

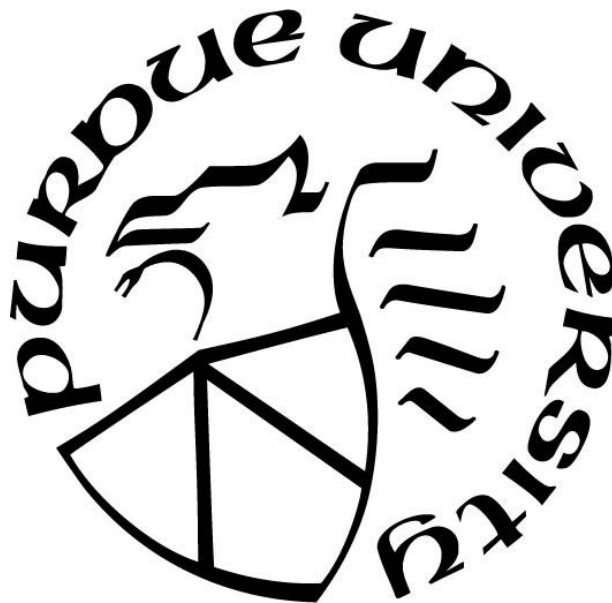
**ORGANIZING AND IDENTIFICATION WITHIN /R/THEREDPILL: THE  
COMMUNICATIVE CONSTITUTION OF ORGANIZATIONAL  
IDENTITY ONLINE**

by  
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**A Dissertation**

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*To the young men that I've worked with throughout my career—you gave this project purpose,  
importance, and meaning.*

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## ABSTRACT

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Title: Organizing and Identification within /r/TheRedPill: The Communicative Constitution of Organizational Identity Online.

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Online gendered collectivities like the Manosphere (an online collection of blogs, forums, and chat spaces devoted to shedding light on perceived social misandry) have provided opportune spaces for regressive forms of gendered organizing to occur. These spaces offer individuals an online network of safe spaces dedicated to antifeminism, misogyny, and pick-up artistry. While Manosphere networks have gained attention with their connections to the emerging Alt-Right activism online, these spaces have been legitimized in and throughout specific social networking platforms. For instance, sites like Reddit (dubbed the ‘Internet Culture Laboratory’) have become known as a hotbed of misogynist behaviors fostered and shared on comment threads and its subcommunities (known as subreddits).

Whereas previous scholarship pertaining to the Manosphere and The Red Pill have described the larger technocultural spaces that contribute to an increasingly toxic online world, less studied is how these organizations are organized—particularly with a focus on gendered organizing. SubReddits may adopt and take organizational forms wherein organizing occurs primarily through communicative engagement between users in the spaces (e.g., sharing posts, commenting on posts, and supporting some ideas over others through Reddit’s ‘upvote’ currency system). Over time, spaces like The Red Pill are networked, enacted, and organized. With an aim of understanding how organizational identity is organized and enacted on The Red Pill’s subreddit, this study analyzed the Top 100 posts of all time (over 35,000 comments and roughly 6,000 pages of text data) from The Red Pill to understand how conversations and content enacted a masculine organizational identity.

Using a multi-level analysis, this dissertation examines members’ text-based engagement, the social network, and types of roles influencers adopt to construct an organizational identity for r/TheRedPill. Using the comment threads from the Top 100 posts of all time, text mining and semantic networks were generated to understand how members of r/TheRedPill construct

meanings and concepts focused on the organizational identity of the space. Second, using social network analyses, this dissertation illustrated the networks of influence of central users within r/TheRedPill. With a goal of understanding the roles that central users adopted, the dissertation adopted an online observation of the space to create a typology of leadership roles within r/TheRedPill. The findings uncovered three distinct contradictory themes focused on masculinity, sexual activity, and backlash that were central to organizing in The Red Pill. In addition to these three themes, the social network analysis and observation revealed distinct roles that influencers adopted to promote the organizational identity of r/TheRedPill.

Theoretically, the dissertation contributes to the Communicative Constitution of Organizing online by showcasing how the interconnections between conversations around gender, sexual activity, and backlash ‘scale up’ to construct a gendered organizational identity. Methodologically, this dissertation utilizes multiple levels of analysis to investigate online organizational activity. Pragmatically, these findings help provide a rich portrait of alternative forms of gendered organizing that occurs online. Future directions include examining the broader Red Pill network on Reddit, as well as examining contrastive spaces (e.g., r/TheBluePill or r/ThePurplePill) to investigate how members’ discursive engagement organizes and constitutes organizational activity as a response to r/TheRedPill.

## PROLOGUE

*“You take the blue pill—the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill...and I show you how deep the rabbit-hole goes.”*

(Morpheus to Neo in *The Matrix*<sup>1</sup>)

I first saw *The Matrix* (Wachowski, Wachowski, Reeves, Fishburne, L., & Moss, 1999) during the fall of 1999 when my parents bought the VHS tape from the local Blockbuster Video. As a fan of science fiction and action movies, the movie was a cinematic feat, and became one of the movies during my teenage years that I often rewatched as it continued to hold up to the test of time. Its graphics, the action sequences, and the overall story of the movie—a man on a quest to understand humanity—were continual points of conversations with my high school buddies. In short, I loved *The Matrix*, and the series’ sequels and video games were highlights of my teenage years<sup>2</sup>. How could I have known that *The Matrix* would show up again in my research?

Early stages of the dissertation project were interested in understanding how and why online harassment occurred. As I began to map out potential topics pertaining to online harassment, I was drawn to the work of Karla Mantilla’s (2015) *Gendertrolling* and Whitney

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<sup>1</sup> *The Matrix* is a 1999 science fiction film focused on the adventures of computer hacker, Neo. After meeting Morpheus, an infamous hacker from the deep web that is considered a terrorist by the government, Neo begins to understand that the world he has been living is a carefully crafted, dystopian computer program. In reality, humans are slaves to machines. Thus, Morpheus reveals to Neo this truth, and recruits him to help with the fight to set humanity free from enslavement.

<sup>2</sup> *New York Magazine* film critic, Mark Harris, has credited *The Matrix* with revolutionizing how individuals talk, think, and question truth and institutions in 2019. He argues that *The Matrix*’s “loudest manifestations are also its most malignant: The clown-in-hell mad-prophet fulminations of Alex Jones’s InfoWars, Pizzagate, QAnon, and the anti-Semitic mutterings about ‘lizard people’ of which Alice Walker is so enamored all retail, for the most morally depraved reasons, the idea that ‘reality’ is just a pane of glass concealing the truth and that the only way to reach that is to pick up a rock and throw it.” (para. 10).

Phillips' (2015) *This is Why We Can't Have Nice*. Both continually led me down a scholarly rabbit hole trying to figure out how and why these forms of communicative practices occurred. As Mantilla (2015) and others described, often a focus of online harassment is on the targets, but there was limited scholarship on spaces and men who carried out these forms of harassment. During the Fall of 2015 and Spring of 2016, I continued to brainstorm and immerse myself within literature and news articles on online harassment. My research continued into the early Fall of 2016, with the United States engaged in a heated and contentious Presidential election.

Six weeks before the election, I presented my ideas for this dissertation project at the annual Organization for the Study of Communication, Language and Gender conference in the suburbs of Chicago, IL. During the discussion, I shared my ideas for investigating the Reddit space, r/MensRights, as it was a major hub for men's rights (Massanari, 2015), and had been anecdotally noted as a space that inspired online harassment (Marcotte, 2017). I also shared some of my professional and volunteer work with college men in order to share why this topic is important to me. As I talked, I noticed an audience participant continually shift in her chair. When all the panelists had discussed their various research projects, the discussion panel chair turned to the audience, "Now we'd like to open up the session for audience questions. Are there any?"

Immediately the woman's hand shot up. "I have a question and a recommendation for you, Sean."

"Yes—great!" I replied.

"Have you considered looking at The Red Pill on Reddit. They are engaged, they use the men's rights language, but they are actively recruiting and becoming increasingly popular on college campuses."

Stunned, I looked at her, “You mean, ‘the red pill’ from *The Matrix*?” I leaned into the table as my interest and knowledge in *The Matrix* was reawakened.

She nodded her head, and continued, “Yes. They have adopted the term and phrase because they believe that they have knowledge and power in their world view. More troubling, they are gaining popularity because of how they talk about sex and masculinity.”

“Wow. I’m not shocked that these types of spaces have emerged, but I’d love to talk more with you after the panel” I stated thankfully. After the panel, the woman and I talked briefly about her knowledge of the group, their aims, how active they were, and I thanked her the comment and recommendation.

How could I have predicted that the key to Neo’s (the main protagonist of *The Matrix*) success and awakening (the red pill of truth) would become the source of and inspiration for my eventual dissertation and research topic? Little did I know how deep down that rabbit hole would take me...



## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

According to a 2014 Pew Study, “73% of adult internet users have seen someone be harassed in some way online and 40% have personally experienced it” (Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart, & Madden, 2014, para. 1). The same study describes stark differences related to gender. Whereas men are more likely to experience harassment, women are more likely to experience sustained and sexually explicit harassment (Duggan et al., 2014; Mantilla, 2015). Online user-generated networking sites like Reddit™ and 4/Chan™ “have achieved notoriety for [their] misogynist culture, with threads where rapists have recounted their exploits and photos of underage girls” (Taylor, 2014, para. 30). The internet reproduces and amplifies many social problems (boyd, 2010) and cultivates the sharing of problematic content that fosters challenging behaviors (Jane, 2014; Mantilla, 2015).

With the rise of controversies like the exposure of women’s treatment in the video game industry (i.e., #GamerGate) and normalization of trolling behaviors online (Bartlett, 2014; Mantilla, 2015; Phillips, 2015), scholars and practitioners began to examine how hegemonic masculinity<sup>3</sup> presents itself in online spaces as a response to perceived misandry in society. Trolling is the deliberate use of inflammatory messages to incite an argumentative response; however, its cousin, “gendertrolling” is the specific use of threats and messages that are targeted at women through rape threats or jokes because of challenges to male-dominated spaces (Bartlett, 2014; Mantilla, 2015; Phillips, 2015). Although these behaviors in the digital context are relatively new, almost every era of feminist movements has seen a backlash from men who

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<sup>3</sup> Hegemonic masculinity refers to “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (Connell, 2005, p. 77).

feel threatened by the loss of their status in society (Faludi, 1991). With social moves toward equality, there are backlashes toward marginalized identities (e.g., women, people of color, that occur through sexist, racist, and homophobic messages shared in online spaces (Bartlett, 2014; Faludi, 1991; Ferber, 2000).

Backlashes are simultaneously occurring online, and the purveyors of this behavior are often white men connecting within the Alt-Right online subculture (Ging, 2017; Phillips, 2015). The Alt-Right is a neoconservative political subculture that emerged through sites like Reddit and became legitimized through conservative news outlets like Breitbart (Landsbaum, 2017). The Alt-Right serves as the overarching online, irreverent, conservative subculture through which movements such as Paleoconservatism (a similar ideology to libertarianism), White Nationalism, Identitarianism (an American adaptation of European nationalist movements), and the Manosphere exist (Anglin, 2016). The Manosphere is a collection of blogs, sites, communities, and forums focused on discussions of anger and frustration toward feminists and women.

The Manosphere originated and became embedded within the larger, socio-political movement of the Alt-Right in 2012 (Anglin, 2016). Because of the increasing prevalence of hate groups and hate messages online, it is important to examine the organizations that cultivate and share these messages. One such organization, The Red Pill, operates within the umbrella of the Manosphere collectivity. Specifically, this dissertation examines the subreddit community, /r/TheRedPill (TRP), and seeks to understand how organizational identification and the collective, organizational identity are communicatively constituted online. Whereas organizational identity defines organizational collectivities; organizational identification occurs as individuals cultivate oneness, belonging, and affiliation to their larger organization (He &

Brown, 2013). TRP is a men's rights organization on Reddit that blends elements of pick-up artistry and a supportive space to discuss the effects of misandry on the men. While scholars like Mantilla (2015) have examined the effect of the specific gender-focused backlashes, this dissertation develops an understanding of organizational processes pertaining to organizational identity in online organizations like TRP. Moreover, this exploration is a first step in crafting a richer portrait of the (presumably white, male) users that are members of these online organizations.

Where scholarship has explored sociological reasons for engagement in men's rights activist organizations (e.g., Ging, 2017; Kimmel, 1987; 2013; Marwick & Lewis, 2017a, 2017b), communication scholarship has yet to fully study these online spaces through an organizational communication context. More specifically, scholarship investigates spaces like TRP through cultural lenses (Masanari, 2015; 2017), through discursive frames pertaining to misandry (Marwick & Caplan, 2018), or strategies used within social media to recruit members (Hodapp, 2017); however, these scholarly inquiries do not expressly acknowledge men's rights activist organizations as that—namely, as an *organization*. Marwick and Lewis (2017b) describe men's rights sites like TRP as networked and agile in that their organizational presence and connections can often be rapid and instable (p. 9); however, given the relative stability of TRP since 2013, these types of organizational forms online have yet to be investigated as an extension of organizing/organization within the field of organizational communication. Furthermore, if we are to consider TRP as an organization, we can then begin to more deeply understand the phenomena that others have studied as a form of organizational activity. This movement toward understanding organizing enactments is critical to our understanding of how contra-organizing occurs within the politically-charged and increasingly polarized world (both on and offline).

Miller (2014) provides an apt definition of *organization* that characterizes TRP as an organization. Namely organizations must have a social collectivity, individual and organizational goals, coordination of activities, an organizational structure, and be embedded within a network of organizations. Members of r/TheRedPill use Reddit as their central hub for organizing, sharing experiences, providing advice, and offering tools for members' strategic offline tasks (i.e., engaging in casual sex). Additionally, organizational processes like identification can occur within these online organizations; however, scholarship has yet to fully extend this process within an online setting of a hate organizations. In considering TRP as an organization, there are potential connections that deepen our understanding of how political echo chambers, over time, cultivate and sustain online harassment via the Communicative Constitution of Organization. In sum, it is becoming increasingly important to first understand *what* membership looks like in online spaces, and second *how* the members interact with one another to organize organizational identities. These research questions guide the dissertation project, and help situate the methodological approaches discussed next.

Using a mixed methodological approach, the text and user data from the comment sections of TRP was analyzed using (a) text mining and semantic network analysis, and (b) social network analysis (SNA). Reddit offers rich data that can be collected to uncover structural data (semantic content and user structures) to illustrate TRP organizational processes. The strategic use of words and phrases helps craft and constitute meanings; semantic networks highlight topics, concepts, and organizational ideas that are central within TRP (Lambert, 2017). Text signifies organizational behavior, why membership occurs, and how users interact (Cooren, 2004; Doerfel, 1998). Reddit is inherently a text-based platform, but is driven by user-generated engagement and interactions within discussion threads.

Therefore, a social network can be constructed to investigate how members of TRP engage with one another within the TRP discussion posts. The social network analysis explores engagement patterns within TRP to uncover users who are most engaged within the subreddit space. The social network is connected to the text data to map the connections between concepts and users. In so doing, typologies are created to discover characteristics of users within TRP. More specifically, a social network offers two key insights: (1) the social structure of TRP, and (2) how individuals' identity and identification converge for organizing masculinity in online spaces. These insights are bolstered using social network analysis. To more deeply contextualize identity and identification processes of individuals within TRP, it is important to understand the role of TRP within the Manosphere. Therefore, the rest of this chapter addresses TRP's position and inclusion within the Manosphere.

### **The Manosphere and The Red Pill**

The Manosphere represents a collective group of blogs, communities, sites and spaces that cultivate and foster anti-feminist rhetoric and behaviors (Ging, 2017). The first known use of "The Manosphere" was in November 2009 in a self-titled blog that lasted for nearly two months; however, the ideas went viral into a variety of other web spaces ("Manosphere | Know Your Meme," 2017). These spaces, in particular, are ripe with men's rights activists (MRAs) discussing and connecting with one another. These MRAs lament the various ways in which they perceive a loss of status within society on the basis of gender; the social support created in these groups operates as an organizing factor for these spaces. The Manosphere cultivates and curates a diverse network of men's rights activists, white supremacists, trolls, and anti-Semites (Ging, 2017).

Within the Manosphere, there is a focus on how feminism and feminists (both women *and* men) have caused problems within society and denigrated the status of (presumably white) men within society. Whereas the collectivities of aggrieved individuals may have different goals, the Manosphere creates a safe space for these men to come together in virtual spaces:

They sit alone...They meet online, in chat rooms and on websites, whether promoting antifeminist men's rights or the re-Aryanization of America. They troll cyberspace, the anti-PC police, ready to attack any blogger, columnist, or quasi liberal who dares to say something with which they disagree. (Kimmel, 2013, p. 36)

Moreover, the behavioral patterns extend to online trolling and harassment and offline stalking (Mantilla, 2015). Driven by their belief that they have taken the "Red Pill," which is a reference to the 1999 science fiction movie, *The Matrix*, members of the Manosphere view the social world as a series of dichotomies in which "the blue-pill thinkers are those who uncritically accept the idea that society discriminates against women. 'Red Pillers', by contrast, recognize that it is men who are worse-off" ("Balls to all that," 2016). In the movie, the main character, Neo, takes a red pill, which reveals the true nature of society. Red pilling, as an act, is rooted in a form of conservative critical consciousness about the status of the world. Marwick and Lewis (2017a) describe the members' desire to "convert people--especially young men--to their way of thinking...To men's rights activists, being red-pilled means throwing off the yoke of popular feminism and recognizing that men, not women, are the oppressed group" (para. 7). Red Pilling originated within its eponymous community, TRP. This space within the Manosphere collectively defends rape culture, criticizes the perceived misandry created by feminists and 'social justice warriors,' and is generally antifeminist. Antifeminism within the Manosphere refers to the specific worldview that rejects the idea of male supremacy and privilege; moreover,

proponents of antifeminism, in this regard, contend that female supremacy exists within society. To the members of the Manosphere and The Red Pill, their worldview is shaped by (what they perceive) is a female-centric world.

### **The Red Pill: A Primer on Angry, White Men <sup>4</sup>**

/r/TheRedPill (TRP) is a unique space within the Manosphere as the rhetoric, terminology, and behaviors cultivated in that specific space are often prevalent throughout the Manosphere (Ging, 2017; Marwick & Lewis, 2017a, 2017b). Founded in 2012 by Reddit user, pk\_atheist (also known as former New Hampshire Republican lawmaker, Robert Fisher<sup>1</sup>), TRP's original focus was an online space devoted to sexual activity (Bacarisse, 2017; Lewis, 2017; Red Pill Handbook, n.d.). Within the official, "Red Pill Handbook," TRP, pk\_atheist, argues that TRP, as an organization, is quick to blame Feminism and feminists for social problems; however, the user describes Feminism as a sexual strategy employed by women for their own happiness:

Feminism is a sexual strategy. It puts women into the best position they can find, to select mates, to determine when they want to switch mates, to locate the best DNA possible, and to garner the most resources they can individually achieve. The Red Pill is men's sexual strategy. Reality is happening, and we need to make sure that we adjust our strategy accordingly (p. 7).

Despite being "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression," members of TRP contend that feminism is inherently a worldview that promotes inequality and gives women sexual power over men (hooks, 2001, p. viii). To the TRP, feminism offers women personal choices related to their own sexual politics and activities. Because members of TRP see a loss of their own sexual power and prowess, the establishment of The Red Pill serves as the counterpart

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<sup>4</sup> Fisher resigned from the New Hampshire House of Representatives in 2017 because of public outcry for his involvement within r/TheRedPill.

to Feminism. Sex, in this vein, is strategically linked to power, and The Red Pill, as a movement seeks to subvert the influence of feminism within society. Despite these claims to not be overtly antifeminist, TRP contends that men have been oppressed within society due in part to Jewish, feminist control (Anglin, 2016). Moreover, the perceived dominance of feminists throughout society has created a prevailing feeling of denial and challenges to men's sexual prowess, which are rooted in traditionalist views of manhood and masculinity (Ferber, 2000). For instance, men should be masculine (and not feminine), stoic, emotionless, athletic, and strong. These traditionalist views are also are manifestations and performances of hegemonic masculinity, and become an unattainable, problematic, and idealized form of manhood:

What we call masculinity is often a hedge against being revealed as a fraud, an exaggerated set of activities that keep others from seeing through us, and a frenzied effort to keep at bay those fears within ourselves...the reigning definition of masculinity is a defensive effort to prevent being emasculated. (Kimmel, 1994, p. 103)

Although these values are embedded within TRP, members consider themselves to be apolitical, and fighting against their perceived social gynocentrality (Landsbaum, 2016).

