017; Kalish and Kimmel 2010; M. S. Kimmel and Mahler 2003; O'Malley and Helm 2022; Pyke 1996). Earlier

research into school shootings argued that boys who committed school shootings did so in response to emasculating bullying from their peers and that these acts were facilitated by norms about hegemonic masculinity that approve of violence as a means of reclaiming or reasserting masculinity that has been challenged or lost (M. S. Kimmel and Mahler 2003). Ideologies of masculine supremacy, therefore, bear some responsibility for school shootings where the attackers were responding to emasculating bullying and school cultures with violence, which is normalised as an appropriate response for men to take when their masculinity is challenged (Tonso 2009). In this way, male school shooters are "overconformists" to norms on masculinity that see violence as a legitimate response to emasculation (M. S. Kimmel and Mahler 2003, 1440).

A key narrative in nearly every manifesto was that of warfare. This enables the attackers to argue that their attack was self-defence against an aggressive Other which is an accepted justification for violence in the West (Marcks and Pawelz 2020). The performance of hegemonic masculinity requires the potential to enact violence, but this violence should only be fulfilled in circumstances where it is socially legitimised (Witt 2020). This self-defence framing allows the attackers to argue that their violence is socially legitimised, enabling them to use violence to reassert or claim their masculinity. The war that the attackers believe themselves to be engaged in is not real, and because it is not real, those who invent it are able to construct it in such a way that they can be active and autonomous combatants within it. They identify what actions and events constitute enemy attacks, and they decide which "reactions" that they can take would be meaningful. This construction allows them to be active agents in the war. It facilitates the performance of their masculinity in a way that is accepted and valorised in mainstream society: by being a soldier. Likewise, children were mentioned in every manifesto bar one (that of the Oklahoma City bomber). In attacker manifestos, the child became an object, an idea. Children were not seen as real beings, but rather constructed to fit into the attacker's narrative to justify or explain part of their grievances. The child becomes direct or indirect motivation for action in the narratives, a site of struggle for the autonomy of adult actors, something to fight for or instead of. "The child" is an emotive signifier which allows it to be used by the far-right as a mobiliser. They are attempting to give "The child" an inherently white supremacist meaning which will encourage others to act for white supremacist gains around this signifier.

The child has always been a motivating signifier in far-right and fascist discourse. The "14 words" (*We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children*) use "the child" to drive people to action and propagandise their cause to others. The "14 words" may have originated from a statement by Hitler in Mein Kampf "What we must fight for is to safeguard the existence and reproduction of our race and our people" (Balleck 2018, 123), showing a very long history of the significance of "the child". In Nazi Germany, women were awarded the Cross of the German Mother after they had borne four or more children (Wilicki 2019). Children are also an important part of right-wing Christian discourse, in the less extreme form, with the Quiverfull movement encouraging adherents to have as many children as possible (Harrison and Rowley 2011). The Quiverfull movement takes its name from Psalm 127:3–5 which refers to children as arrows in a quiver and encourages Christians to have as many of them as possible so that their "quiver is full" (Psalm 127:5), which turns children symbolically into weapons in a holy war. The Quiverfull movement believes

children to be the front line of combatants in the culture wars and that women's job in the Evangelical Christian right is to birth as many of them as possible (Du Mez 2021). While in the 1990s, this war was fought against liberals in the US through entering establishment politics to promote Christian right ideals, when the Iraq war broke out the Quiverfull movement said that children would be physical combatants in the war against Islam (Du Mez 2021). This use of children as weapons continues to permeate right wing to far-right and fascist thought.

The men in the dataset use the masculine framing of war to affirm, prove and assert their masculinity against emasculating forces. Higher birth rates of the outgroup is an emasculating phenomenon because it shows the male Other to be more sexually prolific than the white man. Women not having sex with the attacker is emasculating as sexual relations with a woman are an inherent part of hegemonic masculinity in the West. A war is constructed against these emasculating forces as this is a way for the attackers to act out their masculinity in a way that conforms to hegemonic ideals in society. In their imagined war, the men can become soldiers whose actions are meaningful for their perceived in-group and the furtherance of their ideology, thus enabling them to become men in the way society values. Through the symbolism of the child and the framing of war, they were able to reassert their masculinity, in a hegemonic way, against the forces that they perceived to be emasculating. By combining the ideas of war and children, by turning children into weapons in the war of "birthrates", the men are able to discursively construct their masculinity in the shape of the two most dominant masculine archetypes in Western society: that of the father and soldier.

Conclusion

This paper is the first step in filling the gap in gender analysis of a body of far-right attacker manifestos. I have argued that the attackers in this dataset have used mainstream norms around masculinity to create themselves in line with ideal versions of masculinity that come from mainstream discourse - the man as physically strong, combat capable, and sexually prolific. This project has systematically reviewed 19 manifestos for gendered themes and found presentations of masculinity that are in line with mainstream constructions of masculinity in all of them. While this manuscript was in preparation, the UK experienced an attack that was at least partly motivated by incel ideology (Crawford and Keen 2021). A year later, in 2022, another far-right attack was committed, this time accompanied by a manifesto, which this paper was revised to include. The Buffalo shooter's manifesto was the first to mention trans people as a grievance. This is a qualitative expansion of the far-right grievances that can be associated with gender, and is undoubtedly in relation with mainstream rhetoric around trans people (Chapple 2020; Gill-Peterson 2021). The threat from the far-right is growing, qualitatively and quantitatively. Far-right violence does not happen in a vacuum; the attackers in this dataset did not start with beliefs at the fringe of the political spectrum. Mainstream norms and attitudes towards women, LGBT+ people, people of colour, children, violence, etc., all contribute towards a rhetorical climate where far-right beliefs can take hold. Further research is needed on how extreme right discourse interacts with, borrows from, and relates to mainstream attitudes, norms and values within society in order to counter this growing threat.

Note

1. Both of these attackers discuss their heritage in their manifestos. The LAPD shooter wrote of being "the only black [*sic*] kid in each of [his] elementary school classes" and the Isla Vista shooter, who had a white father and a Chinese mother, called himself "half-Asian" or "Eurasian" because of this.
2. While these conspiracy theories are often antisemitic, the theme of antisemitism was reserved for explicit antisemitism to keep the themes internally consistent and distinctive from each other.

Notes on contributor

Ninian Frenguelli is an ESRC funded PhD candidate at Swansea University. His PhD is in gender and the online far right, studying the different attitudes towards gender and gendered issues that are expressed by far right actors on their websites.

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Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author, N. F. The data are not publicly available due to the ethics and legality of hosting terrorist content online.

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