While TRP's Reddit space still describes itself as a group that discusses "sexual strategy in a culture increasingly lacking a positive identity for men" (Red Pill Handbook, n.d), the group's goals have evolved to include a distinct focus on overtly political issues that discriminate against men (Lewis, 2017). Within the space, members frequently engage in conversation about the "dark truths" of reality including:

feminism is toxic, sexism is fake, men have it harder than women, and everything the media teaches about relationships is a lie. In reality (the argument goes) women don't want soft-centered men/chocolates; they want to be dominated, controlled, and manipulated. The most extreme Red Pillers even believe that women want to be raped. (Tait, 2017, para. 7)

Anecdotally, though, some journalists have begun to comment that sites like TRP offer a gateway into larger white supremacist networks online (Marcotte, 2017). This claim seems



evident in the growth in membership of TRP—particularly as the new focus has invited members of the Alt-Right into its ranks. In an interview with men’s rights critic and creator of the website *We Hunted the Mammoth*, David Futrelle describes the transition in the following way: “At some point they started talking about actual pickup-artist stuff a lot less and started throwing in right-wing, racist politics.” (Landsbaum, 2017, para. 7)

Conversations regarding defense of campus rape culture, ridicule of safe spaces<sup>5</sup> and “liberal snowflakes”, and perceived attacks on free speech on college campuses are increasingly a mainstay of organizational activity within TRP (Fox, 2017; Lewis, 2017). Not surprisingly, this increased focus on college activity also mirrors a growing social focus on the status of men within U.S. society. Rosin’s (2010) article in *The Atlantic* traces the social, political, and economic rising of women as a detriment to men. She writes:

Since the 1980s, as women have flooded colleges, male enrollment has grown far more slowly. And the disparities start before college. Throughout the ’90s, various authors and researchers agonized over why boys seemed to be failing at every level of education, from elementary school on up...But again, it’s not all that clear that boys have become more dysfunctional—or have changed in any way. What’s clear is that schools, like the economy, now value the self-control, focus, and verbal aptitude that seem to come more easily to young girls. (Rosin, 2010, para. 50)

With a prevailing feeling of being left behind by society, these men have searched for outlets to cope. The structural and social changes have created feelings of displacement for white men, and, as a result, the men are joining social movements that “blame the losses of white men on women and minorities” (Ferber, 2000, p. 32). Because of these downturns, social support groups for men have become increasingly popular (Ferber, 2000; Kimmel, 2013; Rosin, 2010). Mapping

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<sup>5</sup> In the United States, the term ‘safe space’ has been connected to the women’s movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and referred to spaces that offered “a certain license to speak and act freely, form collective strength, and generate strategies for resistance...a means rather than an end and not only a physical space but also a space created by the coming together of women searching for community” (Kenney, 2001, p. 24); however, current manifestations and applications of the term has been met with ire and criticism. Detractors argue that “safe spaces” limit freedom of speech and are used by college educators to keep students from encountering challenging topics and content (Shulevitz, 2015).

this historical transition, TRP offers its members a unique opportunity: finding ways to work around societal expectations by reasserting traditionalist views on gender and relationships while also engaging other likeminded men. As a member organization within the Manosphere, TRP exists as a space that converges larger political and cultural ideologies within the United States in online settings.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

This dissertation explores the ways in which men's rights organizations organize and constitute both organizing in online spaces and organizational identities within TRP. In Chapter two, I provide an overview of literature related to online communities, discussing the importance of social support in informal online spaces. Specifically, I discuss trends in scholarship related to hate groups' formation and recruitment and trolling within online spaces. Within this conversation, I weave in the historical backdrop of online communities. Shifting the focus from online hate groups to gendered structures, I provide an overview of organizing related to gendered structures and institutions<sup>6</sup>, and discuss literature related to gender communication as a form of discourse that engages or invites members to join.

From there, I define the Communicative Constitution of Organization (CCO) and identification literature that helps to provide a theoretical lens within organizational communication to situate this dissertation. I discuss both the foundations of the Montréal's School's Communicative Constitution of Organization (CCO) and identification literature as they create an extension of and application toward online contexts. The Montréal School's approach to organizational processes examines the interactions between text (the specific content

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<sup>6</sup> Institutions refer to social constructs that are "embedded in all the social processes of everyday life and social organizations" (Risman, 2004, p. 430).

of communication and its potential meanings) and conversation (the actual act of communication). These two interactions are the basis for organizations not just as a site of communication but also collectively engaged in the creation of organizational activities and processes. Organizational processes like identification can be explored within this perspective as a specific form of text within organizations. In other words, the Montréal School's adoption of text and conversation are manifest within online spaces that are exclusively text-based and can communicatively constitute organization over time; therefore, organizational processes like identification and organizational identities are constructed vis-à-vis text-based engagement within online spaces.

Chapter three discusses the multi-level methodological approach that is utilized to investigate the online organization, TRP. It begins with a description of the subreddit, /r/TheRedPill, and provides an overview of the data collection process. Next, it describes the data analysis strategies that comprise multiple levels of analysis within /r/TheRedPill. One level of analysis looks at the semantic level by researching the strategic use of words and phrases within the community that enact organizational identity and identification. The next level of analysis examines structural levels by investigating the social network of the group to find central users within the network. These central users then become the basis for creation of user typologies within /r/TheRedPill.

Chapter four shares results from semantic network analyses and showcases the discursive construction of the TRP organizational identity (RQ1). It describes the results from social network analyses that identified central users and leaders within TRP (RQ2). Then, the chapter situates these users' roles and influence in TRP through a digital observation of the TRP organization (RQ3). These observations illuminated and created typologies of influencers within

TRP that shaped, framed, and reinforced the communicative enactment of the TRP organizational identity.

Chapter five discusses the results, and provides theoretical, methodological, and practical implications of this dissertation study. More specifically, I theorize about this dissertation's results within a broader conversation about men's rights activist organizations online. Next, I discuss the use of three identity themes that serve as a catalyst for identification and enacts the TRP organizational identity. Finally, I offer pragmatic implications and applications of this dissertation's findings and conclude with future directions of research.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Online communities are rooted in social practices that converge public and personal communication between users. Online spaces are social acts. Tönnies (1988) argues that feelings of togetherness and similar values govern communal activities: “the very existence of [community] rests in the consciousness of belonging together and the affirmation of the condition of mutual dependence (p. 69). When considering the context of understanding online communities that exist around social movements, Tönnies’ conceptualization can provide a macro-level understanding of *why* individuals engage and join online communities; however, the inherent fluidity and informality of online spaces proves challenging in exploring online community formation (Diani, 2011). The interacting feelings of togetherness and values create a hybrid space within online settings that form networked organizations. Networked organizations are “comprised of a collection of organizations along with the linkages that tie them to each other, often organized around a focal organization” (Monge & Contractor, 2003, p. 219). Using Monge and Contractor’s description, online communities, then, can be considered a form of networked organization as they are organized around exchange of information and dependency on multiple organization (and actors).

In what follows, I describe evolution of online communities, discuss the effect of online participatory cultures (Shirky, 2011) that cultivate social support and social action, and review scholarship that explores the increasing prevalence of hate and extreme political ideologies within online, socially-mediated communities. From there, I broaden the scope of inquiry to investigate gender as an organizing discourse that structures both institutions and communities. Particularly within the context of the dissertation, I link scholarship related to precarious masculinity as a potential foundation for TRP membership. Finally, I conclude by positioning the

dissertation within the larger theoretical lens of the Communicative Constitution of Organization and articulate how organizational identification processes (via textual approaches) contribute to understanding TRP as both a space for cultivating identification and engaging in organizational activity. Finally, the chapter concludes with the research questions guiding the dissertation.

### **Online Communities: Evolutions and Uses**

Humans are inherently social beings, and social media, as a form of social interaction has been around since the dawn of time (Standage, 2013); however, with the advent of computer-mediated communication technologies, individuals have become connected to one another in unprecedented ways. Starting in the late 1960s with U.S. military research networks known as the Advanced Research Projects Agency Networks (ARPANet), the Pentagon utilized computer-to-computer networks as a way for academics and scientists to share data and ideas with each other (Bartlett, 2014). Early networks were censorship-free, decentralized, and collaborative. The first virtual communities began in the 1970s and 1980s through online bulletin board systems (BBS). Virtual communities are online spaces that emerge via computer-mediated technologies that offer users an opportunity to connect and build relationships with one another (Rheingold, 1993). Early adopter Howard Rheingold (1993) detailed his experiences interacting with others within the Whole Earth ‘Lectronic Link (or WELL). The WELL operated as “a computer conferencing system that enables people around the world to carry on public conversations and exchange private electronic mail (e-mail)” (Rheingold, 1993, p. 1). Within the WELL, Rheingold and others exchanged ideas and interacted with one another about a variety of topics such as parenting, online role-playing games, and traveling.

As an active member of the emerging virtual community, Rheingold (1993) described his fascination at the various roles that he began to technologically enact:

Like others who fell into the WELL, I soon discovered that I was audience, performer, and scriptwriter, along with my companions, in an ongoing improvisation. A full-scale subculture was growing on the other side of my telephone jack, and they invited me to help create something new. (p. 2)

As Rheingold (1993) and others later described (for a review, see Fuchs, 2017), user-generated content and roles within online spaces is a key function of community organizing. User-generated content also extends toward the presentation of online selves (Palfrey & Gasser, 2009). boyd and Ellison (2008) argue, “social network sites are structured as personal (or “egocentric”) networks, with the individual at the center of their own community” (p. 219). The technological affordances<sup>7</sup> (or site-specific features embedded within the sites) enable users to interact with like-minded individuals and cultivate new forms of connection and community within online spaces. While Rheingold frequented the WELL, other sites like Usenet emerged as both a chatroom space and online community to engage with others around any number of topics. The first members of Usenet engaged in many of the same practices that exist today—namely trolling and offensive behaviors (Bartlett, 2014)

As communities grew and developed into more sophisticated technologies like chatrooms and evolving BBS into comment threads, the connectedness and ability to engage with others across the globe offered users a unique way to learn about the world around them and engage with diverse peoples. Rheingold (2000) describes online communities as a “third space” that foster connections in a way that “such places are where communities can come into being and continue to hold together. These are the unacknowledged agorae of modern life” (p. 7). Online communities are a “third space” that foster connections in a way that “such places are where communities can come into being and continue to hold together. These are the unacknowledged

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<sup>7</sup> For additional conceptualizations of affordances, see Rice, Evans, Pearce, Sivunen, Vitak, and Treem (2017) and Treem and Leonardi (2013).

agorae of modern life” (Rheingold, 2000, p. 7). The early focus on the web was countercultural, providing individuals with an opportunity to engage one another, regardless of identity or background, fostering relationships across the world (Barlett, 2014). Early adopters of online spaces considered cyberspace to be free from law, censorship, and wholly open for all to use as they pleased on BBS and sites like Usenet.

While the code for early years of the internet was first written in 1989, and the first internet web browser, Mosaic, was launched in 1993 (Rainie & Wellman, 2012). The emergence of the internet coincided with the growing popularity of personal computers in homes across the United States and abroad. Using a personal computer, early adopters were able to not only connect to others, but also perform and enact new identities in private and customizable ways. Rainie and Wellman (2012) describe the popularity of personal computers in the following way:

Before the internet, if we wanted to share some information with one person and not others, we would either tell that person face to face, call her, or send her a sealed letter. We had to monitor her communication to ensure that others would not know who we were talking with and what we were saying... Since the introduction of the internet, we can customize communication so that only the intended recipient/s get the information. (p. 66)

Put differently, the affordances of the internet enabled users to customize and veil communication in ways that are individualized and rooted in some level of anonymity. Messages and engagement in BBS and chatrooms contained a performative element. In this way, the ability to perform and screen identities in individualistic ways became an early trend within internet communities (Turkle, 2012).

While early critics of the internet saw its prevalence as contribution to many of social problems including loss of offline communities and community connections (Putnam, 2000; Turkle 2012), early scholarship on online communities focused on the digital divide between online and offline identities. Turkle (2012) proffered that virtual and offline identities were, in



fact, distinct from one another. Furthermore, Turkle asserted that identities are screened and more daring than offline identities, and, at times, wholly different from one another.

Psychological studies corroborated these claims as they examined the dissociative affect that occurs through screened activity via chatrooms (Suler, 2004). To understand why online identity performance can be more visceral, bizarre, or even offensive, especially in contrast to offline identities, Suler proposed the Online Disinhibition Effect, which has been applied in a variety of contexts to explain how trolling, sexual exploitation, and online sexual activity occurs (Bartlett, 2014).

Despite assertions of separate worlds and identities, some scholars challenge this notion and argue that the two worlds—virtual and offline—are not so separate:

Identity is not broken up into online and offline identities, or personal and social identities. Because these forms of identity exist simultaneously and are so closely linked to one another, Digital Natives almost never distinguish between the online and offline versions of themselves. (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008, p. 20)

Notions of digital identity and identification are discussed later in this chapter; however, it is important to note that evolving internet cultures continue to grapple with and challenge existing notions of identities and identity performance. The rapid expansion and integration of the internet into daily lives continues to present new challenges regarding both identity and communities.

Emerging in the late 1990s to the early 2000s, online communities began to evolve into what is now known as Web 2.0. Web 2.0 is characterized by an increasing focus on digital forms of capitalism as corporations began to see the internet as a space to profit from its users (Fuchs, 2017). Engagement in virtual communities like the WELL shifted toward more socially mediated sites and spaces—these spaces began to be seen and conceptualized as social media. With the

global explosion of social media as a daily phenomenon that is used and incorporated into everyday life, there are still questions and challenges in defining social media.

Defining the term, “social media” is not without conflict. Papacharissi (2015) argued that social media is rooted in specific contexts of time, space, and technologies; moreover, since various affordances within social media are dynamic, the contexts (and resulting definitions will change). According to McCay-Peet and Quan-Haase (2017), social media “are web-based services that allow individuals, communities, and organizations to collaborate, connect, interact, and build community by enabling them to create, co-create, modifies, share, and engage with user-generated content that is easily accessible” (p. 17). At the heart of this definition, though, exists the importance of sociality with others. Returning to Tönnies’ (1988) original conceptualization as a communal site for togetherness and likeminded individuals, social media offers a bridge for sharing and engaging collective, participatory online cultures.

In the early 2000s, Harvard student, Mark Zuckerberg launched the social media platform, Facebook™, which brought U.S. college students together across their campuses (Rainie & Wellman, 2012)<sup>8</sup>. While not the first social media site, Facebook is a powerhouse in terms of user engagement and influence with social networking sites, and within the marketplace of social media sites and applications ushered in other sites like Twitter and Reddit. As such, social media “has become an integral part of everyday life with large economic, political, and societal implications” (McCay-Peet & Quan-Haase, 2017, p. 13). Because of the explosion of social media applications and sites, Grahl (2013) created a typology of six social media

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<sup>8</sup> In April 2018, Zuckerberg appeared before the US Congress in response to Facebook’s role in selling user information to UK-based political consulting firm associated and their alleged attempts to influence the 2016 US Election in favor of then-candidate, Donald J. Trump; moreover, Zuckerberg noted that Facebook should have done more to protect users’ privacy and security (Meredith, 2018). At the time of this dissertation writing, testimony before Congress has ended but the full ramifications and penalties and/or guidelines for Facebook and users have not been sorted out yet.

applications including social networking, bookmarking sites, social news, media sharing, blogs, and forums. Sites like Reddit have gained increasing popularity from users; Reddit is currently listed as the fourth most frequented site on the internet in the United States (Reddit.com Traffic Statistics, n.d). Reddit's ability to blend Grahl's different types of social media applications into one while focusing its efforts on social news provides a unique way for users to engage in virtual community. According to Grahl (2013), Reddit is a social news site that allows

people to post various news items or links to outside articles and then allows its users to "vote" on the items. The voting is the core social aspect as the items that get the most votes are displayed the most prominently. The community decides what news items get seen by more people." (n.p.)

Reddit's blends news and social interaction to create a unique entre into understanding how virtual communities cultivate strong ties between users. With online spaces playing a central role within everyday life, the potential relational implications of a networked digital community are important to consider as they offer insights into diffusion of ideas, on and offline mobilization of action, and spaces that help provide support and are catalysts for action.

### **Online Spaces for Social Support**

Designed as sites and spaces to attract and engage with others, social media have emerged as a growing and influential form of communal organization as they communicatively enact norms, roles, social collectivities, and even become spaces for social support. Rheingold (1993) argued that the strength of the virtual community rests within the quality of relationships: "people in virtual communities do just about everything people do in real life, but we leave our bodies behind. You can't kiss anybody and nobody can punch you in the nose, but a lot can happen within those boundaries" (p. 3). The richness of relational ties creates bonds that are strong and create feelings of oneness with others in online spaces. In other words, individuals are

able to engage with others in asking for advice, helping, and providing a variety of other relational and emotional supportive behaviors.

Social support in the form of emotional connections via relationships within online spaces are a key product of the bonds fostered. Considering this new form of community organizing, research “has generally confirmed that ties maintained online are as real as offline ties, entailing mutual trust and disclosure, supporting relations of work, advice, socializing, and social support” (Gruzd & Haythornwaite, 2011, p. 168). Within online health contexts, Wright (2002) assessed online cancer support communities. In his online survey, Wright found a slight negative correlation between perceptions of life stress and perceived emotional support in cancer communities, and cancer survivors’ perceived need for interpersonal connections within online spaces as a key motivator for engagement in online communities.

The utility of the internet in providing an emotionally supportive space for individuals during trying times served as a key way in which cancer survivors connect and engage each other. Similarly, Braithwaite, Waldron, and Finn (1999) investigated computer-mediated groups for individuals with disabilities. In their content analysis of 1,472 messages, Braithwaite et al. found an overwhelming percentage of emotional and informational support messages between users. Participants in their study often validated and affirmed each other’s offline, lived experiences; moreover, the online nature of these shared messages mirror similar studies of in-person interactions. Their findings indicate that online spaces provide a necessary, educative means to manage offline activity. In sum, the impact of social support bridges the online and offline insofar as online spaces serves as an extension of offline connections for many individuals.

## Online Spaces for Social Action

These connections can also extend into social action in both online and offline through responses to social problems by cultivation and galvanization of social action and activism in communities. Highfield (2016) argues, “online, collective action involves a diverse cast of actors, platforms, tools and issues, using social media and their affordances as part of strategies of promotion, organization, resistance, subterfuge, and surveillance” (p. 106). Combining all Highfield’s described elements, social movements online take multiple forms and become networks of solidarity for various forms of collective action—including protest. For example, Tucker et al. (2016) used big data from Twitter networks to provide insights into how social media can be used to galvanize both on- and offline protests. In their chapter, the authors sought to create

a set of criteria that, taken together, augur for the possibility of an important role for social media in either the individual-level decision to participate or not participate in a protest and/or the overall trajectory of the protest movement itself. (p. 218)

In doing so, Tucker et al. (2016) explored two specific contexts—the Turkish Gezi Park protests and the Ukrainian Euromaidan protests—and uncovered three factors that are part of the relationship between social media and protests: (1) information; (2) motivation; and (3) social networks. These three pillars of their study helped provide clarity on how and why individuals engage in protests through social media. Their findings provide insights into larger online political activism and decision-making behaviors of online networks; as such, Tucker et al. provided a theoretical model of online social protests that engage both on and offline action.

While Tucker et al. (2016) adeptly described protest movements in an era of computer-mediated communication, scholarship regarding sustained social movements is nascent. Zayani (2015) detailed the strategic convergence of “digital culture, youth activism, cyber-resistance,

and political engagement” within the Tunisian revolutions of 2011-2013 (p. 7). Tunisia, as the first Arab country gain access to the Internet, presents a context through which the convergence of varied socio-technical affordances enabled Tunisian youth to rise against authoritarian leadership. In other words, online spaces—like hashtags, discussion boards, and message boards—enacted an online form of a physical club that serves to promote, organize, and cultivate various types of resistance. The specific forms of digital discourse architecture built into social media and blog sites enabled Tunisian youth to “not simply disseminate critical information about Tunisia, but also to denounce infringements of users’ rights, mobilize bloggers, express concrete demands, and give an outlet to citizen claims” (Zayani, 2015, p. 130).

These types of online organizational activities and forms of online resistance can also inadvertently create political subcultures. For instance, Cantey and Robinson (2015) examined and described typologies of identity negotiations and social commentary on Twitter through the #BlackTwitter conversational space. The Black Twitter subculture “is defined and discussed as a political, metaphorical, real, or imagined community...that reflects a microcosm of experiences aligned with many interpretations of (as well as discourses of) Black people within the larger context of society” (Cantey & Robinson, 2015, p. 219). Citing victories in bringing awareness to the murder of Trayvon Martin, discussions related to media portrayals of blackness, and even as a communal space to critique celebrity chef, Paula Deen, after she admitted to using racial slurs. Using these digital spaces to convene and mobilize “offers a collective and place for open, honest, discussion rather than a forum...supports the notion of having anonymity in this shared space as users feel free to share opinions outside the mainstream” (Cantey & Robinson, 2015, p. 223). Perceptions of anonymity are a mainstay of online cultures, and can be freeing for some

users; however, a growing trend within online cultures has begun to coopt the anonymity of the internet to engage in trolling and harassment.

### **The Dark Side of Online Communities**

Online communities and social media are not immune from many of the various problems that exist within offline society. Virtual spaces often recreate the societal “isms” such as racism, classism, and sexism that are prevalent in offline communities. Also, worth reiterating, individuals do not divorce their offline identities, values, morals, and beliefs when they “enter” online spaces. Bandura (2001) centers the role of moral agency within (dis)engagement processes—meaning how likely one is to exercise pre-existing values, and asserts, “[through] selective disengagement of moral agency, people who would otherwise behave righteously and considerately perpetrate transgressions and inhumanities in other spheres of their lives” (p. 9). While pre-existing values and attitudes do not disappear as one enters online spaces, there is dichotomy between moral restraint and incivility.

What may be considered a faux pas in face-to-face settings, may be ignored in mediated settings as the mediated contexts of internet-communication can create a disinhibition effect (Suler 2004). Suler (2004) notes, “different modalities of online communication (e.g., email, chat, video) and different environments (e.g., social, vocational, fantasy) may facilitate diverse expressions of self. Each setting allows us to see a different perspective on identity” (p 325). Given the recreation of offline identities in a variety of online contexts, online identities, then, can be different intersection of one’s self. Selfhood, in this context, lends itself to Palfrey and Gasser’s (2008) claim that online identities are extensions (or even exaggerations) of offline identities. Individual’s preexisting attitudes and beliefs become heightened in online spaces, and can create echo chambers of problematic social attitudes.

Social attitudes—specifically those related to women (or rather the status of men) in society—become important in understanding how communities become safe havens for individuals’ own prejudices and biases. At their least, these ideologies perpetuate an increasing silencing effect within online spaces and communities; however, at their worst, these attitudes encourage and normalize gendered violence against women and minorities throughout cyberspace (Mantilla, 2015). Few studies have begun to examine how online spaces are fertile grounds for the worst parts of society. Gerstenfeld, Grant, and Chiang (2003) employed content analysis to examine the web content of 157 extremist websites. Gerstenfeld et al.’s findings suggest various ways in which white supremacist groups are using the internet to recruit young members through appeals like web-based games and “kids” pages; however, a major finding of their study is that white supremacist groups operate within a larger, collective network of online white supremacist sites:

The internet allows these groups to link to one another, both electronically and logistically. Even geographically isolated groups with only a few members can become part of a collective. Not only does this facilitate the sharing of information and other resources, but it also helps forge a stronger sense of community and purpose. (p. 40)

The technological affordances created throughout online communities expedite mobilization and enact communication networks that create a larger web of community. This finding indicates the vast possibilities of web-based connections for both social movements and communities. In a similar vein, McNamee, Peterson, and Peña (2010) studied 21 online hate groups using a grounded theory approach; however, the authors used broader selection criteria than Gerstenfeld et al. by focusing on seven different categories of hate groups and 21 different websites that fit within those categories. In their study, the authors found that four categories of messages (education, participation, invocation, and indictment) worked together to “(a) reinforce hate group identity; (b) reduce external threats; and (c) recruit new members” (McNamee et al., 2010,



p. 273). In doing this, McNamee et al.'s study created a theoretically-driven understanding of hate groups' online communication strategies and organizing processes.

These two studies are important linkages in understanding how hate groups operate within online settings, but most importantly, both offer two key takeaways. First, while media portrayals of these groups would make it seem that hate group messages are overtly rooted in extremist ideology and perspectives, both Gerstenfeld et al. (2003) and McNamee et al. (2010) discuss how these views are often hidden and may appear in more subtle ways. For instance, Gerstenfeld et al. (2003) describe white supremacists' overt assertion that they are non-violent and not hate-oriented. Similarly, McNamee et al. (2010) argued that the hate groups' web presence would often try to distance themselves from or indict groups that employ hate and violence as a tool for spreading their views. They both describe the utility and efficacy of spreading messages through the internet. Both articulate the various ways that the internet's lack of regulation aids in sharing information within and outside of the groups' network.

These affordances are apparent within efforts to coordinate different types of attacks on individuals who challenge traditionalist ideas, spaces, and communities. Consider the impact of and backlash against #Gamergate. Mantilla (2015) describes Gamergate in the following way: "a campaign of harassment against women in the video game industry that received widespread media attention in August 2014" (p. 46). Using explicit forms of gendered threats, gamers and internet trolls attacked, attempted to silence, and even doxed women for speaking out against sexism and misogyny within the video game industry. Some scholars have examined hate groups by examining specific analytical lenses like race; however, gendered threats are just beginning to showcase how gendered trolling and hate threats are being perpetuated within online spaces. Christians (2015) highlights the continuous Gamergate controversy in terms of masculinist

ideologies that “cannot be separated from those seeking reasonable debate because anonymous and pseudonymous participants have no culpability” (p. 11). The masculinist ideologies are rooted in patriarchal power structures that privilege the male voice, and make dialogue challenging—especially in online settings that were created in a masculinist tradition (Ritter, 2014). Attitudes toward gender and traditionalist narratives become embedded in how users utilize social media communities.

Seeing this growing trend of gendered hate online, Schmitz and Kayzak (2016) conducted a content analysis of the leading 12 men’s rights websites in an effort to extend understanding of online backlashes against feminism and progressivism. In their study, they found evidence of two types of messages and spaces that exist within online men’s rights communities: (a) men searching for traditionalist meanings and communities of hegemonic masculinity, and (b) social support for perceived victimization at the hands of “gendered discrimination” in offline settings. Both communities promoted messages and ideologies that cultivated growing feelings of frustration and desperation, which result in backlashes against women and other minorities (Faludi, 1991). Schmitz and Kayzak’s (2016) study points to how internet spaces, while socially mediated, can create echo chambers of social support that result in violent and hate-filled backlashes toward minorities. As mentioned previously, social media spaces like Reddit can create a festering culture of problematic messages, activities, and communicative behaviors as users seek to find likeminded individuals—namely those looking to reassert their own masculinity.

In exploring the construction of masculinity (particularly hegemonic and problematic forms), Schmitz and Kayzak (2016) argue, “MRAs’ online strategies are ideologically-charged in their attempts to make sense of complex realities that they interpret to be largely detrimental to

men, which they argue is the result of feminism” (p. 11). More explicitly, content on these sites are strategically selected to promote an ideological agenda (rooted in anti-feminist and pro-masculinist rhetoric and arguments). The content offers a form of social support for men who feel powerless and select information and spaces to help reclaim their perceived disenfranchised masculine identity. Massanari (2017) examined social news site, Reddit, as a space that actively cultivates these types of spaces. Because of the increasing polarization and toxic environments that are becoming mainstream in online spaces, “it is important to understand how these kinds of interactions on Reddit are also reflective of and influenced by other platform cultures. Toxic technocultures propagate precisely because of the liminal and fluid connectedness of internet platforms” (Massanari, 2017, p. 341). Given that online communities have existed since the internet’s inception, technocultures have always been embedded and enacted within online spaces. Early technocultures valued open and countercultural ideals; however, the increasing politicized, polarized, and hate-filled nature of the internet (particularly in spaces like TRP) provides an important backdrop and much-needed call for investigation.

### ***The Context of the Dissertation: TRP***

Consider the subreddit community, TRP. This subreddit characterizes itself as a “discussion of sexual strategy in a culture increasingly lacking a positive identity for men” (“The Red Pill • TRP”, 2016). The subreddit operates as a social support space for men to learn how to “hook up” with women, but creates an area for men to discuss their issues with modern society’s misandry—often because of increasing democratization and focus on equity at the hands of feminists and “social justice warriors.” These men, while not calling themselves as such, are men’s rights activist and engage in anti-feminist and misogynist activism within a variety of subreddit communities. Research has yet to fully investigate the organizing effects of gendered

backlashes cultivating online activist communities. In considering gendered backlashes, it is important to also investigate the role that gender plays as an organizing Discourse (e.g., institutional messages that constitute specific, systemic realities) within society and how these gendered backlashes occur via organizational discourses (day-to-day interactions; Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004).

### **Gender as an Organizing Discourse**

Gender is the socially enacted and performed attitudes, behaviors, communicative strategies that are performed, enacted, and negotiated within the nexus of masculine and feminine identities. While this definition centers gender as a performative and communicative act, scholars have not always assumed and understood gender to exist as such. Gender, as a form of discourse, is rooted in performance and communicative strategies (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Women and men are taught to do gender from a variety of messages that are, in turn, recreated through individuals' impact on social structures. West and Zimmerman (1987) argued that the differences in gendered discourse are (re)created through social messages, socialization, and interactions with one another, and "in doing gender, men are also doing dominance and woman are doing deference, the resultant social order, which supposedly reflects 'natural difference' is a powerful reinforcement and legitimator of hierarchical arrangements" (p. 146). These messages are inherently relational, and emerge from a variety of places; however, they are rooted in interactions between individuals. Bird (1996) argues that the continual interactions between individuals communicatively construct stable institutional meanings related to gender "through the accumulation of meanings attributed by and to the self over time" (p. 122). In this respect, gender becomes a social institution that is socially constructed. The social constructionist narrative of gender argues that people, too, interact with social institutions to *do*

gender. Risman (2004) contends, “Social structures not only act on people, people act on social structures,” which stress the importance of individuals’ interaction and accountability in constituting gender--and its practices (p. 432). In other words, as individuals take on gendered identities, their own focus on policing and enacting hegemonic norms or idealized identities (i.e., hegemonic masculinity and femininity) became a way of institutionalizing what and how gender emerges and is created in a variety of contexts.

Social structures of gender, in this vein, begin to emerge in workplaces and organizations that *do* gender. Acker (1990) connected relational aspects of gender to a prevailing heteronormative, masculine organizational identity that exists. This normative discourse hides or ignores the prevailing masculine discourse encompassing organizations. With this in mind, the masculine become the tradition, and any attempt at changing it is often met with backlash (Acker, 1990; Faludi, 1991; Kimmel, 1987). Organizations become a communicatively constituted product of individuals’ constant enactment of gender as they institutionalize and reify masculine norms of competition, individualization, power, and control.

Seeing these masculine norms as prevalent throughout the social world, masculine ideologies fester throughout the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of society. Gender emerges as a power structure and is equally important as economics and polity in shaping and influencing the social world. Gender, as an institutional social structure creates and enacts difference through its privileging the masculine over feminine. Acker (1990) argues that gender, as an organizing structure, constructs class and other identities. In other words, gender constructs and creates realities that are ripe for inequality, which can emerge within online spaces. Related to class, Acker argues that labor markets, workplace relations, work processes, and wages are all symbols

of gender. Moreover, because of the hegemonic notion of masculinity, these symbols become both symbolic and material forms of inequalities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

### **Hegemonic Masculinity(ies)**

Hegemony works in part due to the interactions between the hegemon and the oppressed (Mumby, 1997). Gramscian notions of hegemony are apt in discussions of gender, in part because of the pervasiveness of hegemonic gender identities (Mumby, 1997). Gender is institutionalized because gender is *communicatively enacted* throughout society in a variety of ways (West & Zimmerman, 1987). For instance, gender socialization at early ages informs and shares meanings to children about what is (and is not) acceptable for boys and girls to do, play, and wear. Other messages are shared through larger, cultural discourses related to careers and the masculine and feminine natures of certain vocations also provide signposts of how gender becomes a form of discourse that permeates throughout society. Hegemony is a pervasive structure that entices some to aspire to impossible ideas of self, communities, and societies. Hegemonic norms, like masculinity, are predicated on the “maintenance of practices that institutionalize men’s dominance over women” and is “constructed in relation to women and subordinate masculinities” (Bird, 1996, p. 120). If organizations are created with the hegemonic masculine Discourse, any change to this structure will result in attempts to reassert dominance. Masculine Discourses are recreated due to (re)socialization efforts that are continually patterned, enduring through media messages, and span micro to macro-levels of influence. On micro levels, gender is created through manhood acts (Schrock & Schwab, 2009). At an early age, boys are taught that they are to be stoic (“Boys don’t cry!”), to be athletic and powerful is important, and that you should never appear feminine (“You play ball like a girl!”). These messages come from media, parents, and school systems. Such gendered messages are likewise produced for little

girls as they are taught to be dainty, love princesses, and engage in essential femininity. On meso-levels, these messages are consistently shared through schooling, education, organizations, and workplaces. On macro-levels, gender is a pervasive structure that permeates into economics, politics, and other institutional structures. West and Zimmerman (1987) centered gender as a social structure that creates differential treatment and behavior, and that is rooted in preference toward men. As such, gender (re)creates social inequalities through its evolving nature.

Hegemonic masculinity exists differently in local, regional, and global levels.

Masculinity (like the overall gender structure) is an assemblage of different traits that create hybridized and localized versions of power structures that cause inequality. For instance, Bird (1996) noted that even amongst groups of men, homosociality (i.e., male friends) contains three key elements that maintain hegemonic masculinity and promote specific discourses related to male identity performance: emotional detachment, competition, and sexual objectification of women. In a field study of eight men, Bird (1996) found that her participants supported the idea that being masculine means not being feminine. This distinction was evident in their explicit talk about not showing feelings. To be emotional means that individual is ostracized by other men. Moreover, men should “get over” feelings rather than go through them. Another central discourse was the prevalence of competition as it engendered dominance. Finally, Bird noted that the men called their descriptions and objectification of women, “shop talk.” Despite the reality that several of the participants felt uneasy or would not talk in that way with a woman present, Bird’s findings indicate the pervasiveness of hegemony on group-level interactions, “when personal conflicts with ideal masculinity are suppressed both in the homosocial group and by the individual men, the cultural imposition of hegemonic masculinity goes uncontested” (p. 121). The power of gender, in this sense, continues through these interactions.

### **Precarious Manhood: Backlashes and Challenges to Gendered Structures**

For some men, the continual social-structural changes prompt a backlash and a crisis of masculine ideals. Given that hegemonic masculinity exists in society, as an institutional Discourse, it creates unrealistic, (albeit) aspirational goals for manhood and what it means to be a man. As such, masculinity is built on shaky grounds. Willer, Rogaline, Conlon, and Wojnowicz (2013) argue that men enact a continuous form of “precarious manhood” that is “plagued by chronic doubts” because there is some level of identity maintenance always occurring (p. 984). Willer et al. (2013) conducted four physiological studies measuring to test the precarity of masculinity by examining identity threats made to men in an experimental setting. Their findings indicate the following:

men tend to overcompensate, in a sense overdoing gender, and in so doing inadvertently reveal themselves to be sensitive to threats. One implication of this finding is that extreme masculine behaviors may in fact serve as telltale signs of threats and insecurity. Perhaps those men who appear most assuredly masculine, who in their actions communicate strength, power, and dominance at great levels, may actually be acting to conceal underlying concerns that they lack exactly those qualities they strive to project. (p. 1016)

Masculinity, in this sense, is rooted on relative and hierarchical comparisons to other men. As society has been constructed on the basis of patriarchal ideas of power, men can see the changing definitions of identity, family, workplaces, and society as an assault on their (unearned) status within society.

As such, this changing social landscape cultivates feelings of entitlement, anger, frustration, and inadequacy for many men. These changes, in turn, trigger backlashes and crises of masculinity; however, these shifting social landscapes are nothing new. In his historical essay, Kimmel (1987) describes three major responses to social changes: (a) anti-feminist responses that argued biblical and biological reasons for difference and male dominance, (b) masculinist responses that the increasing feminist social prominence would change and alter men’s identities,



and (c) profeminist men who understood the ways in which gender structures cultivate social inequalities. As such, these three competing discourses were evident in a variety of socio-historical contexts that today are still prevalent. Ferber (2000) explored the nature of masculinity as it was constructed in white supremacist and mythopoetic men's movements. Both movements connect to the first two discourses described by Kimmel (1987). Because of the social change, men engage in these spaces as there is a growing "sense of confusion over the meanings of both masculinity and whiteness, triggered by the perceived loss of white, male privilege" (p. 31). To remedy and find a way to affirm their identities, men engage in these social movements to ease and mitigate their perceived challenges to identity. Moreover, despite having different aims, Ferber (2000) notes that there are similarities between the two movements, namely, an essentialist view of gender identity, the use of shame in keeping men from being men or having white pride, and a deep connection to myths of identity ("the deep masculinity" or "whiteness").

They both construct essential definitions of masculinity, and they argue that difference and inequality is nature. Both organizations, to reclaim their identities, promote messages of "boys will be boys." These messages also exist within online settings and communities. In offline settings, Ferber (2000) and Kimmel (1987, 2013) note that men flock to men's rights activist groups in response to perceived identity crises and changes to gender structures. It stands to reason that if r/TheRedPill acts as an organization, then it, too, would paradoxically affirm and challenge men's gendered identities, engage in supportive behaviors, and attempt to control or reassert fundamental/traditional gender roles and structures in online settings (Buzzanell, 2010; Putnam & Ashcraft, 2017).

Considering the topic of exploring men's rights organizations in online settings, men engage in social movements like mythopoetic groups due in part to their threatened masculine

identity. These groups, then, become a form of social support in reaffirming their identity while also cultivating both online and offline behaviors—often in the form of overdoing their gender. Overdoing gender refers to the specific behaviors that men utilize when their masculine identities are threatened or challenged. Oftentimes, these overdone gender behaviors result in physical and verbal acts of aggression, power, and dominance; however, in mediated spaces, these are often manifested in violent, gender-based messages, insults, and threats (e.g., rape threats). Whereas scholarship has focused on the reasons and underpinnings of why men enact gender in this way, it has yet to explore the connection in communication as it constituted organizational identity, and organization—especially within online contexts.

Oftentimes, these forms of masculinity become enacted through an affinity toward “geekdom” (Kendall, 2002), and are an extension of subordinate masculinities (Connell, 2005). Connected to the larger trend of the online harassment vis-à-vis toxic technocultures, geek masculinity is enacted and supported in more visceral and problematic ways. Massanari (2017) describes geek masculinity in the following way:

geek masculinity often embraces facets of hypermasculinity by valorizing intellect over social or emotional intelligence. At the same time, geek masculinity rejects other hypermasculine traits, as “the geek” may show little interest in physical sports and may also demonstrate awkwardness regarding sexual/romantic relationships. (p. 332)

To that end, Red Pill’s online organizational activity creates an online space through which men can engage with one another to lament their perceived emasculation because of the perceived power and status of feminists and social justice warriors.

In short, scholars have begun to explore digital identity, but lack solid footing on how this is enacted within a gendered lens. Moreover, within online settings, scholars have yet to examine how gender impacts the constitution of organization and its corresponding processes. In pairing online spaces with men’s groups, there are potential connections that help scholars

understand how and why men engage in online trolling, gendertrolling, and a whole host of other problematic and nefarious behaviors. As such, the dissertation links various threads of gender theorizing within organizations together. Second, it exposes the gap in which online contexts can also muddy the waters of doing and undoing gender. Because of this confusion, it becomes increasingly important to understand how the communicative constitution of gendered organizations are enacted and organized within online spaces.

### **Online Communities Communicatively Constituting Organization (CCO)**

The Communicative Constitution of Organization (CCO) argues that organizations, as part of the socially constructed world, are products of the communicative processes. Embedded within these assumptions are the ideas that (1) organizations are a dynamic byproduct of the communicative interaction of their members and (2) influenced by environmental interactions (Schoenborn, Blaschke, Cooren, McPhee, Seidl, & Taylor, 2014). Organizations in online settings, too, can exemplify a CCO approach through the asynchronous discourse that occurs within online settings. When considering TRP as an organization, one framework through which to view its overall development is through the CCO. Although there are several CCO perspectives<sup>9</sup>, the Montréal School's approach is an applicable theoretical basis for uncovering how online organizations are constituted through the interaction of text and members. It is through these conversational and interactive elements that Taylor, Cooren, Giroux, and Robichaud (1996) characterize organizations as “a set of transactional relationships, mediated by interaction: people making requests of others, promising things, passing judgment on others’ performances” (p. 231). Communication in online organizations are produced through “the

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<sup>9</sup> For a discussion on the various CCO approaches, see Brummans, Cooren, Robichaud, and Taylor (2014); and Schoeneborn et al., (2014).

production and comprehension of text; action is mediated by text, but only when the text has been submitted to an interpretation” (Taylor et al., 1996, p. 6). Interpretation, through sensemaking perspectives, can aid in providing communicative construction of organizations (and their activities) by engaging texts in interactions known as conversations (Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen, & Clark, 2011).

### **Text as Agentic**

Text and conversations, then, serve as building blocks for organizations, and, more specifically, text acts as formative. Cooren (2004) asserts,

The textual agency approach suggests that what constitutes an organization is a hybrid of human and nonhuman contributions. Signs, memos, and contracts display a form of agency by doing things that humans alone could not do. Created by human beings, these texts participate in the channeling of behaviors, constitute and stabilize organizational pathways, and broadcast information/orders. (p. 388)

The dual interaction between text and human communicators forms a space through which to view the organizing processes of organizations in that the interplay between both converge to create and enact the organization as a dynamic and conversational process (Taylor, et al., 1996). Cooren (2004) further contends that organizing, as a process, involves both human and nonhuman interactions (text), which constitute organizations. Extending this CCO perspective into online spaces, the interplay between the asynchronous, textual engagement through message boards as well as activities within social networking sites like Reddit becomes an entry point into exploring CCO in online spaces.

Research using the Montréal School’s approach to CCO has largely examined brick-and-mortar organization. The Montréal School’s main focus within CCO is that organizations are created and recreated through interactions between systems of meanings of text and conversation, and this interactional system serves as the foundation for the constitution of

organizations. For instance, Robichaud, Giroux, and Taylor (2004) studied municipal city governments and noted that the borough's mayor listened to his citizens' grievances regarding the ills of their society, and incorporated those perspectives into his own understanding of their stories and experiences into the way he described the city. Individual concern elicited by the citizens became a building block of metacommunication that the mayor employed. The communicative interactions between the two groups helped to foster deeper ties and understandings of the borough-as-organization (Robichaud et al., 2004). Additionally, CCO perspectives have been applied to a variety of qualitative approaches when organizations begin to form from meetings (Chaput, Brummans, & Cooren, 2011; Cooren, 2006) and communication episodes (Blaschke, 2017). These studies provide a vantage point in describing a processual view in which organizations are communicatively constituted through over time through consistent engagement of members. Organizations are not instantaneously formed by groups of individuals coming together; rather, they are created and enacted through strategic and intentional interactions amongst and between members over time. Within the context of the dissertation, these applications of CCO serve as a means of exploring online communities' communicative enactment of organization in that, over time, communities form through engagement. Users engage with one another on discussion boards, and, over time, the connection to online spaces begin to form organizations. While the studies reference the impact of time as an organizing process, another extension of CCO can possibly exist within the framework of gender as an organizing communicative process.

Gender, as a social structure, is communicatively constituted through relational interactions on micro-, meso-, and macro-levels (Acker, 1990; Bird, 1996; Connell &

Messerschmidt, 2005; Risman, 2004; 2009). Risman (2004) describes the interactive process between gender structures' organizing power and individuals in the following way:

Social structures not only act on people; people act on social structures. Indeed, social structures are created not by mysterious forces by human action. When people act on structure, they do so for their own reasons. We must, therefore, be concerned with why actors choose their acts. (p. 432)

In this vein, gender, as an organizing structure, becomes one way in which organizations exist. Acker (1990) similarly describes the various ways in which organizations are gendered in both material ways (e.g., through policies, reward structures, leadership presence) and immaterial ways (e.g., culture, hierarchies, and environment). Moreover, Acker describes how organizations, while claiming to be gender-neutral spaces, often enact masculine cultures through their commitment to organizational language.

Relatedly, Buzzanell's (1994) review of feminist organizational communicational scholarship examined the poststructural and standpoint lenses that have been utilized to understand how both men and women understand themselves within organizations. Buzzanell's review also illuminated the various way in which gender, as a communicative process, recreates and reproduces gendered (and more explicitly, masculine) relations that often marginalize women and other minorities. Gender, as a form of communicative organizing, then, becomes an important part of the talk-in-action between organizational texts and individuals that communicatively constitute how organizations (and its members) do gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Within the context of men's rights organizations, sociological approaches examine various structures that are enacted through gender discourse (Acker, 1990; Risman, 2004, 2009; West & Zimmerman, 1987); however, the scholarship routinely ignores the central role of communication within the micro- to macro-levels of organizing from identities to

organizations. As such, when gender is considered an additional piece of CCO, groups like TRP serve as a heuristic application of CCO theorizing.

Considering the study of TRP, research has yet to fully explore the implications for CCO coupled with gender in online spaces. A challenge in extending traditional organizational communication theorizing is that oftentimes, scholars assume that “there are organizational dynamics, explicit goals and regulations, and relations and structures that can be empirically observed in some form” (Stohl & Stohl, 2016, p. 6): however, when considering the nature of certain communities online, organizational structures and activity may be hidden. This hidden nature means that there is a need to use innovative methods to illuminate these organizational processes and organizing that is occurring within quasi-hidden organizations. To that end, the proposed mixed method approach will combine ego and semantic networks with qualitative, semi-structured interviews provides an innovative way to understand the communicative constitution of online organizations. As described, online communities behave as organizations; however, they have traditionally been characterized as communities or groups. Therefore, extending CCO into online spaces provides an innovative way to both apply and extend what is known about the Communicative Constitution of Organization.

### **Communicative Constitution of Organizational Identification**

If we are to assume that TRP acts and communicatively constructs organization in online spaces, then it is plausible to consider the existence of organizational processes, as well. More specifically, organizational identity/identification is a process that is often explored within organizational settings. Organizational identification is “an active process by which individuals link themselves to elements in the social scene” (Cheney, 1983, p. 342); it is both a process and a product of the dynamic relationship between organization and individual (Cheney et al., 2014);

and is characterized as a sense of oneness with an organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). The organization-individual linkage is cultivated in the connections, interactions, and conversations that occur between various symbols, groups of people, and larger organizational entities. \

### ***Organizational Identification within CCO***

Couched within a variety of CCO perspectives, the Montréal School theorizes organizational identification as existing in two distinct ways: consubstantiality and organizationality. Originating with the scholarship of Burke (1969), identification was first conceived as a new form of rhetorical persuasive strategy wherein identification is described as a dynamic persuasive process. Burke argued,

In being identified with B, A is "substantially one" with a person other than himself. Yet at the same time he remains unique, an individual locus of motives. Thus, he is both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another. (p. 21)

Burke's notion of identification becomes a springboard for applications within organizational settings and contexts as members reflexively engage in the dialectic of their individual and organizational identities. Organizational identity is rooted and centered on its members—particularly in how their connection to an organizational entity creates and cultivates identity markers. This process, known as organizational identification, is “an active process by which individuals link themselves to elements in the social scene” (Cheney, 1983, p. 342).

Organizational identification, then, is both a process and a product of the dynamic relationship between organization and individual (Cheney et al., 2014).

As a process, organizational identification occurs through the interactions between individuals and organizational texts and norms. In their study, Chaput et al. (2011) examined the formation of a young political party in Quebec, Canada (*Quebec Solidaire*), and situated



organizational identification within a performative view of sameness. Drawing on Burke and Cheney's perspectives, Chaput et al. note that identification can emerge through the process of consubstantialization, or the "common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, and attitudes, as well as norms, principles, rules, texts, and artifacts, in the co-creation of sameness" (p. 257). Similar to Scott, Corman, and Cheney (1998), Chaput et al. (2011) adopt a processual view as they showcased the ways in which identification is iteratively (re)negotiated and enacted through every day communicative interactions that created the *Quebec Solidaire* party. Related to Chaput et al., scholars have examined organizational identification through performativity of texts and individuals with the hacker group, Anonymous (Dobusch & Schoeneborn, 2015). Anonymous is a collective entity of users who engage in online forms of protest and activism; is informally organized; and is notorious for their use of hacking and trolling of certain groups like Scientology. Using identity-claim analysis of two different communication episodes, the researchers uncovered that Anonymous achieved how organizational actors achieve identity and actorhood, "through carefully crafted and staged speech acts that were claimed to have taken place on behalf of Anonymous as an organizational endeavour" (p. 1027). Performance of identity can also be found in the work related to offline men's rights organizations.

Within the sociological perspective, scholars have investigated sociocultural factors that contribute to engagement in problematic organizing because of identity threats (Cheney et. al., 2014; Kimmel, 1987). Ferber (2000) explored rhetorical strategies within men's groups like the Mythopoetic Men's Movement and White Supremacist organizations that enable men to identify and engage with other men. Inside these organizations, leaders invoke a crisis of masculinity (hegemonic masculinity being the aspirational organizational identity), and make various appeals that are rooted in affective, cognitive, and behavioral processes of identification; however, they

also pair various social and political changes within society--feminist movements—(Kimmel, 1987) as a contributing factor in a growing “sense of confusion over the meanings of both masculinity and whiteness, triggered by the perceived loss of white, male privilege” (Ferber, 2000, p. 31). Ferber (2000) continues, “For both movements, the solution is for white men to come together and reclaim their masculinity” (p. 52).

Similarly, within anthropology, cultural elements become an important way in fostering organizational identification. For example, Schmitz and Kayzak (2016) conducted a content analysis of MRA websites to uncover the various ideological and material strategies that MRA sites use in online cultures to engage and socialize their newcomers. Schmitz and Kayzak (2016) describe online engagement in the following way: “for men who already feel powerless in a society that is described by feminists as patriarchal, seeking out support from MRAs on the internet represents one way that these men can reclaim their masculinity” (p 12). Organizational identification, here, occurs when individuals engage in, find belonging with others, and begin to identify and act in accordance with the mentioned social movements. Connected to these ideas, Ben Salah, Deslauriers, and Knüsel (2017) investigated brick-and-mortar men’s organizations (anti-feminist, pro-feminist, and a blended perspective) to examine how organizing emerged within a European context. The findings of the mixed methods study suggest (unsurprisingly) stark differences views on men’s discrimination; however, most intriguing was the similarities on ontological views of manhood and axiological views men’s emotional development. In other words, all three organizations shared similar sentiments regarding gender as a social construction; they all believed that gender norms are a product of intricate social institution. Secondly, these social constructions can cause emotional deficits in that men lack emotional development to engage in relationships. As such, the authors described these primary

perspectives as reasons that men engage in men's organizations. Regarding the methodological approach employed by Ben Salah et al. (2017), the authors suggest that future research of men's organizations should use mixed methods and examine potential relational structures from members to leaders.

Within these various approaches to gendered organizational identities rest a relational approach in which gendered communicative acts simultaneously constitute organizational identity and identification. Despite the gendered nature both CCO and organizational identification, scholarship has yet to richly examine the nature of online organizations (as a space) in impacting organizational identity and identification. Online spaces like TRP serve as an important site that cultivate and enact organizational identity as they offer forms of social support, connections with other men, and belonging within a larger network. Through these spaces, men affirm a virtual identity anchor as MRAs offer a critical way to navigate and negotiate their own tensions of masculinity as societies tend toward equity. In a society that they perceive as challenging traditional notions of manhood, these men find spaces of support that help to anchor their masculine identities within communication networks and online organizations. These spaces are inherently problematic as they often incite and trigger violent responses vis-à-vis trolling and online harassment when ideas of manhood are threatened. Most scholarship pertaining to online harassment focus on the impact and reaction to men's online behaviors and activities rather than examining the spaces and communities that foster these types of behaviors. Additionally, Schmitz and Kazyak (2016) urged scholars to explore men's rights groups' presence in online settings, writing, "the prevalence and accessibility of the internet allows men from all over the world to identify and connect with each other through various [Men's Rights Advocacy – MRA] groups, with MRAs being active beyond the United States in

countries such as Australia and Canada” (p. 12). The affordances offered in these spaces connect likeminded individuals and are embedded within larger, online, organizational networks (Ben Salah et al., 2017; Schmitz & Kayzak, 2016; Taylor, 2014). This study provides a means of potentially understanding why and how these users (presumably white men) select, engage, and become members of these online MRA organizations. As such, this proposed study is guided by the following research questions:

**RQ1:** How is organizational identity discursively constituted within r/TheRedPill?

**RQ2:** Who are the influential members within r/TheRedPill?

**RQ3:** How do the influential members within TRP shape organizational activity?

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

To investigate the organizational activity within r/TheRedPill (TRP), I adopted a multi-level methodological approach. This chapter provides an overview of the methodological choices utilized to investigate TRP. I first describe the site of inquiry, TRP, then discuss the data and sampling strategies used to identify the data. Then I discuss the procedures used to analyze the data. To answer RQ1, I conducted text mining and semantic network analyses that uncovered conversational topics, themes, and threads related to the TRP organizational identity that are present within the Top 100 Posts of All Time within TRP. To answer RQ2, I collected, analyzed, and mapped the interaction and engagement of members within Top 100 Posts through social network analysis. Finally, to answer RQ3, I resituated the influencers uncovered in RQ2 within both the Top 100 Posts and the larger, TRP organization. More specifically, I conducted online observations to more deeply describe and understand how influential users shape the TRP organization.

### Data Collection

Reddit is the sixth most popular internet site globally, and fourth within the United States (Reddit.com Traffic Statistics, n.d.). Duggan and Smith's (2014) study of internet users discovered that six percent of internet users engage in Reddit communities, with men ages 18-29 representing nearly 15 percent of the survey population. r/TheRedPill is the 459<sup>th</sup> most popular community space on Reddit (out of 1,208,849 subreddit spaces) (/r/TheRedPill metrics, n.d.). Suffice to say, r/TheRedPill is highly popular, and operates as a "discussion of sexual strategy in a culture increasingly lacking a positive identity for men" ("The Red Pill • /r/TheRedPill", 2016).

The members of this community and posts are unique cases as they are organized centrally around perceived systemic threats toward masculinity (Ferber, 2000; Kimmel, 2013). TRP currently has a user network of 261,860 subscribers,<sup>10</sup> and, at any given time, has around 1,900 active members. From a broad perspective, TRP operates as a “discussion of sexual strategy in a culture increasingly lacking a positive identity for men” (“The Red Pill • TRP”, 2016). The site itself serves as an online club for men to learn how to not only “hook up” with women, but also creates a space for men to discuss their issues with modern society’s treatment of men—often because of increasing democratization and focus on equity at the hands of feminists and the pejorative, “social justice warriors.”

As stated, this project utilized a mixed methods approach. The semantic network data were collected by copying the text from the Top 100 posts of all time. This was made possible through a Google Chrome Add-On called, “Reddit All Comments Viewer Secure,” developed by Turecki<sup>11</sup> (2015). Reddit’s default platform limits comment threads to 500 comments. Turecki’s add-on expanded all comment hidden behind JavaScript to reveal all the comments for a post; additionally, the add-on also expanded all comment threads hyperlinks of sub-conversation. Data were collected by extracting data from the Top 100 posts of all time within TRP. The top posts are calculated using the social currency, Upvotes<sup>12</sup>, which are given out by individual users. Upvotes are a measure of agreement that a post contributes to the overall conversation within the larger subreddit communities; posts with high upvotes are more highly favorable. Upvotes for

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<sup>10</sup> As of April 22, 2018

<sup>11</sup> Turecki’s updated add-on is based on Abhijeet Rastogi’s (2012) extension, “Reddit All Comments Viewer” found at <https://blog.abhijeetr.com/2012/03/chromium-extension-reddit-all-comments.html>

<sup>12</sup> According to Massanari (2015), “voting is intended to show others what material deserves more (or less) attention from the community” (p. 3).

these posts range from 1075 to 4163. The top 100 posts are also categorized in a variety of discussion themes from “The Red Pill” (posts about the theory), “Men’s Rights” (news stories related to discrimination aimed at men), “Rants,” “Fitness,” and “Red Pill Examples” (personal stories and examples of men practicing Red Pill ideas offline). A summary of the research questions and data collected can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Summary of Research Questions and Data Collection

Research Questions	Data Collection	Data Source
RQ1: How is organizational identity discursively constituted within r/TheRedPill?	Text Mining (Lambert, 2017), Semantic Network Analysis (Doerfel, 2002), and Thematic Analysis (CITE)	Top 100 Posts of All Time: 35,256 text comments from discussion threads
RQ2: Who are the influential users within /r/TheRedPill?	Social Network Analysis (Borgatti, Everett, & Johnson, 2013)	Total user interactions: 35,356 user interactions (w/ “deleted” user accounts)  Total sample size: 23,398 user interactions (66% of the total user interactions)
RQ3: How do the influential members within TRP shape organizational activity?	Examining the Keyword-In-Context/Ethnographic-style of observation and “thick description” of Top 25 Users (Krippendorff, 2013)	Observations, Notes, Site Analysis

### Data Analysis

The first level of analysis examines the comment thread data of TRP to uncover insights into organizational identification processes. This approach is uniquely qualified to explore the roles of users in communicatively constituting organization through text. The next step of analysis explores the users’ interactions within the community, and investigates the organizational structuring of activity within the social networks. Through the micro-contexts of

online communities, insights can be uncovered about the role the larger online social networks aid in organizing.

### **RQ1: Text Mining & Semantic Network Analyses**

In examining the discursive construction of organizational identity, the first stage of analysis focused on text mining of the comment threads of TRP. The text-based content shared throughout TRP can provide understandings in which the organizational identity is discursively (re)constructed by members throughout time. The support for TRP ideals is evident in their support of content vis-à-vis Upvotes, and, throughout time, constitute and enact identity themes of the TRP organizational identity. To understand how the organizational identity of TRP is enacted in RQ1, I adopted a text mining and semantic networking strategy to investigate the comment threads from the Top 100 Posts of All Time in TRP. Text mining, as a research method, explores the potential meanings and relationships of words, concepts, and knowledge connected within large text corpuses. Drawing from its sibling method, content analysis, which argues that the analysis of the content of bodies of texts can give insights into deeper meaning, text mining methods similarly explore how meanings are enacted and communicated through the strategic use of words and phrases (Krippendorff, 2013).

Semantic network analysis was an appropriate method for this study for two primary reasons. First, considering the volume of text data, text mining and semantic network analyses were able to analyze large amounts of data in a shorter amount of time. The scale of data for this project included 100 discussion threads within TRP containing a text corpus of 35,643 user comments, which is just over 5,938 pages of text. Total comments for each post ranged from



1,059 to 65 with an average of 356.43 comments per post<sup>13</sup>. The Top 100 posts contained titles such as, “Swedish man acquitted of rape charges thanks to audio recording,” “Equality is a bitch, Ain’t it?,” “I’m in fucking tears right now. A woman used the justice system to ruin my life,” and “Today I saw first hand how chicks use guys like ATMs.”<sup>14</sup> Second, the semantic network analyses created a relational, semantic concept map of the types of content shared within TRP. Whereas the posts within TRP had tags, which served as category markers of types of posts, the specific content and topics shared within TRP was important to consider as organizational processes can exist in a variety of categories and topics.

Depending on one’s strategy of inquiry, the nodes within these networks are represented in a variety of ways. Nodes can be words or phrases; whereas, the edges represent the linkages (or co-occurrence) between the nodes. For instance, in a semantic network from Reddit data, edges represented the co-occurrence of two words or phrases from the comment sections. Edges also give insights into intertextualities that “form dependency networks among texts, which in turn suggest possible paths for reading the given body of texts” (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 356). Text mining creates semantic networks that allow researchers an opportunity “to represent meaning according to the manifested structure of concepts (words) as they are found in natural language texts” (Doerfel & Marsh, 2003, p. 218). These relationships and associations between words and phrases showcase the interpretive possibility of text mining—always the analysts’ interpretations.

Text mining can additionally be useful in illuminating knowledge structures within text data when the body of text is too large for an individual to investigate (Krippendorff, 2013;

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<sup>13</sup> Data were collected throughout October and November 2017. The total number of comments may have increased, or posts may no longer be available on r/TheRedPill.

<sup>14</sup> For a complete list of post titles, see Appendix A.

Lambert, 2017). Text mining can be used to uncover various concepts that serve as central to the body of text being analyzed. For example, He, Zha, and Li (2013) used text mining to examine Pizza Hut™, Domino's Pizza™, and Papa John's Pizza™ across social media platforms Facebook and Twitter. From the text, He et al. (2013) uncovered how the companies' use of social media enabled and cultivated customer interaction. Text mining offered He et al., (2013) a way to examine a large body of social media data to create a social media competitive analysis between companies noting, "As Web applications and social media become increasingly prevalent, using text mining to analyze textual data from outside the organization becomes a critical business need and is expected to provide richer analysis and better support for decision makers" (pp. 469-470). Within network analysis, there are group analyses called cluster analysis; similarly, text mining, too, can be useful in constructing a semantic network. He et al.'s use of clustered data provides key insights into various ways in which the pizza companies were using social media. For instance, they found clusters on Facebook centered on photos of food, giveaways, and appreciation). Semantic networks can then be analyzed as networks, and cluster analyses illuminate potential topic areas that exist within the text corpus that are structurally related to one another (Lambert, 2017). More specifically, using text mining (and programs like AutoMap), the analyst can not only envision and uncover topics that are central within the data, but also detect how these topics are discursively constructed within the body of text. For instance, text mining has been used in email exchange networks to uncover leadership roles within workgroups (Carvalho, Wu, & Cohen, 2007), and racially-constructed social identities that emerged through conversations on Twitter using the Michael Brown and Eric Garner shootings as the topic framework offered a way to understand stereotype (Joseph, Wei, & Carley, 2017).

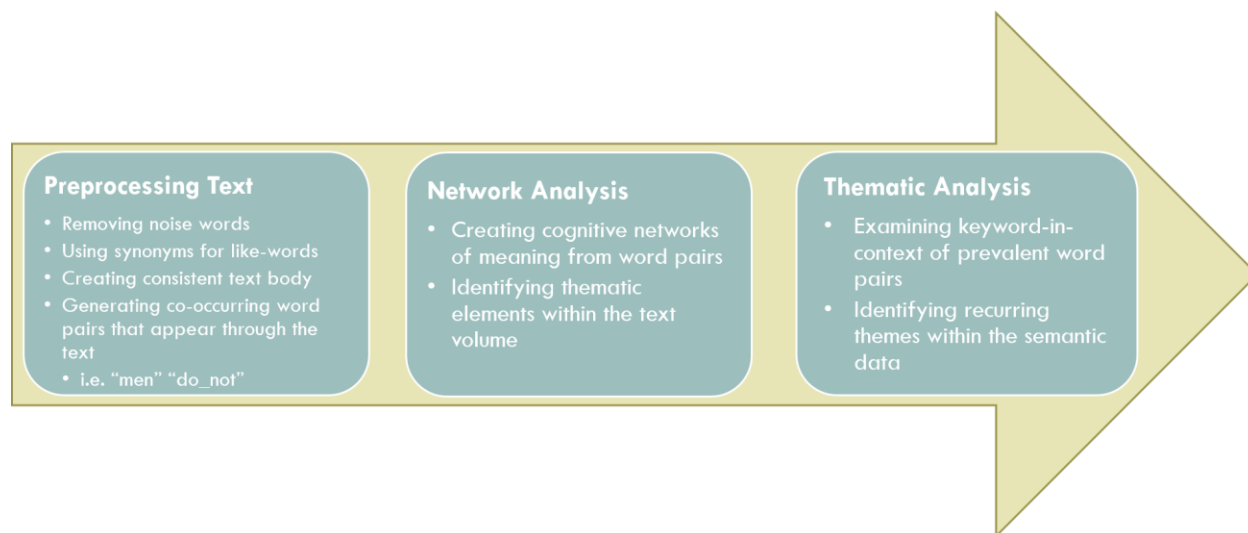
Other applications of text mining include determining relationships between entities that exist within the text corpus to generate conceptual maps of meanings. If an analyst was curious about what governmental agencies, leaders, sites, and policies existed within a text corpus related the Syrian refugee crisis in a selection of international newspapers, then text mining could provide insights into the presence and frequency of these concepts and *how* they are talked about within the body of the text. Diesner and Carey (2005) described the potential for this type of mapping in examining information related to terrorist groups within media. The authors used AutoMap™, a text mining computer program, to create initial concept maps, and then used the program construct a meta-network (i.e., organizations, locations, agents, resources, task-events, or knowledge) of how these meta-entities are related to and interact with one another in the text. In doing so, Diesner and Carey (2005) created a micro-level, semantic network of media coverage, but then created a coding scheme that classified nodes within the network as one of the meta-network entities. This type of text analytic approach

enables the extraction of meaning and enables interpretation by signaling not just what words are used but how they are used. This enables differences and similarities in viewpoints to be examined; and it enables the tracking of micro social change as evidenced by changes in meaning. (Diesner & Carey, 2005, p. 28)

Uncovering the possible connections between these entities enables researchers to understand how and why these entities exist and are connected to other entities within the text corpus.

To that end, text mining research has flourished over the last years with the explosion of social media and other computer-mediated communication technologies. New technologies and online spaces have offered researchers a unique window into a variety of phenomena from topic modeling political figures' social media posts (Garimella, Weber, & De Choudhury, 2016; Highfield, 2016) to mapping the discursive construction and framing of political issues and protests (DiGrazia, McKelvey, Bollen, & Rojas, 2013; Highfield, 2016; Rambukkana, 2015).

Text mining offers a glimpse into how these larger issues are communicatively constituted through online spaces; however, a recent trend within the text mining research explores the ways in which identity is both formed and constituted through textual data. As such, text mining is an appropriate method to uncover the relationships between words in the text corpus.



**Figure 1.** The Text Mining and Semantic Network Analysis Process

The comments from the top 100 posts within TRP were preprocessed using AutoMap. Preprocessing is a necessary step in pre-analysis as it helps remove irregularities within the text corpus that could skew analysis and results. Preprocessing is a text cleaning process that removes noise words (i.e., “a,” “the,” or “in”) and metadata (i.e., hyperlinks), and fixes typical spelling errors that occur within the text. Automap also fixes common stemming issues within the text. For instance, frequently appearing words like “fucking” or “fucked,” reverted to the root word, “fuck.” Additionally, using AutoMap’s thesaurus function, words like “man,” “guys,” “guy,” “boy,” or “boys,” all became the word, “men” within the dataset. This process was also duplicated with words pertaining to “women.” Additionally, frequently occurring phrases like, “the red pill” (and variants like “RP” or “TRP) or “social justice warrior” (and variants like “SJW”) became “the\_red\_pill” and “social\_justice\_warrior” respectively. It is important to note

that although preprocessing is a necessary step in creating a clean text corpus, I utilized the thesaurus function within AutoMap minimally to protect the integrity of the textual data. Preprocessing occurred until the final, clean dataset was imported into AutoMap (Diesner & Carey, 2005).

By mapping the semantic network of the conversations that occur within TRP, one can begin to see how the strategic use of words and phrases help to enact meanings related to linguistic identity markers of the organization and overall identification processes that can occur. That is, the networked relationships form a web of connections or links that tie concepts to one another (Scott, 1988). Using AutoMap's co-occurrence list, pairs of words frequently appearing together then were converted into co-occurring pairs that were imported into NodeXL (Smith, Ceni, Milic-Frayling, Shneiderman, Mendes Rodrigues, Leskovec, & Dunne, 2010) for analysis. For instance, words like, "men" and "do\_not" often appeared within the text corpus. Semantic network analyses were utilized to find central ideas and concepts that emerged within the text corpus via cluster analyses using the Clauset-Newman-Moore algorithm (Clauset, Newman, Moore, 2004). The Clauset-Newman-Moore algorithm identifies community structures within large network datasets by clustering nodes "into groups such that there is a higher density of edges within groups than between them" (Clauset et al., 2004, p. 1). That is, nodes that are more connected to others within the network are more likely to be similar (e.g., demographics, interest, topics of conversations, etc.). In their study of a purchasing network on the e-commerce site, Amazon.com, Clauset et al., (2004) found distinct similarities in Amazon's recommendation network. That is, if a person bought Book A, then Amazon would show ten other items related to Book A. Thus, the recommendation network consists of all items related to Book A; thus, using their algorithm, Clauset et al., were able to identify group structures that existed within the

recommendation network (e.g, books on politics, the arts, self-help, engineering, etc.). Regarding semantic network data, the Clauset-Newman-Moore algorithm can be utilized to find specific clusters of conversational topics, themes, and issues that are more densely connected to one “theme” than others (Clauset et al., 2004; Lambert, 2017).

Although the Clauset-Newman-Moore clustering algorithm is useful for identifying similar semantic themes of topics, I borrow from qualitative analyses to more deeply contextualize the semantic networks. Thus, once the clusters have been identified, I visualized each major clusters’ semantic networks, and then returned to the original text corpus to better describe and analyze how the nodes of the network construct meaning. Using the semantic clusters as a guide, I engaged in a constant comparative method of thematic analysis of the clusters to determine themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Themes refer to recurring ideas and meaning within the text corpus and are noted if they meet Owen’s (1984) criteria of recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness. I began open coding the keywords-in-context phrases generated throughout the clusters, and compiled a list of open codes. During the second round of coding, I began grouping the open codes into higher level categories. For example, codes like “idea of manhood acts,” “testosterone,” and “fitness,” were groups into larger family categories like, “What it means to be a Red Pill Man.” During these rounds of coding, contradictions began to emerge pertaining to the TRP organizational identity. Contradictions refer to “polar opposites that are interdependent, define each other, and can potentially negate one another (Putnam, Fairhurst, & Banghart, 2016, p. 74). As such, I gave attention to issues, moments, and descriptions of experiences where organizational identity descriptions and conversations were revealed.

For instance, a central conversational topic within TRP revolves around divorce issues. Within the comment threads, topics related to divorce would appear next to each. More specifically, word pairs like “child” and “support” or “alimony” are highly connected to “divorce.” Additionally, word pairs like “legal” and “system” appear within this cluster of words. In other words, while the overarching “theme” pertaining to the nodes within the text body might connect to ideas about strategies, behaviors, or experiences users have had as they pertain to the larger topic. Concept maps give insights into the various sub-topics that exist within the text body. As such, the text corpus of the comment threads can provide a pathway in exploring how identity is created through text as identity markers and behaviors may show up within the text corpus. Examples could be organizational in nature—“TRPer” or “Red Pillar,”—as they would offer descriptive content on not just *what* these organizational identities may be, but they could also provide qualifiers or richer characterizations of these identities. In other words, within the concept maps, qualifiers such as “strong” or “alpha” can give insights into how organizational identities are understood within TRP. Additionally, these identifiers may also exist as examples of what members are *not*—“weak,” “beta,” “Blue Pillars,” or “cucks” are known to exist within conversations in and around the Manosphere (Massanari, 2017).

## **RQ 2: Social Network Analysis**

Social network analysis is inherently a ‘relational approach’ in that the methodology explores the relationships that are woven together between various entities (Monge & Contractor, 2003). Important to note is that social network analysis does not just examine the relational ties between pairs, but rather the entire web of connections within a group of people (Marin & Wellman, 2011). These relationships form a web of connections or links that tie one entity to another (Scott, 1988). In considering the social network, Sinclair (2016) describes

networks in the following way: “We define ourselves by these connections: our family, our friends, our neighbors, our coworkers all for a social geography” (p. 121). Embedded within Sinclair’s conceptualization is a literal way in which networks are formed through relational connections that are constituted through our daily social interactions. Linkages to like-minded individuals—known as homophily—were first uncovered through ethnographic analyses in which observations “could easily ascertain all of the ties between members (whether those ties were behavioral, like sitting together at a cafeteria table, or reported, as when an informant tells about his or her close friends)” (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001, p. 417). Other approaches to examining relational ties—political networks, for instance—are situated in a similar framework; however, their structures potentially illuminate the embedded power relations between actors within the network (Himmelboim, 2011).

From a broad perspective, network analysis can connect micro and macro social structures by linking specific contexts to the larger structures that are constituted through communication networks. Tichy, Tushman, and Fombrun (1976) added that network analysis is a useful tool in studying organizations as the method is adept at mapping static *and* dynamic connections within organizational settings. A facet of the connections between micro-macro structures is the generalizability of relationships and connections between nodes. These interrelationships, in turn, help to create larger, interconnected institutional structures. In other words, micro-level structures can offer key insights into larger macro-level structures and have possible application within online settings.

Within online spaces, Sinclair’s notions of web-like connections ring true. Using network analysis to uncover the structural elements of organizing within online communities is

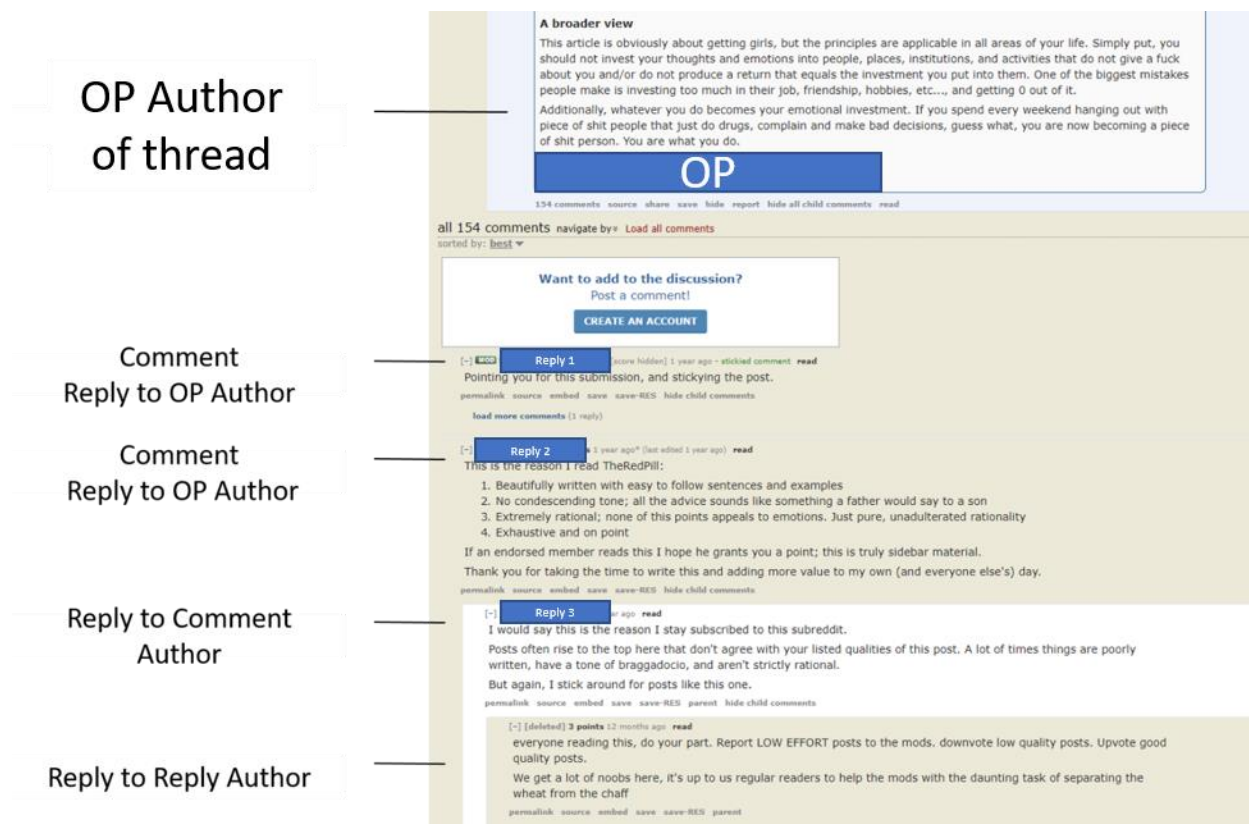


burgeoning area of study. boyd and Ellison (2008) note the social network sites (SNS) like Reddit are unique in that

they enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks. This can result in connections between individuals that would not otherwise be made, but that is often not the goal, and these meetings are frequently between “latent ties” ...who share some offline connection. (p. 211)

In this dissertation, network analyses examined the relationships between users, and investigated how the online, social organization was structured through central members of TRP. Nodes within this directed network were users who participated within the comment section of posts within TRP. In November 2017, I examined and collected the user data from each of the Top 100 posts. I collected the interactions between users in the comment threads in a separate Microsoft Excel file, and then compiled all the interactions into a larger file containing all the user interactions from the Top 100 posts. In this dissertation, I reported on the Top 25 users that appeared throughout the social network. Reddit users are afforded some anonymity in that their personal and identifiable information is not publicly available; however, the users’ posting history and site activity is. Despite the publicly-available nature of the social network data, I assigned the Top 25 users that appear in this dissertation pseudonyms.

In Figure 2, the originating post author (“OP”) was the author of the initial thread. Thus, I mapped the reply interactions in the following way: Reply 1 → OP; Reply 2 → OP; and Reply 3 → Reply 2.



**Figure 2.** A diagram of a Reddit page, and how the social network was mapped.

There were 35,356 interactions within the total sample; however, in collecting the social network interactions, I noticed many users within the discussion threads had deleted their account. It is important to note, in Figure 2, a comment is given from the user “[deleted]” to Reply 3. Deleted user accounts represented 11,958 unique interactions throughout the social network. Because the deleted accounts all appeared with the same username, “[deleted]”, I removed and ignored these user interactions that contained as there was no way to uncover the specific roles that the individuals would play within r/TheRedPill. When available, these users’ comments (as shown in Figure 2) were part of the semantic network data. Thus, removing these users from the network resulted in a final sample of 23,398 users within the social network (roughly 66% of the total sample within the Top 100 posts of all time).

As stated, the edges in this network represented direct replies within the comment thread. Using the network analysis software, NodeXL, the whole networks were constructed based on dyads consisting of user-to-user interactions within the comment threads (Smith et al., 2010). In the overall network, outdegree centrality was calculated to map and uncover the influential members within TRP (Borgatti, Everett, & Johnson, 2013; Smith et al., 2010). This metric is appropriate to use in analyzing the network in identifying important individuals within direct reply networks (Hansen, Schneiderman, & Smith, 2010). In this network, users that interacted with one another the most were represented as the most centrally located users within TRP.

Additionally, the Clauset-Newman-Moore algorithm was used to explore clusters of users, which gave insights into further network roles (Smith et al., 2010). Through clusters, the Clauset-Newman-Moore algorithm highlighted subgroups (or cliques) that existed within TRP and demonstrated their connections via influential members of TRP. Influential members were critical in establishing organizational norms, behaviors, and leadership structures. They also took various roles within the comment threads. The final part of the analysis sought to bring the semantic and social networks together by in-depth observation.

### **RQ 3: Online Observation**

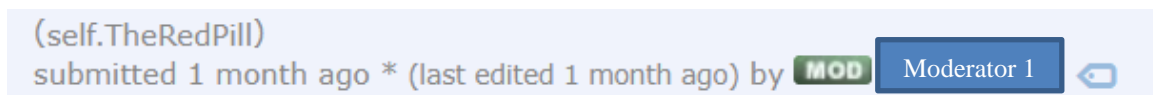
The final part of the analysis combined the social network with semantic networks to provide a deeper understanding of the overall text body that exists within TRP. Drawing on strategies outlined from Huffaker (2010) and Johnson, Safadi, and Faraj (2015), social network analyses outlined in RQ2 identified central users within network who may assume leadership roles in TRP. In both studies, leaders' unique network positions aided in their overall networked influence online. More specifically, both studies examined the nature of leaders' influence by examining their text-based engagement in their respective online space, their tenure, and specific

roles that users adopted. Thus, to understand both what roles the central users took within TRP and how they influenced TRP organizational activity(ies), I adopted an online observational approach that investigated the Top 25 users in TRP.

In adopting an observational approach to online research, Markham (2017) described internet observations as focusing on three central conceptualizations of the Internet: (1) the internet is viewed as a tool for communication and mobilization, (2) a way of being that usurped the on/offline dualism of previous theorizing, (3) and a space that individuals experience viscerally (not physically) (Markham, 2017). These three central threads build upon existing scholarship of online ethnographies. For instance, Slater (1998) created a typology of four user participation styles within his analysis of IRC [Internet Relay Chat] focused on sexual picture trading. With an aim of understanding how individuals engaged with tensions pertaining to disembodiment and authenticity, Slater's ethnography offered an important lens in examining how users frame their experiences and perceptions of chat community wherein "anything is possible but little is realized because, although the malleability of the body allows any identity to be performed, no identity can be taken seriously" (p. 116). That is, the performance of desirable bodies and identities in IRC were often dynamic and constituted in tentative configurations where play and identity exploration was possible given users' engagement with the communicative and technological affordances of the spaces. More recently, Caliandro (2011) collected posts from travel sites like TripAdvisor.com and Hostelworld.com to describe the roles users adopt within these forums. These posts, then, became typologies that helped to "systematically explore the social nature of digital environments, and to collect very concrete and actionable insights from them" (Caliandro & Gandini, 2017, p. 97). Taken together, both studies showcase the possibilities of ethnographic and observational research online aimed at

identifying how members of spaces engaged with both the space and each other. Building upon these considerations, RQ3 adopted an observational approach to TRP that examined the influential user roles in shaping and framing the TRP discursively.

More specifically, TRP members with high outdegree centrality engaged frequently throughout the social network, and those with formal leadership roles were identified by “tags” connected to their username (see Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Formal Leadership Tag of, Moderator 1.

As shown in Figure 3, the user, Moderator 1, holds the formal, moderator role within TRP.

Identifying tags was one step to contextualize user roles within TRP. Another way examined user profile pages, which are publicly available within Reddit (see Figure 4).

These profile pages are indicative of many things including recent posts, additional roles within the TRP network, and length of Reddit tenure.

Welcome to Reddit.

Come for the cats, stay for the empathy.

BECOME A REDDITOR

and start exploring.

sorted by: new

A Family Man Experiences the Light-Switch, Loses Everything, Baffled that the Rules Don't Apply

by Moderator 1

in TheRedPill

22 points

1 month ago

read

Red pill = Seeing past one's ego and worldview to realize an objective truth, no matter how counter-intuitive or politically incorrect.

Blue pill = plugged into the matrix, buy everything at face value. Everybody is special and no trends exist.

All the other colors are dumb by people trying to co-opt a brand to serve their own purposes.

[permalink](#)
[source](#)
[save](#)
[save-RES](#)
[context](#)
[full comments \(335\)](#)
[report](#)

A Family Man Experiences the Light-Switch, Loses Everything, Baffled that the Rules Don't Apply

by Moderator 1

in TheRedPill

23 points

1 month ago

read

If there was an upside to the risk, that's one thing. But there literally isn't one benefit you get from marriage worth the risk.

[permalink](#)
[source](#)
[save](#)
[save-RES](#)
[context](#)
[full comments \(335\)](#)
[report](#)

A Family Man Experiences the Light-Switch, Loses Everything, Baffled that the Rules Don't Apply

by Moderator 1

in TheRedPill

39 points

1 month ago

read

Being afraid to get hurt is some psychologically damaged childhood shit. Get a better reason

It's not being afraid of getting hurt, it's intentionally not signing a contract that is inherently flawed.

There is nothing man-up worthy about getting into a contract designed to exploit him. Simply suggesting that it is a matter of maturity to accept such bullshit is exactly how the blue pill conditioning works.

You're handing a woman a gun, pointing at your face, asking her not to shoot.

[permalink](#)
[source](#)
[save](#)
[save-RES](#)
[context](#)
[full comments \(335\)](#)
[report](#)

A Family Man Experiences the Light-Switch, Loses Everything, Baffled that the Rules Don't Apply

Blue Pill Example

(self.TheRedPill)

submitted 1 month ago \* (last edited 1 month ago) by Moderator 1

to r/TheRedPill

335 comments

[source](#)
[share](#)
[save](#)
[hide](#)
[report](#)

Moderator 1

28,151 post karma

68,158 comment karma

[send a private message](#)

redditor for 5 years

Moderator 1

has helped pay for 94.93 hours of reddit server time.

gifts on behalf of Moderator 1

have helped pay for 98.16 hours of reddit server time.

MODERATOR OF

r/TheRedPill

r/asktrp

r/RedPillWomen

r/becomeaman

r/trpgame

... and 9 more →

PUBLIC MULTIREDDITS

redpillnetwork

TROPHY CASE

what's this?

Five-Year Club

Gilding III

reddit per annum

Team Orangered

Verified Email

Figure 4. User Profile Page within Reddit

78

The final method used to understand how users were engaging throughout TRP was to examine the keyword-in-context (KWIC). To create this linkage, AutoMap's keyword-in-context (KWIC) function demonstrated how the user data is embedded within the textual data. As mentioned, usernames appeared as user\_[UserName] in both semantic and social networks. For example, TRP moderator, Moderator 1, appeared within the semantic text file as shown in Figure 5.

```

user_Moderator1 21 points 2 years ago
Not just "is he one of those nice guys?"
but rather:
Was he really just an asshole all along only pretending to be nice to get in my pants?
In a woman's world, current circumstances and emotions define objective reality. If he's not nice now, then he must have always been an asshole. He was always this way, she just didn't see it.
Notice women talk like this all the time. Especially after breakups.
"He was always an asshole, I just didn't see it."
Sure, toots, that's why you fucked him for three years.
permalinkembed

```

**Figure 5.** An Example of a username within the text corpus.

In linking the semantic and the social network data together, a typology of central leaders within TRP was created based on the formal roles within TRP (Johnson, Safadi, & Faraj, 2015; Lee, Yang, Hsu, & Wang, 2019). These typologies were based primarily on the leadership roles in TRP and were supplemented by how these influential users engaged within the online organization. In examining the multiple data sources posts, user profiles, and the text corpus, I analyzed these users' embeddedness and activity within TRP. The analysis included observations of these users' interactions within TRP that I captured through my own notes (see Figures, 6-8).



My notes (Figure 6) were captured, in part, during the social network data collection; they included my specific questions, observations, and thoughts that emerged throughout the data collection. They provided an important addition to responding to RQ3 in that helped to more deeply contextual the influential users, their contributions, and how they interacted within TRP to shape the organizational identity.

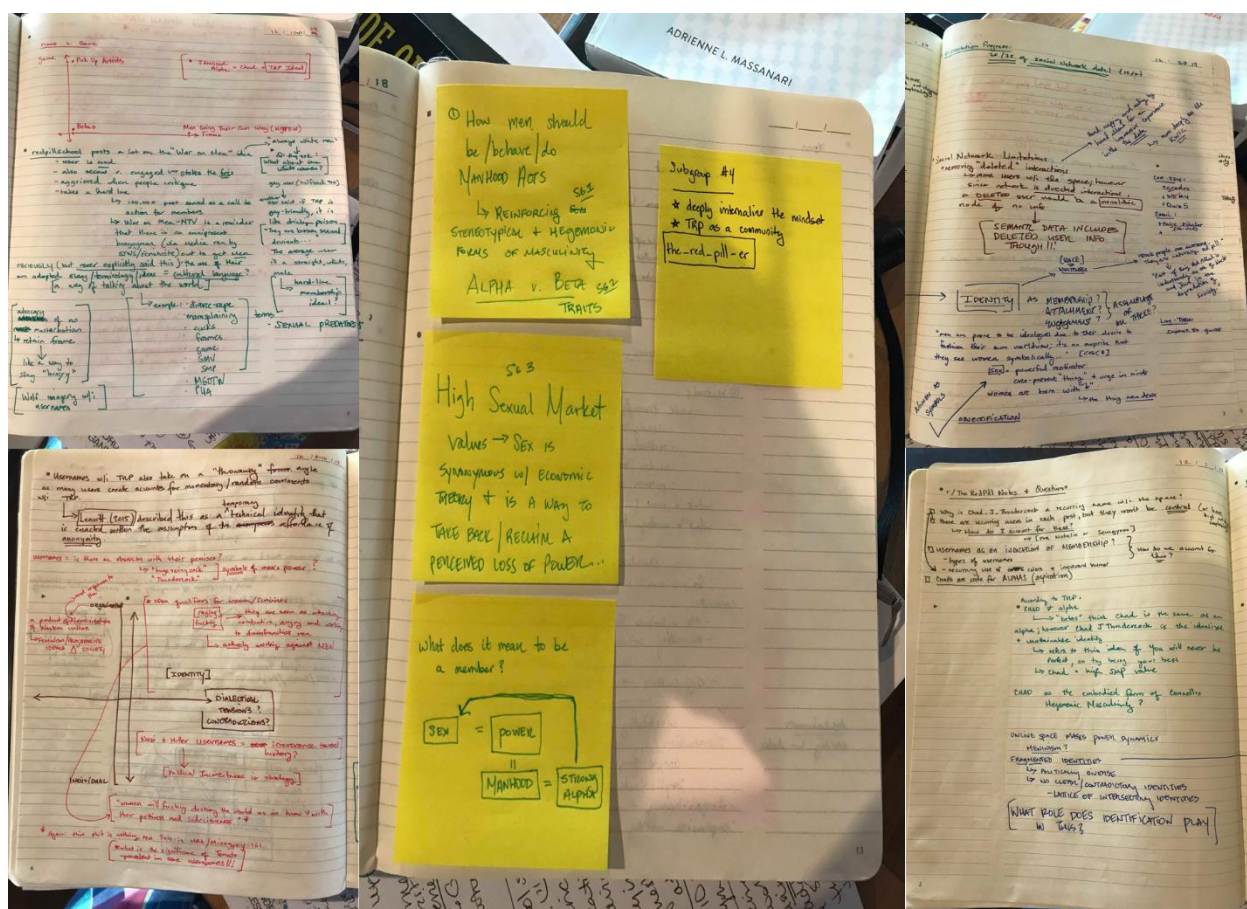


Figure 6. Notes from Eddington's Notebook



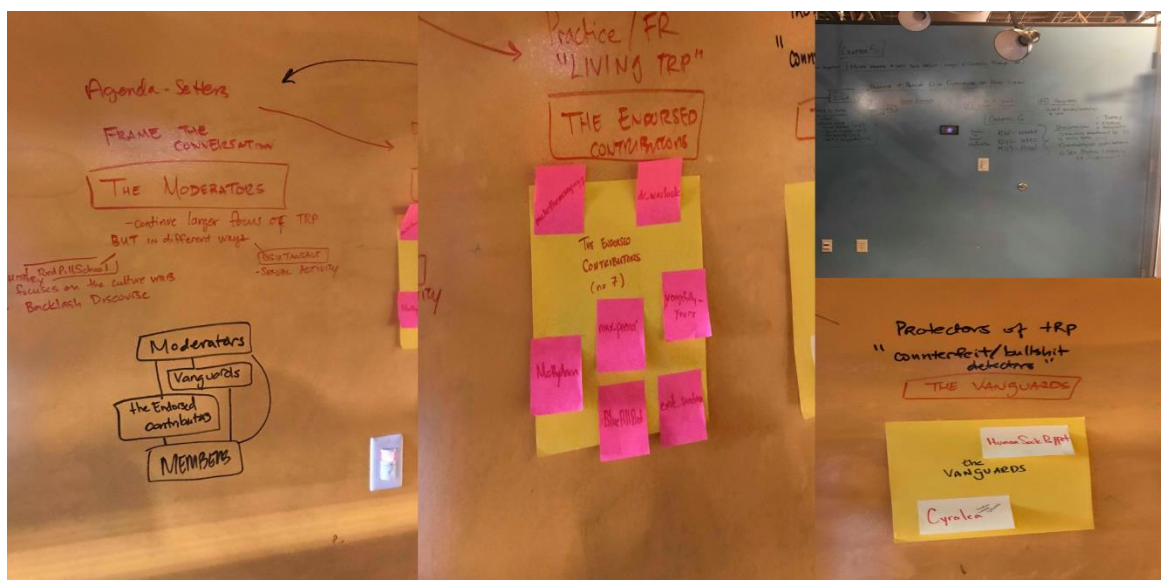


Figure 7. Initial Affinity Diagramming of Influential Users within TRP

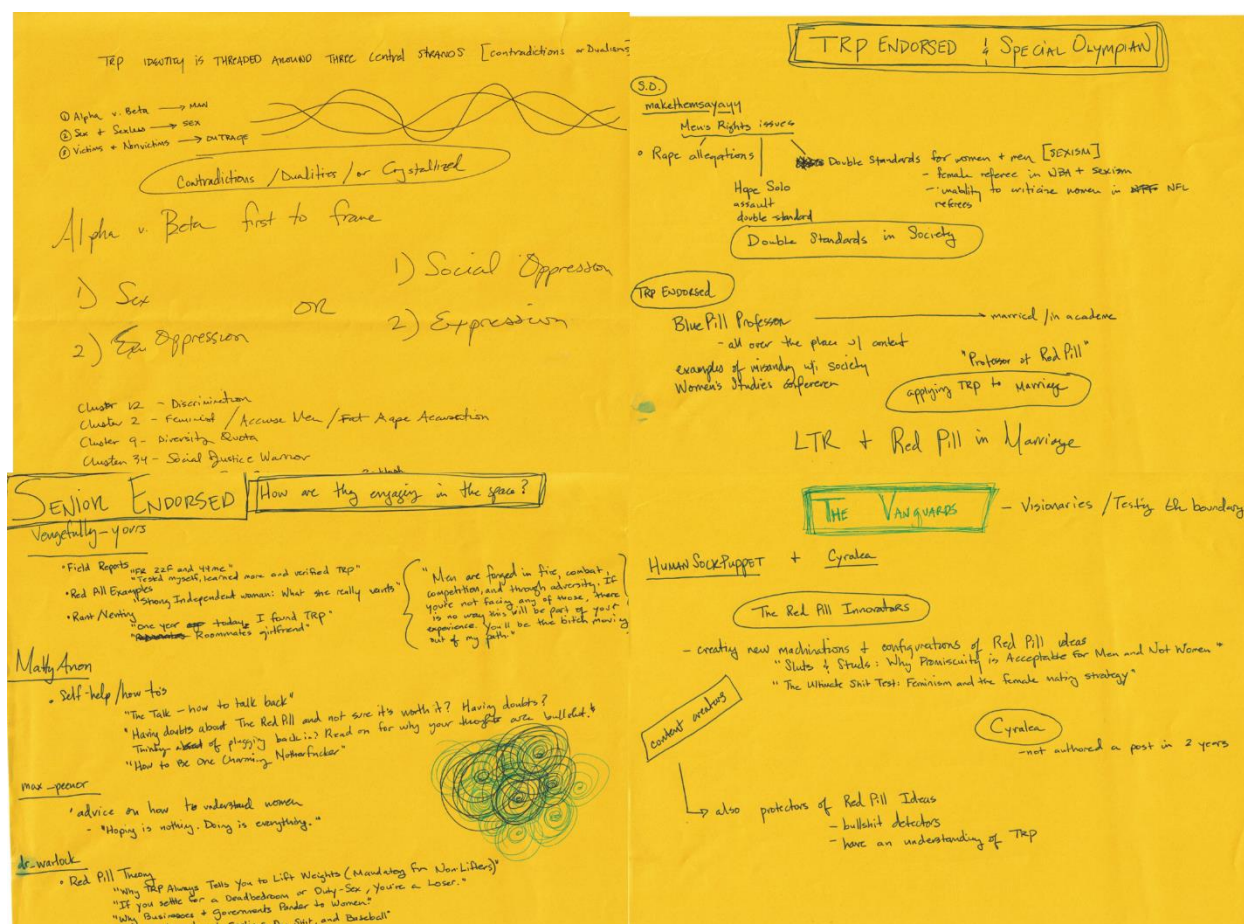


Figure 8. Eddington's notes on how users engaged within TRP

Relatedly, Figures 7 and 8 indicated my brainstorming and organization of the influential users and their contributions within TRP.

### **Researcher Positionality and Reflection**

My research on The Red Pill seeks to understand both the organizational identity of TRP and how identifications occur. Specifically, my dissertation analyzed gender issues online within a Reddit™ men's rights activist community known as "r/TheRedPill." Couched within growing trends of trolling, harassment, and gender-based threats online, my research observed an online organization of a men's rights activists and supporters for understanding how they organized their larger Red Pill identity. With a goal of productive change, my broad aim for this project was to understand how the D/discourses within TRP enacted an organizational identity as this is a necessary starting point for possibilities for engagement. In other words, I maintained that empathic understanding of these men's stories and experiences was the best and most honest way forward. Explicit within this research is a focus on the organizing processes of both whiteness and masculinity that are relationally enacted within this technoculture—both processes that have organized my own identity as a white man in both similar and dissimilar ways. This acknowledgement of being more knowing than not did not emerge until I began to understand the story of this dissertation during the data collection and analysis.

Initially, I presumed a stance of being an outsider to what and how members of r/TheRedPill talked about their experience. Their collective whiteness and masculinity coalesced around anger and ire as members lamented on their own perceptions of loss of status, power, and legitimacy in society, as a researcher, I often struggled to engage with the emotion-laden conversations shared throughout r/TheRedPill. Still, as a researcher and a man who supports feminist goals and social justice (e.g., diversity, inclusion, and equity), taking an initial position

of understanding felt seemingly contradictory. During the data and collection process, I took copious notes as an attempt to bracket my responses to the data that I was analyzing. The following represents one reflection of how I wrestled with the task (and tensions) of undertaking this project from the vantage point of empathy and understanding.

\*\*\*

*[November 4, 2017] I can't help but feel frustrated as I read these posts. Even though semantic networks presumably take me away from the data, both the social network analysis and observation put me in the belly of proverbial beast. Reading some of the posts, feeling these men's anger, pain, and frustration...it's horrific stuff...Stories and moments of feeling like a failure because of divorce, seeing their frustrations emerge when they talk about their failed relationships or inability to engage in healthy romantic relationships. Seeing them wrestle with insecurities about their bodies. To a certain degree, I get these insecurities. I can understand the frustration; however, how they express their rage that is where they lose me. The politically incorrect language that is used as a call for attention, how they think they've gamed the system and women.*

*I'm fighting to keep empathy.*

*The dark vision that they have about humanity, sexuality, women, and the role and ideals of manhood are regressive, toxic, and unattainable. And still, as I continue to dive deeper into the data, I'm fighting for empathy—to keep my eyes open to the humanity that connects me as an observer of this space.*

*I keep reminding myself that their pain and frustration are real and felt—to them.*

*For the first time, a question that I received when presenting preliminary findings of this project at the Organizational Communication Mini-Conference is hitting me: What is my response as a man immersing myself in the data?*

*On one hand, I try to shield myself from being affected. Be a stoic and analytical researcher. Observe. Analyze. Report. On the other hand, I can't divorce the emotional responses from my analysis. My visceral reactions--the scoffs, the outbursts, and the "Are you kidding me" --seem to keep coming. Are my reactions just proof of the things that they are saying about "the libs"???*

*I'm trying to remind myself that their stories are integral to understanding their worldviews. **I'm fighting like hell for empathy.***

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This recreation of my journal entry from data collection describes one of the main tensions that I felt during my collection, analysis, and writing stages of my dissertation. In trying to unpack the men's experiences and connect them to broader themes, I often found myself bracketing my own responses as to not cloud my judgment. "I'm fighting like hell for empathy" became my mantra and constant reminder throughout the writing process. Several times I had to be reminded by my doctoral advisor, Patrice, that there was a balancing act between activist writing and research writing.

Considering both the subject-matter and own positionality (as a man who shares the same societal privileges of many of the men of r/TheRedPill, supports feminism, and works with college men to fight against hegemonic masculinities), I initially struggled to describe my findings objectively as possible. In fact, initial abstracts and drafts were written out of anger, frustration, and disbelief of how these men were engaging with one another, talking through their

issues, and using politically incorrect language throughout. In other words, I was writing as an outsider, trying to showcase my own separation from these ideas about manhood, relationships, and women. The reality was messier and more complicated than that.

Although I was an outsider in many of their beliefs, as I dug into the ideas of manhood, I had to acknowledge that, in my ways, I *was* an insider. One instance during the writing process in February 2018 served as a reminder of this. Throughout my doctoral studies, I have mentored, coached, and worked with college men. One night at dinner, one of the young men (“Terrance”) started talking about his experience and defeats trying to find a date for an upcoming dance. As I listened intently and asked questions, he started sharing his feelings about the status of men in society. Terrance talked about how he felt disadvantaged because he was not the ideal “fraternity man” that, he believed, women wanted. As he talked, I smiled and acknowledged the awkwardness of dating and relationships and shared some of my own experiences that mirrored Terrance’s feelings. Unintentionally, the rapport that I had built talking about masculinity, manhood, and relationships had opened the floodgates for a deeper conversation. Terrance was eager to talk more about a recent experience at a job fair. As he walked throughout the job fair, he noticed that many of the technology companies’ booths did not have photos of people like him—white men. Again, these feelings of inferior in society surfaced in our conversation. Sitting back in my chair, it occurred to me that I read these types of sentiments before—in my data. When I placed a human face on these issues, it became harder to *not* empathize with the men of the Red Pill. I *was*, in fact, an insider to many of these issues. These were issues that my students were feeling; moreover, these were moments that I had felt to a lesser extent. Although my own experience navigating manhood and masculinity has never been as visceral and extreme as the men of the Red Pill, I could not deny that I empathized with their experiences. Thus, in engaging

with the data and finding the story of the men of r/TheRedPill, I had to reconcile the reality that, as a researcher and a man, my positionality was simultaneously that of an outsider and insider.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Research question one examined the nature of the organizational identity of r/TheRedPill (TRP). Organizational identity refers to the central, enduring, and distinct forms of interactions that produce the collective characteristics of an organization (Albert & Whetten, 2010; Whetten, 2006). Although organizational identity has been theorized and studied from different metatheoretical traditions, Whetten's (2006) approach is inherently communicative insofar as he adopts the discursive attributes of organizational identity invoked "as categorical imperatives—what the organization must do to avoid acting out of character" (p. 221). Aligned with Whetten's conceptualization, Barbour and Lammers (2015) argue that recent theorizing about organizational identity examines the interactions between individuals within organizational contexts, thus building on the interactional and textual discursive and material aspects that become organizational identity processes and results.

Guided by these conceptualizations of organizational identity, the text-based interactions between TRP users produce and are produced by users' engagement with one another in and throughout the r/TheRedPill online space. That is, as individuals contribute to TRP through their posts and comments, their engagement in the space helps to author the larger TRP identity; furthermore, as TRP members' support for certain TRP ideals showcases (*vis-à-vis* Upvotes), some TRP ideals become more centralized, persistent, and distinct. Because of this, the text-based interactions provide insights into the broader organizational identity themes of TRP—namely, the semantic understandings of organizational characters that converge to produce an overall TRP identity to which members align and (re)produce. In other words, these identity themes discursively construct the TRP organizational identity.

In this study, the TRP identity themes coalesce around dualisms insofar as they are evident in the oppositional discourses that distinguish members from nonmembers of TRP, good or high-status members TRP members from other members not as highly regarded. Dualisms are “the existence of poles, dichotomies, binary relationships that are able to create tensions, but can be separated” (Putnam, Fairhurst, & Banghart, 2016, p. 69). Of interest is that TRP identity theme dualisms manifest and replicate the binary, oppositional forces that are evident internally in the text but that also form the public face or identity of TRP. Of particular importance is that TRP members often define themselves in terms of who they are *not* over who they are. These contrasts are commonplace and enduring (i.e., “TRPs are not betas; we are Alphas”; “Red Pillers” versus “Blue Pillers”).

By investigating how the TRP organizational identity is constructed by its members, the contra-constructions of TRP identity often resulted in contradictory sub-themes throughout the text-based conversations. Semantic network analyses uncovered three broad contradictory and convergent subthemes related to gender, sexual activity, and responses to societal oppression. Although the overarching theme of TRP organizational identity was dualistic, the three subthemes often were constructed in contradictory and paradoxical ways. Contradictions refer to the “bipolar opposites that are mutually exclusive and interdependent such that the opposites define and potentially negate each other” (Putnam et al., 2016, p. 70). At times, TRP members defined themselves through contradictory assertions, values, and positionings of themselves and others. For instance, one member might exclaim, “Women are nothing but goldiggers [sic] and use men for resources” and another would argue, “this how you pick up hot women in the club!” The contradiction in this example existed in attitudes toward women. On one hand, members described women as villainous, gold-diggers, and people to be avoided. On the other hand, the



second example offered an opposite view that was based on pick-up strategies to attract women. Based on these contradictions, it seemed reasonable to assume that members of TRP both love and hate women, thus constituting a seemingly irreconcilable dilemma that would result in an either-or choice of avoidance or engagement with women.

Considering TRP's goal of educating and promoting sexual strategies for its members, these attitudes toward women appeared at opposite spectrums. TRP members would recommend privileging pick-up strategies over the former. In other words, their choice repressed one of the choices, but TRPers would also navigate contradictions through what Putnam et al. (2016) described as reframing, which "occurs when parties situate opposites in a new reformulated whole or a novel relationship so that the poles are no longer pitted against each other" (p. 128). For TRP members, reframing occurred through their adoption of strategies, tricks, and tests that both (1) aid men in increasing their sexual experiences, and (2) cultivate safeguards (mental, physical, and material) that protected themselves against women.

Additional contradictions occurred in how TRP members described others (particularly women), themselves, and the status of men in society. They engaged in contradictory discourses both individually and collectively throughout the conversation threads. By noting these thematic contradictions and the overall dualistic nature of TRP organizational identity, the work of TRP could be viewed as sustaining the problematic nature of the affect and nature of organizational character and attachment as well as recreating the ongoing need to reaffirm values aligned with membership. These contradictions frequently intersected with each other to communicatively constitute the TRP identity.

Other times, TRP members defined themselves through paradox. Paradoxes are "contradictions that persist over time, impose and reflect back on each other, and develop into

seemingly irrational or absurd situations because their continuity creates situations in which options appear mutually exclusive, making choices among them difficult” (Putnam et al., 2016, p. 72). Continuing the example from above, one might assume that a central part of the TRP identity was either a rejection of women or a desire to win women over in bars and other venues despite the potential for women’s golddigging behaviors; however, TRP members invoked *both* sentiments throughout the text corpus. These recurring sentiments, or emotions articulated in the text, were embedded with the overarching organizational identity constructions and the three identity subthemes. Whereas Buzzanell and Burrell (1997) describe as themes as enduring and recurring patterns of conversation, in considering the construction of TRP identity that emerged throughout the data, these subthemes characterized and defined the dualisms and their contradictory and paradoxical descriptions as subthemes. In sum, these dualisms existed within the text corpus in three specific online conversational threads: Gender, Sex, and Backlash.

**Table 2.** TRP Identity Subthemes' Dualisms and Contradictions that Weave Together to Enact TRP Identity

<u>Identity Thread</u>	<u>Dualism(s)</u> (bolded denotes preferred pole)	<u>Contradiction(s) or Paradox(es)</u>	<u>Example</u>
<b>Gender</b> <i>Masculinity discourses are shared throughout TRP, and focused on the central question, "What does it mean to be a man?"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Strong Men</b> and Weak Men</li> <li>• <b>Alphas</b> and Betas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Men need to be strong, fit, and in control of their lives; however, they cannot because of a feminized society</li> <li>• Men should aspire to be an Alpha Man; however, they will never become an Alpha Man</li> <li>• Adopters of "Alpha" behaviors often are <i>not</i> true Alpha Men</li> </ul>	<p><i>"EVERYONE NEEDS TO REMEMBER: That when Elon Musk was dancing with his first wife at their wedding reception, he looked into her eyes and told her "Im [sic] the alpha in this relationship." Why is this relevant? Because people only say they're "The Alpha"...when they're not the Alpha."</i></p>
<b>Sex</b> <i>Sex discourses focused on the role of sex, how to increase sex, and the effect of sex on TRP members.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Alphas</b> and Betas</li> <li>• <b>Sex</b> and Sexless</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sex is both (1) an expression of domination, power, and identity; and (2) a means to channel resentment and frustration toward villainous women</li> <li>• Within the sex discourse, women are also desired for their sexual power and hated for their agency within the sexual marketplace.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Feminism tells all women that they are entitled to, and can actually obtain all the benefits of a high value man (if only special people like us make all the laws). This appeals most to women at the bottom of the sexual market, as they are least able to naturally land such a man in a free sexual market.</i></p>
<b>Backlash</b> <i>Men's declining status within society has created unfair conditions within society.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>True Victims</b> and Fake Victims</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TRPers lambast progressives for being "victims" of society; however, TRPers describe themselves as the "true victims" of society</li> </ul>	<p><i>...the legal definition of rape leaves no room for a male victim when a woman is involved.</i></p>

First, TRP identity is rooted in traditional, gendered notions of manhood and masculinity—one that valorized strength over weakness. Although subordinated masculinities, particularly geek masculinities (Kendall, 2002), undergirded the communication between and amongst members within TRP, there was a prevailing reverence toward and (re)establishment of hegemonic masculinity. Next, masculinity and manhood was communicated through the dualisms of the Alpha and Beta discourses. Member of TRP frequently shared and communicated with other members that they should aspire to adopt Alpha traits and behaviors as Beta traits and behaviors are abused by women.

Second, TRP identity emerged through the persistent dualisms pertaining to sexual activity. Drawing from the first subtheme, the Alpha and Beta discourse extended into sexual activities. Whereas numerous sexual partners created a powerful sexual identity (i.e., Alpha), the absence of sexual partners (and sexual activity) engendered a weaker, non-TRP identity (i.e., Beta). In other words, a primary goal of TRP was focused on creating, sharing, and practicing “sexual strategy” for men. Here the dualism referred to freedom and slavery in that sex operated agentically. In other words, sex was an expression of TRP members’ societal status, and was a physical embodiment of agency through sex.

Third, TRP identity was organized around dualisms pertaining to societal backlashes and victimhood. On one hand, TRP members generated and discussed various ways that institutions, groups, and women seek to actively oppress men within society. Most of these grievances converge on issues of sex and romantic relationships; however, these issues perpetuate an ever-present “men as victims” narrative throughout TRP. On the other hand, members of TRP reject the “victimhood narrative” that is perpetuated through leftist, progressive culture. These cultural narratives about the status of society are dually enacted by Messner (2016) in two key ways:

discussions about (1) women's equality within society that reinforce (2) men's decline in society due in part to deindustrialization. Often, they engage the tensions of being a victim in a society they deemed filled with victimhood discourse. Digging into this discourse unearthed the dualism between true and fake victims of society. In other words, they abhorred the victimhood narrative employed by progressives and "snowflakes;" however, the TRPers adopted similar language to situate their own experiences within larger conversations of the effects of misandry on them. Misandry refers to "a theory of feminism as intrinsically prejudicial and threatening toward men, which provides justification for networked harassment of those espousing feminist ideas" (Marwick & Caplan, 2018, p. 2).

### **Online Constructions of Masculinity, Manhood, and Manhood Acts**

The organizational identity within TRP is constituted and organized around masculinity and manhood. Whereas masculinity referred to the discursive constructions of gender that privileges dominance, sexual promiscuity, and stoicism, manhood referred to the daily enacted practices associated with masculinity. This discursive construction is evident in the overall semantic data collected and analyzed from the Top 100 posts of all time. Table 3 showcases the Top 25 co-occurring node (word) pairs in the semantic data. In Table 3, frequently occurring word pairs showcase a variety of configurations of manhood. For instance, the word pair, "men – do\_not" appear 113 times throughout the text corpus. Throughout the semantic network, TRP members frequently described and constructed a variety of visions and configurations of how a "Red Pill Man" should (and should not) act, behave, or perform their masculine identities. This is also evident in the variety of word pairs containing the node, "men" (e.g., "nice – men," "young – men," "beta – men," "gay – men," etc.)

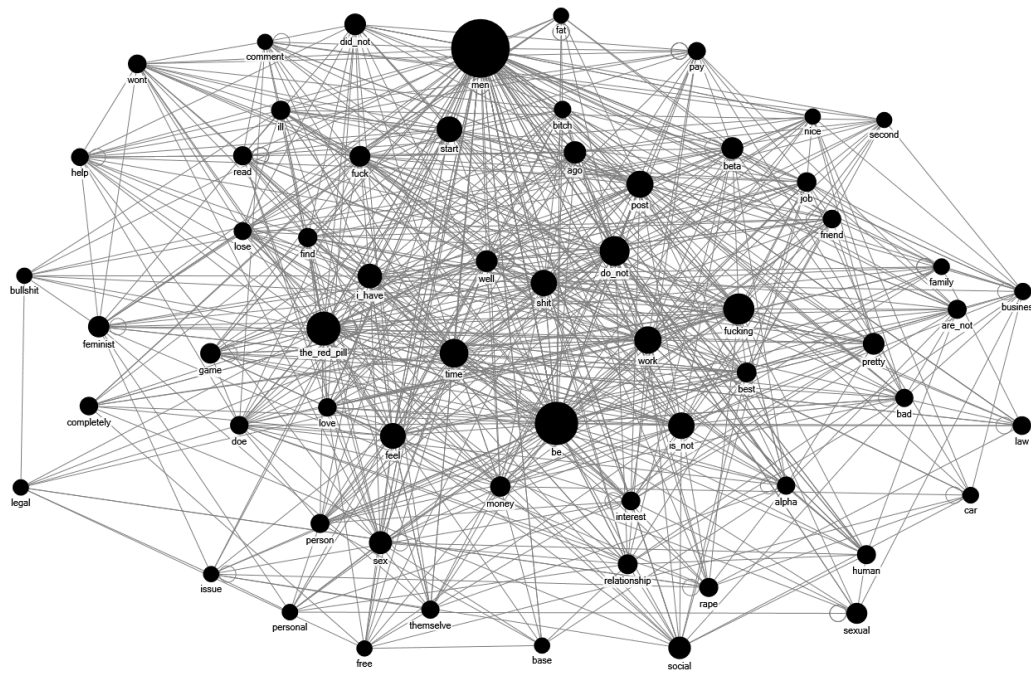
**Table 3.** Top 25 Nodes Pairs (Word Pairs) in the Top 100 Posts of all time within r/TheRedPill

<i>Word Pair</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
hard - work	132
red - flag	114
men – do_not	113
nice - men	103
i_have - read	100
young - men	98
holy - shit	97
blah - blah	88
beta - men	86
birth - control	79
the_red_pill - men	78
false - rape	71
i_have - post	70
gay - men	69
feel - bad	66
abundance - mentality	65
average - men	59
be - men	58
social - circle	58
spend - time	57
find – the_red_pill	55
best - post	54
monk - mode	52
social - skill	51
bank - account	50

Regarding node-level statistics, “Men” is the most central node throughout the entire text corpus (see Table 4 and Figure 9). Men (and conceptions of manhood and manhood acts) are a central part of the conversation within TRP. Manhood acts “have the effect of reproducing an unequal gender order” (Schrock & Schalbe, 2009, p. 280).

**Table 4.** Top 10 Nodes (Words) in the Top 100 Posts of all time within r/TheRedPill

<i>Word</i>	<i>Degree Centrality</i>
Men	715
Be	391
The_Red_Pill	240
Fucking	201
Do_Not	186
Time	171
Work	154
Post	150
Is_Not	144
Shit	141

**Figure 9.** The Top 60 Nodes within the Overall Semantic Network with degree of 50 or higher, with node size representing degree centrality.

Additionally, the second largest central node was “Be,” which co-occurs with “Men” 58 times throughout the text corpus and was within the top 50 pairs (out of 152,965-word pairs). Additionally, as Figure 9 demonstrated, of the Top 10 nodes, “Men” and “Do\_Not” are two highly central nodes. This figure indicated that these nodes are highly connected to others within the overall text body, and throughout the text corpus proffered explicit semantic references to what men should and should not do. Frequently, these semantic references reinforce a narrow definition of masculinity and manhood that become a central part of the TRP identity. Within the actual discussion threads, these sentiments are shared in the following way, “men don't have any need of women outside of relationship / plate status.” Plate status refers to one of the “theories” that portray women as plates that are constantly being spun—women are prospects and men should spin multiple plates at any given time (Updated Glossary of Terms and Acronyms, 2015). Based off the image of a circus trick that performers often attempt to spin as many plates at one time, women are literally objectified and analogous to plates that men spin.

Moreover, to practice TRP, men ought to have little regard for women-as-objects as they can be discarded at any time.

Another example of this reinforcement of masculinity occurred in the following excerpt:

[in reply to the following comment:] It's just that men don't want to appear weak

I am one of those men, or I was one of those men. My ex-wife slapped me in the face repeatedly and even punched me closed fist in the back. Did I call the cops? Nope, and I regret that choice.

In this exchange, an explicit reference is made that men should not be weak and cast a narrow view of how men should act in offline settings. The user above described an instance of domestic violence that he faced within his marriage, and the narrow frame of masculinity (i.e., not appearing weak or like a victim) he adopted prevented him from calling law enforcement. What was evident in these two instances is the reinforcement of hegemonic and limitedly defined



performances of manhood. TRP members argued in quasi-moral terms of how men should behave, and their codification of masculinity in limited ways prevented men from engaging the world around them differently. As the second example demonstrated, the user regretted not calling law enforcement when his ex-wife engaged in domestic violence. These narrow definitions of masculinity and how men should behave served as an entry into the deeper and contradictory nature of how TRP cultivated, shared, and engaged in constructing masculinity, manhood, and manhood acts throughout the subreddit. More specifically, these definitions of masculinity emerged in the discourse surrounding Alphas and Betas.

### **Alphas and Beta: Red Pill versus Blue Pill**

The first dualistic thread of identity within TRP existed within the Alpha and Beta discourse. The dualism occurred in TRP as these identities represented two poles of masculinity. Whereas the Alpha is the strong man; the Beta is the weak. As previously noted, TRP broadly constructed a narrow and limited vision of men's gendered identity; and these two poles represented one of the clearest images of these limits.

Alphas represent the aspirational form of identity that all TRP members should try to become (see Figure 2). According to the TRP Glossary, Alphas are “socially dominant. Somebody who displays high value<sup>15</sup>, or traits that are sexually attractive to women. Alpha can refer to a man who exhibits alpha behaviors (more alpha tendencies than beta), but usually used to describe individual behaviors themselves” (Updated Glossary of Terms and Acronyms, 2015). Alpha men are strong (both mentally *and* physically), and engage in multiple sex partners (in TRP-terminology, “spinning plates”). The following comment showcased how the notion of

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<sup>15</sup> Throughout TRP, value is often couched within one's sexual market value.

alpha male within with TRP. One user shared an experience that he had at a club where a woman attempted to initiate sex in a bathroom at a dance club with him:

Phew, oh god I have dodged so many bullets with women in my life by sheer accident...I hesitated and asked if she had a rubber, because I didn't have any. She said we don't need one, she told me she was clean. Luckily [sic] I was too drunk and I lost my erection and couldn't get it up in time. The bouncer knocked on the door just in time, and demanded me to unlock the door. The girl said no, but I opened it even though my dick was still hanging out for everyone to see. I zipped up then I went back to my friends. When the closing time came, I saw the chick again with her friends, I asked if she wanted to continue where we left off, she replied "I have a boyfriend." Then I asked are you sure? Because it didn't stop you earlier. And then left without hearing her reply. *Anyways I always thought that damn that was my alpha moment: a hot chick wants my dick because I'm jacked and special and whatever.* (emphasis added) I used to be proud of that, and everytime I told that story I was "the man" because random women at the club just want to fuck me. But now after TRP I've realized that she just wanted my cum, to fuck her boyfriend over and if that fails, I was backup plan, and this shit is instinctual to women."

These types of horror stories, as the user above described, were shared to promote villainous portrayals of women. Although the woman mentioned in this scenario performed a recurring villainous trope that appears frequently in TRP, the salient part of this scenario was italicized. To be an alpha, this user believed that an attention from a "hot chick" because he was "jacked" represented the ideal alpha moment. Interestingly, the user ended his comment by talking about the result of TRP in exposing him to the idea that women continually use men for a variety of reasons. Additionally, part of being an Alpha within the TRP also included a weariness about long-term relationships and marriages as they deny the biological drive for men to procreate. In a discussion about Alphas and "cucks,"<sup>16</sup> one user shared the following statement, "Humans are meant to reproduce, make the most number of offspring and thrive in any survival situations. If monogamy was so natural why do I love threesomes and etc [sic] and why is that most marriages just don't stick." Examples like the two mentioned above conveyed the idea that both monogamy

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<sup>16</sup> "Cucks" are a pejorative term that have become "a byword for beta male or coward" (Lahitou, 2016, para. 5).

and serious romantic relationships are not viable or safe for men because women are instinctually engaging in sexual hypergamy—or looking to constantly improve their own sexual relations. Hypergamy<sup>17</sup> is often linked to feminism, in that TRPers believed that all women instinctually “trade up” their Alphas. In other words, TRPers believed that women are aware of men’s Alpha traits, and, deterministically, will leave a man in favor of a stronger Alpha.

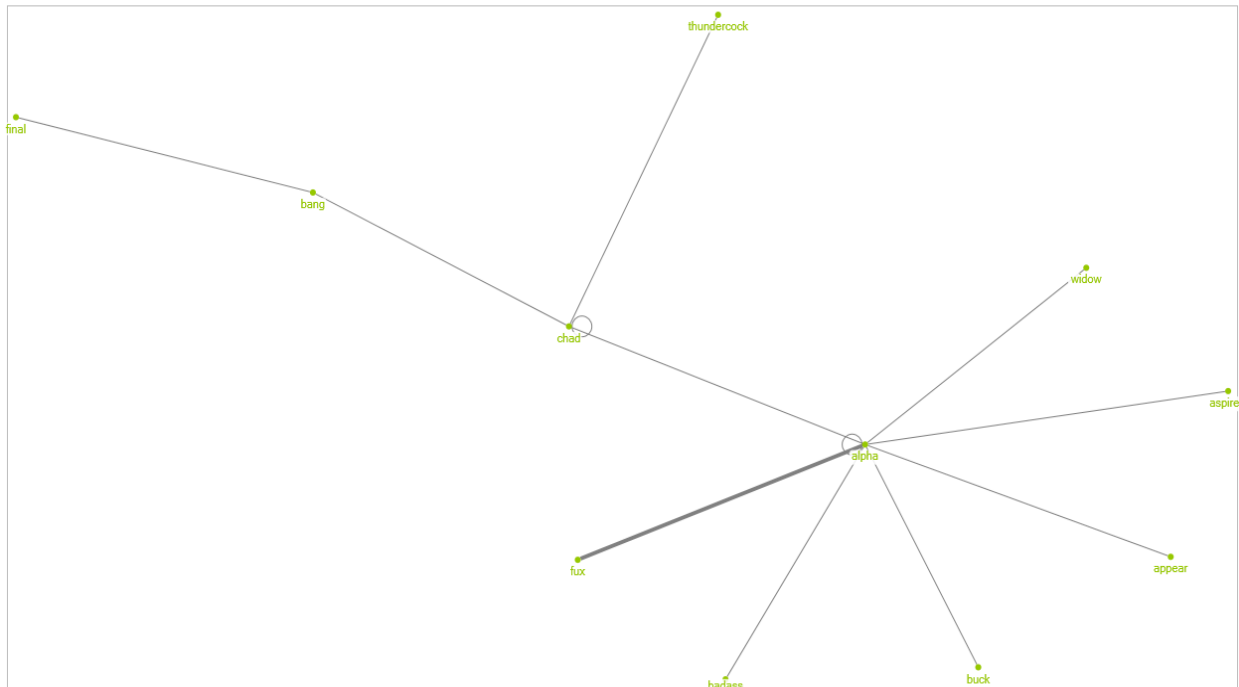
Despite these warnings about women’s hypergamous nature, Alphas maintain a high self-esteem, and are unaffected by society’s standards for men. This construction of their own identity regardless of others’ standards is evident in the following comment:

But an alpha male builds his own frame. His strength of reality is determined internally—not based on external stimulus. Then he projects it out onto the external world--where it is believed by women and beta males to be "reality". As an alpha male (by which I just mean a developed male) it's you who create and determine what is accepted as "reality". Other people adjust to it.

Embedded within this comment is the additional notion that Alphas are those that build and adopt their own “frames” through which to simultaneously view and interact with the world while performing and enacting their individual identity. In other words, Alphas actively craft their own authentic identities based on their ability to reframe and reposition themselves as a rejection to the status quo—one that is dominated by feminist and progressive control of institutions.

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<sup>17</sup> According to the TRP Glossary, hypergamy is defined in the following way: “The instinctual urge for women to seek out the best alpha available. This is marked by maximizing rejection (therefore women are the selective gender). A woman will vet her alpha through various shit tests to ensure his ‘health’ on the alpha scale. She is conditioned to recognize a declining alpha, as hypergamy also tends to continue seeking out higher status males even while with an alpha male. Shit tests allow her to prepare herself for eventually leaving when a new higher status male is found. If the male fails shit tests to a great enough degree, it will effect her [sic] feelings for him. He will effectively lower his sexual market value in her eyes. This will enable her to jump to the next male with ease and little remorse.”



**Figure 10.** Alpha Aspirations within TRP.

Despite these manifestations of Alpha traits, TRPs often speak contradictorily about being an alpha—both in definition and application. Being an alpha is ideal and aspiration (as evident in the word pairs, “alpha–aspire”); however, aspirations of being an Alpha are not obtainable. Being an Alpha operated as a motivational tool for members of TRP; yet it remained an unattainable feat. One user shared the following statement that echoed this sentiment:

Always been semi-alpha my whole life (sports, worked out since I was 18, tall, etc.), but I first started reading TRP a few years ago around when I moved to LA. Lived in LA for 2 years, got a gf who was one of the hottest girls I've banged to date, dated her for a year, and then she dumped me 2 months ago. Now TRP really hits home and I can internalize it. This is the toughest pill to swallow yet - when you're not on top of that mountain, but have to re-build yourself back up once reality hits.

As shown with this excerpt, the user described himself as a “semi-alpha,” despite possessing many of the Alpha traits (sports, fitness, and an attractive girlfriend) described within TRP. In other words, the Alpha aspirations simultaneously revealed the coexistence of both insecurities

(i.e., having to reckon with a relational failure) *and* confidence (i.e., applying the lessons that become real after a disruption in life).

If being an Alpha (dominance, superior to other men; displaying desirability to women, etc.) is an aspirational and impossible task, TRP challenged and coached men that appearances were the next best thing. The semantic network in Figure 10 contains the word pairs, “appear–alpha.” Appearing Alpha is discussed within TRP in contradictory ways. On one hand, members note that being an Alpha “takes next to nothing...because everyone out there is so fucking beta. The only ‘men,’ who appear Alpha (outside of communities like this) are idiots who don't know any better.” Put differently, outsiders aspiring to be an Alpha often misuse and abuse the TRP ideas without engaging in the larger TRP ideology about trying to encompass “Alpha-ness” through sexual activity shared throughout the subreddit.

Still, even within TRP, there are multiple definitions of alpha behaviors that are fragmented and conflicting one another. For instance, one user stated,

Being a man isn't about having an overinflated ego, that's some fuckboy shit.  
Being a man, coming into your own, is about defeat. Be defeated, surrender, allow yourself to lose. Losing is learning. The ultimate goal is not crushing pussy...You are enough...The only thing you need to attract a woman is your mind. Open up your heart, start giving love. Smile with your fucking body. Take an interest in people, show them the path to happiness. Be the light in the fucking darkness.

In alpha terms, being a man is about recognizing one's own self-actualization, or being enough. The above user also described becoming an Alpha in terms of “giving love” and “smiling with your fucking body.” These descriptors conveyed an overly positive characterization of being an Alpha rooted in self-love and self-acceptance. These types of beliefs about acceptance have been propagated throughout self-help literature for men since the late 1970's men's liberation

movements.<sup>18 19</sup> These types of mental and emotional states are obtainable through mindfulness practices. Whereas new age gurus would encourage meditation to reach states of heightened awareness, Red Pillers believed that mindfulness is gained through offline practices like lifting weights. Additionally, in practicing “shit tests<sup>20</sup>” at bars, men flirted with woman, and, at times, can become desensitized to rejection. Others noted that this mindful revelation of “being enough” was the most important “frame” that a member can have within TRP; however, speaking figuratively, one user described the alpha behaviors in hierarchical terms, “if she sees that actually I am placing myself FAR ABOVE her and playing the role of ‘ultimate arbiter of what is good and what is evil,’ then she will know I am alpha (emphasis in original).” To that end, being an alpha is about establishing dominance over women. This user’s phrasing indicated a strategic and logical application of an Alpha identity that fostered an almost God-like presence over women. This user’s invocation of a God-like identity paralleled Bly (1990)’s concept of Zeus energy, “which encompasses intelligence, robust health, compassionate decisiveness, good will, generous leadership. Zeus energy is male authority accepted for the sake of the community” (p. 22).

Contrasting these images of an enlightened Alpha man, other users described natural-born Alphas. One user wrote the following description,

The so-called natural alpha is just an inconsiderate prick who lacks any empathy or ability to conceptualize beyond the edge of his dick. The only thoughts that come to his head are "Me horny! Me go fuck girls now," and then he does it. And then he appears alpha... he appears to be a decisive man. But his problem is that he acts without thinking.

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<sup>18</sup> For a review of men’s liberation and men’s rights movement aims, see Messner (1998, 2016).

<sup>19</sup> An often-referenced book within TRP is the book, *The Way of the Superior Man: A Spiritual Guide to Mastering the Challenges of Women, Work, and Sexual Desire* by David Deida, which focused on men’s mastering of specific mindfulness practices to become an enlightened man. It is the top book sold in Amazon’s “General Gender Studies” category (“Amazon Best Sellers: Best General Gender Studies”, 2018).

<sup>20</sup> According to TRP’s glossary, a shit test (or fitness test) is, “A statement or question meant to gauge your level of Alpha traits.”

These men are described in negative ways that contradict the way that TRP conceptualized the Alpha male. For instance, this conceptualization of Alpha expressed an inability to move beyond his sexual drive; whereas, the TRP Alpha is one that possessed an ability to think beyond his sexual drive. In other words, through the TRP wisdoms, the Alpha is able to make choices based on his own heightened ability to see beyond his carnal desire for sex.

The TRP members named this unobtainable, embodied Alpha man: “Chad J. Thundercock.” Chad J. Thundercock (Chad) is a recurring name referenced throughout TRP, and serves as a mythical hero within the subreddit. He is synonymous for “whichever John your wife/gf/fiance/etc... is moving on to.” Considering the TRP belief that women are hypergamous, Chad represented an individual for whom women leave their men; to TRPers, he always embodied a stronger Alpha frame than the given man. Chad is also described in the following way:

The irony of Chad Thundercock is that despite him being the evil arch type alpha that steals your girlfriend and fucks your sister, but doesn't call her back the next days that this forum often uses him as, many of the members of this form would probably qualify as being a Chad Thundercock themselves. At worst, Chad is just the alpha who uses his powers in a manor [sic] deemed unacceptable by those who have either fallen victim to his charm or aspire to be him.

As this excerpt demonstrated, Chad personified both the evils of the Alpha identity, but also representative of many of the members' actions. While he is the archetypal manifestation of Alpha-ness, he is situated within TRP as both an anti-hero (both good and bad) and a socially constructed symbol of Alpha-ness. These constructions of Chad are evident in the specificity through which TRPers describe him in height and weight measurements (“6'5" 225 [lbs]” with “less than 10 percent body fat”). Physically, Chad also represented the idealized man that women want to be with sexually. He has physical, financial, and sexual prowess to which women

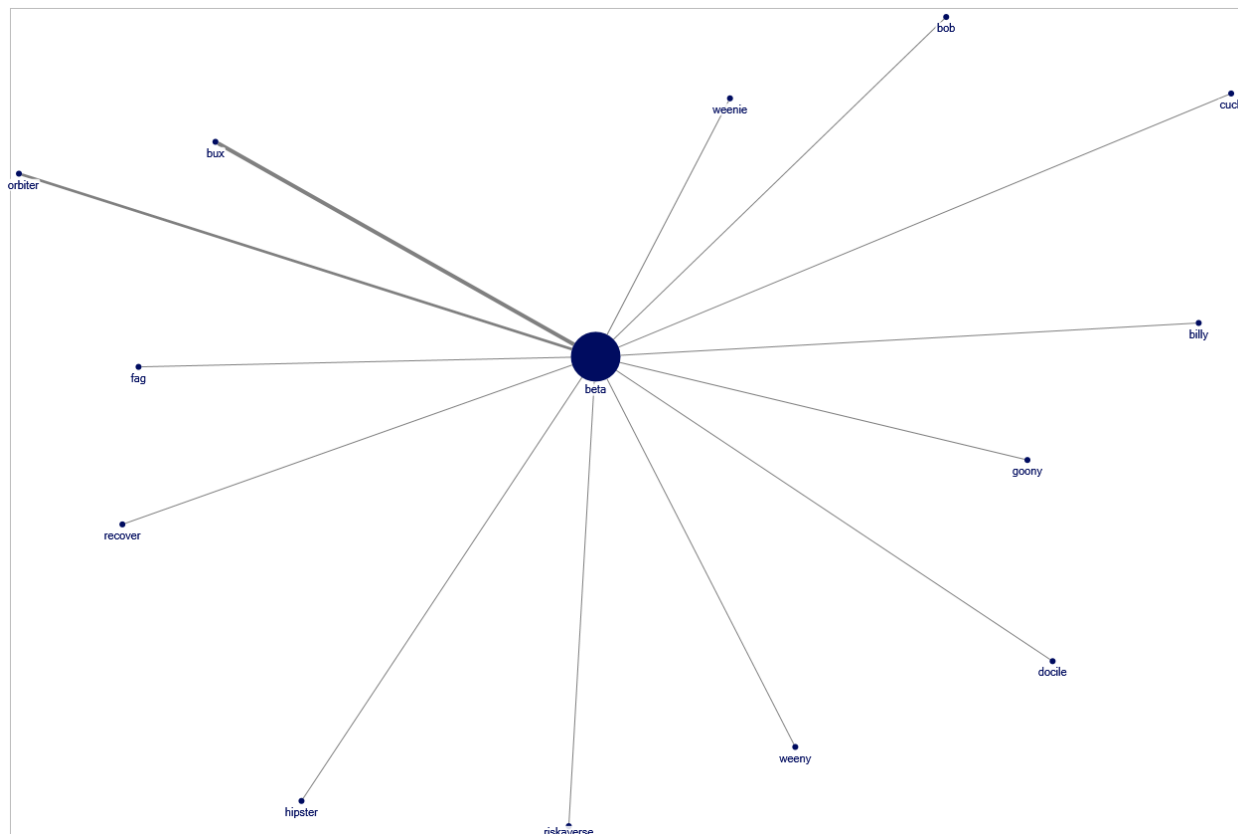
instinctually flock. In other words, Chad rarely exhibited little effort to attract women as he understands his worth and himself within society. Another user shared the following about Chad:

Boiled down, Chad Thundercock is simply the embodiment of the phrase "No matter how good you are, theres [sic] always somebody better". And 'better' depends on circumstance, not facts or reason. Chad is the Boogeyman for most men in relationships, and the reality of the threat Chad represents is the fault of widespread female promiscuity.

Widespread female promiscuity is often discussed within TRP, with Chad being the embodiment of how men can take advantage of women's promiscuity.

TRPers frequently argue that the feminist society teaches men that women want emotional stability and nurturing, but they really want to be dominated. One user wrote, "A girl wants a handsome prince to ride up and take her with him. LOL bro, I found your problem...you're still plugged in! A girl wants Chad Thundercock to fuck her like the whore she is." This quote conveyed the nature of dichotomies within TRP regarding a social construction that operates as a template for an Alpha identity *and* a fundamental Truth about women in society. These types of components of the TRP ideological worldview converge throughout the subreddit; however, this instance indicated how the convergence of these dichotomies constructed and regulated both the social reality and further defined TRP manhood through sexual activity. The evidence of the phrase, "you're still plugged in!" intimated a critique that the user being responded to has yet to fully adopt TRP perspectives, and, as a result, will continue to be bested by Chad. Chad's embodiment of the Alpha male served as a symbol for aspiration within TRP. TRP members often noted, though, that the "Chads of the world" are only viewed as Alphas by Betas. Some even note that "Alpha and Chad are not interchangeable terms;" however, this Alpha-Chad relationship is often contradicted throughout the discussion threads in the language that is used to describe both Chad and Alpha.





**Figure 11.** Framing of Betas within TRP

At times, TRPers struggled to define themselves within the Alpha discourse; however, there was almost universal understanding and clarity on who they *are not* and *should not be*: Betas. According to the TRP Glossary, Betas “display low value to women if they are are [sic] put on too strong or too early in meeting- giving without equity. Beta can be used to describe individual behaviors, as well as people who have an overwhelming amount of beta properties (opposed to alpha)” (Updated Glossary of Terms and Acronyms, 2015). In Figure 11, the central node of this cluster was “Beta” and was connected directly to the following nodes: “docile,” “weenie,” “cuck,” “fag,” and “bullshit.” These word pairs connected and framed the Beta as weaker as they are defined by their feminized natures. Whereas Alphas were individualistic and focused on themselves, Betas were nurturers and providers—particularly to women. One user



living to their fullest potential and were not “dominating” their lives. For instance, one user wrote the following:

Realising you can be anything you want to be is the toughest pill to swallow.  
People cling to the blue pill because it absolves their failures. Fat > not your fault,  
diets are hard Virgin > not your fault, you're too short etc etc Shit job > not your  
fault, you didn't go to college.

In other words, the Blue Pill world fostered one of the worst aspects of the Beta identity: weakness and lack of agency. To the TRP identity, weakness and femininity reinforced the continued disenfranchisement of men within society. To adopt Red Pill teachings often meant that men are subject to no one but themselves. Their failures, missteps, and issues that emerged throughout life were of their own doing; in other words, to adopt the Red Pill was akin to being in control of one's life. TRPers often refer to the Blue Pill in terms of slavery, and the TRP offers liberation:

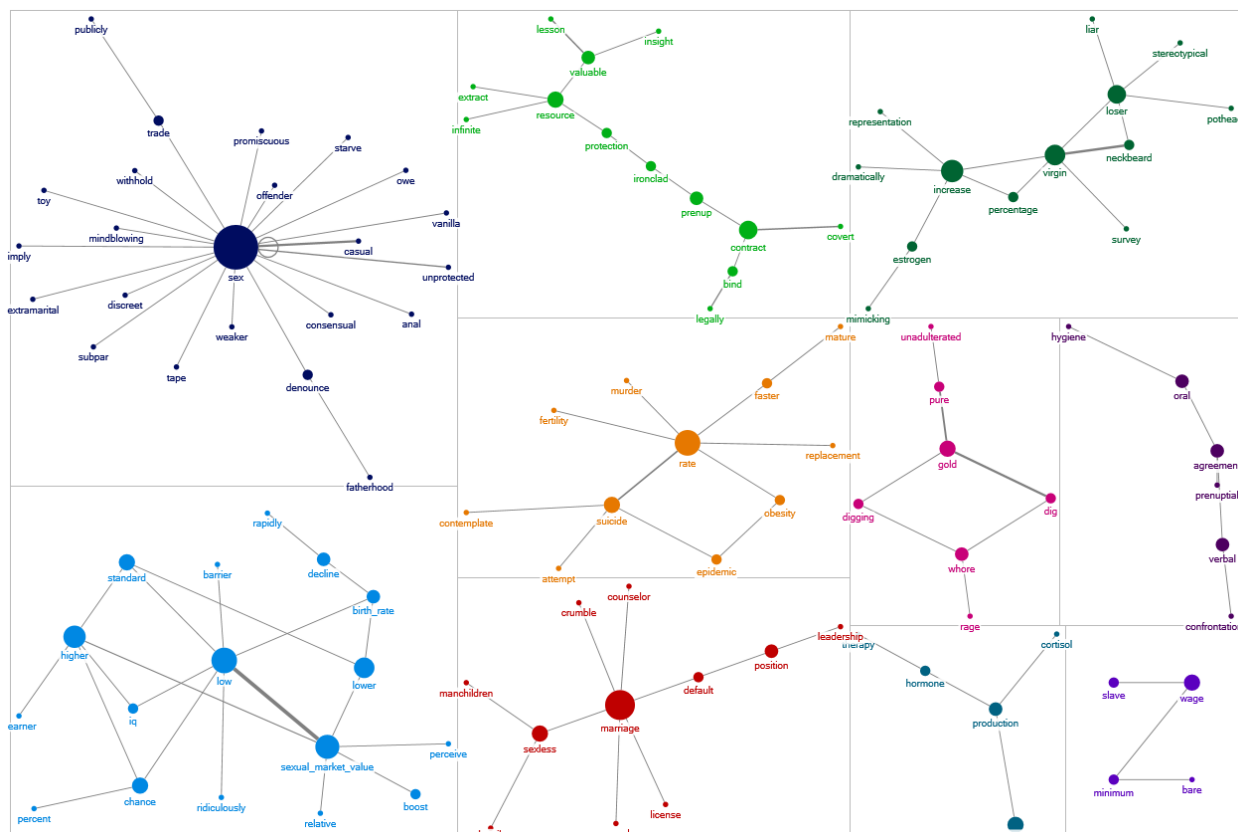
TRP has truth. What you do with that truth is up to you. The fact that it's even referred to as the "RP community" indicates that, yup, TRP came first. Everything else has been a divergent off-shoot of the original The RedPill principles, like bastard children trying to reinterpret the material. This sub, the The Red Pill terminology, all of it was created and refined here within TRP. TRP is what we say it is... We're on the same boat: freedom from the blue pill world. We don't want freedom from the Blue Pill world; we want to fucking dominate it. You fuckers keep goddamn thinking our goals are aligned when they've never been. TRP is about creating a powerful sexual identity for men that allows them to dominate the game at a higher level of play.

Embedded within this excerpt are a variety of images utilized to convey several Truths about TRP. First, TRP operated as the sole author and originator of Red Pill principles; other communities within the network are described as “bastard children” meaning that they are illegitimate. Second, the comment employed the use of “boat” as a metaphor that depicted a journey toward freedom from the world as it existed (“the blue pill world”). As an organization, TRP served its members by helping to free them from both the mindset of the feminized Beta, and ensorcelled its members to reject the status quo in favor of an alternative pathway of

manhood and identity. Perhaps more interestingly, freedom was not enough for TRP members; the comment also invoked the necessity to dominate. Domination is echoed in their use of “game” metaphors. Whereas, TRPers argued that society has socialized men to enact a Beta identity, TRP offered an alternative pathway and possibility for men—one that freed and usurped the existing social order of manhood. Additionally, these pathways offered both liberation and transformation through adopting practices and strategies aimed at increasing one’s sexual activity.

### **Sex as Agentic**

A second contradictory thread of the TRP identity was focused on sex. A recurring motto within TRP is, “Alpha fucks, Beta bucks.” This thread is related to the former in that sex simultaneously centered and extended the Alpha/Beta discourse. The contradiction emerged through the impact of sexual activity. Sex is framed as both liberatory and a way through which men regain their lost sense of status within society (“Alpha fucks”); however, those that did not engage in multiple and numerous sexual activities were passive and weak-minded or were Betas within society (“Beta bucks”). Conversations throughout TRP centered on trying to increase sexual activity while engaging the contrast of what happens when lack of sexual activity occurs (see Figure 13).

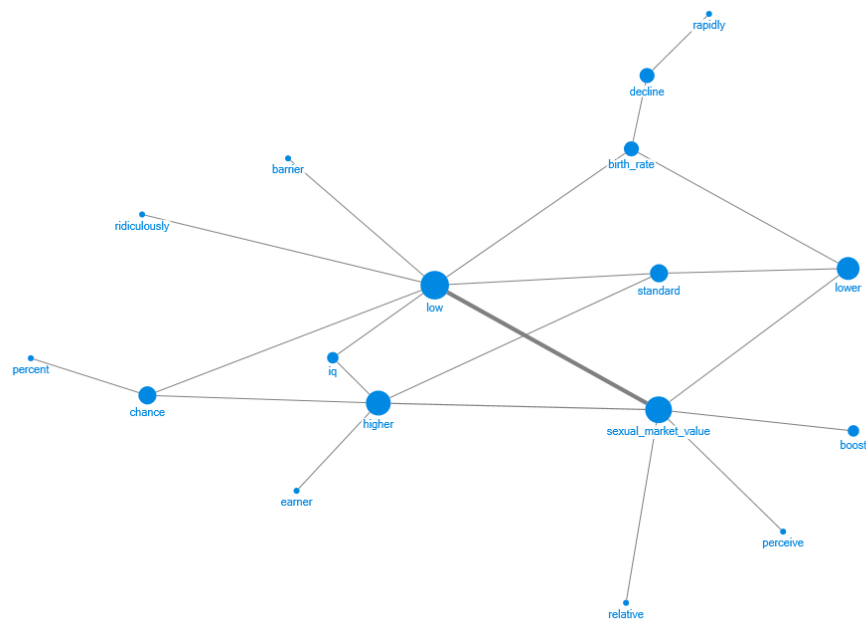


**Figure 13.** Conversations on and around sexual activity within TRP

Learning how to increase one's sexual activity through a cultivation of "strong frames", which increase one's sexual market value, is a staple conversation and tenet of the TRP identity. Strong frames are the most notable Alpha behavior, and are evident in an increased sexual market value. According to TRP, sexual market values are "a shorthand statement for 'what you bring to the table,' whether for a one-night stand or for a longer sexual/emotional relationship" (Updated Glossary of Terms and Acronyms, 2015). Although a "longer sexual/emotional relationship" was not ideal for TRPers, one user wrote the following,

Do not get married. Unless it is on your terms (very rare). Do not get married too young. Even then, what do you stand to gain from marriage? Tread carefully here. Long term relationships are the red pill on expert mode.

For those engaged in long term relationships, agency and personal choice were implications of engaging in longer relationships; however, continually garnering gains in the sexual market place were critical in maintaining these relationships. In other words, men needed a high sexual market value to increase their chances of sex. Figure 14 showcased a subgroup of how sexual market values are framed within TRP. There were semantic linkages between the node, “sexual\_market\_value,” and nodes like “higher,” “lower,” “boost,” “perceive,” and “relative.”



**Figure 14.** Sexual Market Value within TRP

For example, one user wrote that almost everything men do is rooted in biological imperatives to boost their opportunities for sex:

Virtually everything we do as human beings is an expression of our biological imperatives and predispositions whether we realize it or not. This is especially apparent in our choice of career, at least for men. For example, why do so many men want to get a lucrative job? It's not because they enjoy working 80 hours a week, that's for sure. No, it's because somewhere deep down they know having a great high prestige job with a six-figure income is going to enhance their sexual success with women. It's so ingrained into us that we don't even realize it, and to do so is politically incorrect. This is one example of raising one's sexual market value (SMV) without even realizing it (or publicly acknowledging it).

To some TRP members, arguments for men's promiscuity centered on biological desires for sex.

When In questioning another TRP member, one user wrote,

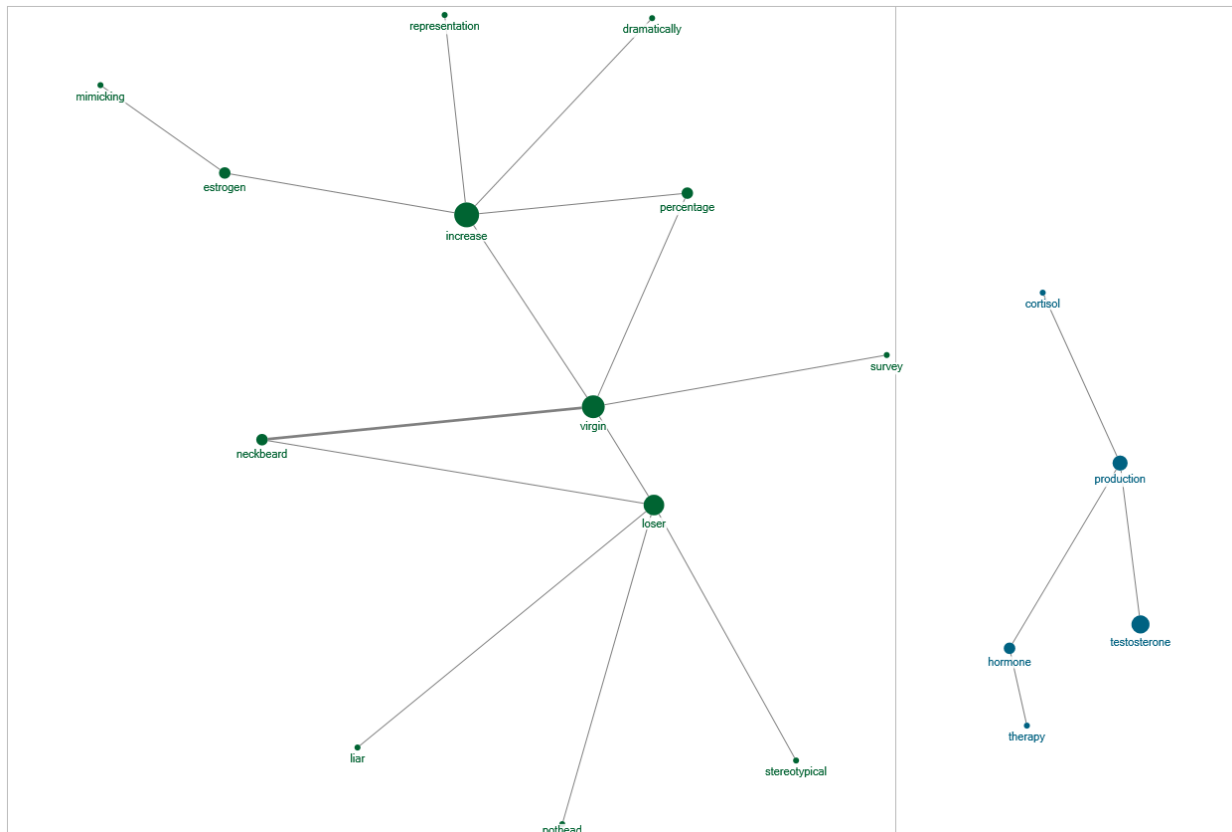
Doesn't that mess up the biological implications that we want to procreate and pass our genes with the best possible mates? If we are fucking landwhales just to create a high SMV (which isn't even 100% guaranteed), and not actual hot women during that time so that we can pass our genes superiorly so that we can go up the alpha ladder every generation.

In other words, a truth about TRP men was that they are hard-wired for sex. Moreover, sex motivated every choice a man made. As both users argued, everything men do within society was an effort to improve their own chances for sexual activity. Career choices and salaries were nothing more than an expression of men's attempt to increase the likelihood of sex.

Other expressions of men's SMV circled back to the evolutionary and biological concept of fitness, a staple of Alpha behaviors and traits. Another user shared,

Not only are you enhancing your quality of life, longevity, and all that, you're also making yourself more physically attractive, and I think it's a fair generalization that most people would like to look good naked. People don't generally go through the hassle of dieting and the pain of working out because it's fun. While it can be, that's usually not the unconscious motivations at play. Often, like the example above, people realize being physically fit raises their SMV.

Using evolutionary psychology, arguments were frequently made throughout TRP regarding sex as the fundamental activity that undergirds every man's decision-making. Additionally, one way to boost men's sexual prowess was through testosterone. In Figure 15, central nodes within this subgraph included "testosterone" and "production," and common argument was that high levels of testosterone contribute to increasing men's SMV.



**Figure 15.** Semantic Subcluster of Testosterone Conversations within TRP

Although testosterone production was discussed within fitness and dieting contexts as members share tips on how to increase testosterone, TRPers also offered warnings about increasing estrogen or consuming estrogen-mimicking foods and drinks (see Figure 16). Within the comment threads, though, users discussed the importance of testosterone in the following ways:

Men need allot of T [Testosterone] to get the engine starting, a little bit of T is enough to fuck with a woman's hormones though. You won't see chicks growing beards but the imbalance created by a shitty diet (McDonalds) and binge drinking is enough to change a sensual woman. Same can be said for men, the T-lowering factors just bottles down to hormonal imbalance. So you won't be growing tits but certainly won't be Chad either.



Another user argued that doing manly things was a way to fight estrogen:

Off topic, but if you feel like a [sic] estrogen filled bitch, you need to lift heavy. Fuck lifting "to get tone", lift to get STRONG. Don't make cardio a main focus on your fitness regimen, make it ancillary. CELEBRATE being a fucking man. Go spear fishing. Kill for your food, at least once in your life. Go build something, restore a car, shave with a straight razor, REFUSE to be forced into being a female with a dick.

Within this user's comments reveal multiple layers of the TRP idea of manhood: physical fitness through specific acts, a celebratory mindset, and doing stereotypical manly acts. Moreover, these manhood acts echoed and extended Bly's (1990) mythopoetic idea of men being initiated into manhood, as "a boy must be initiated into the world of men. It doesn't happen by itself; it doesn't happen just because he eats Wheaties" (p. 14). In other words, men to embrace their innate and "deep masculine" natures to become men (Bliss, 1995; Ferber, 2000; Heinrich, 2014). In embracing their masculine natures, men's perceived loss of dominance disappears. Although some discussions about fitness and wellness occur within TRP, most discussions of testosterone within TRP revert to the role of testosterone and increasing men's sex drive.

According to TRP, testosterone is synonymous with male virility, male fitness and overall well-being. The intersection of these threads is evident in the following comment related to how TRP offered a space to move beyond an unhappy relationship, invest in his physical wellness, and increase his overall sexual activity:

I wasn't happy feeling like shit. Three months ago, I broke up with my [LTR; long-term relationship]. In 3 months I've dropped nearly 50lbs. I'm finishing up Week 8 of Couch to 5K. I've had sex with 8 women in the last three months. I have a regular FWB who enjoys sex with me so much she invites me over nearly every day. I wasn't happy in my LTR, but I wasn't happy with myself mostly. I let myself gain a shit load of weight. I put up with being in a long distance boring LTR. I was responsible and am responsible for my own happiness. Am I 100% happy? Fuck no, but I'm getting there. The Red Pill has helped me realize that I'm number one in my life. I used to be priority #1 in my life long before TRP, but I let myself get settled into being fat, out of shape, boring and unhappy. TRP fixes men, it doesn't ruin relationships.

Embedded within this user's statement, there was an acknowledgement of the dualities that exist in a variety of ways within TRP: Relationships versus casual sex; fit versus fat; pre-TRP versus post-TRP. To be a member of TRP, members defined themselves at one end of the dualisms presented: casual sex; fit; and post-TRP. These dualities both constructed and illuminated a tensional reality that centered sexual activity as a key to dominance, happiness, and feeling like a man.

The discourse surrounding sex was framed in a variety of ways, but is both a by-product of practicing TRP doctrines and activities. As one user wrote,

If you become the greatest man you can be, you're physically fit, professionally successful, socially apt and well-connected, and full of useful skills and interesting hobbies, sexual success just falls into place. Not only does your life rock on its own, but women want to fuck you and be a part of the awesome ride that is your life? Who cares if she "likes" you or "hates" you the same way we like or hate feminists? Your life is awesome and women fuck you for it. What more do you want? Public opinion to side with you? Phhht.

Put differently, sex became a product of adopting the TRP strategies and mindsets. As one user shared, "It's about rising to full-fledged polarized Masculine potential through self-empowerment and Awareness. Sex is but an aspect of true masculinity and a fringe benefit." To members of TRP, the entire doctrine is "about self-realization and actualization. But sexuality is a huge part of that, maybe the biggest. And finding harmony with your biology is a crucial step towards finding peace and contentment." Despite the aim to self-actualize and regain dominance, TRP also created an online space through which users often reflected on and discussed the varied ways that they are oppressed. Although sex was a material manifestation of men's perceived regained power, sex was also an expression of men's resentment toward society.

## **Backlash: Victims against Victimhood Culture**

Sexual activity is an important aspect of TRP identity; however, it is rooted in a response to and perceived loss of status in society. A final thread of identity throughout TRP concentrates on society's promotion of men's oppression. Men's oppression manifests itself in distinct identity threats. Three areas of conversation emerge related to men's oppression that are focal points within TRP. First, social institutions like marriage are seen an expression of men's oppression—particularly when discussing the effects of divorce on men. Second, a common discussion revolves around the breakdown of society at the hands of the progressive politics of feminists and social justice advocates. Finally, rape is discussed as an ultimate form of men's victimization within society. These three conversational topics highlight the tensions surrounding TRP's critique of the progressive "victimhood culture" while simultaneously (and ironically) framing themselves as the true victims of oppression.

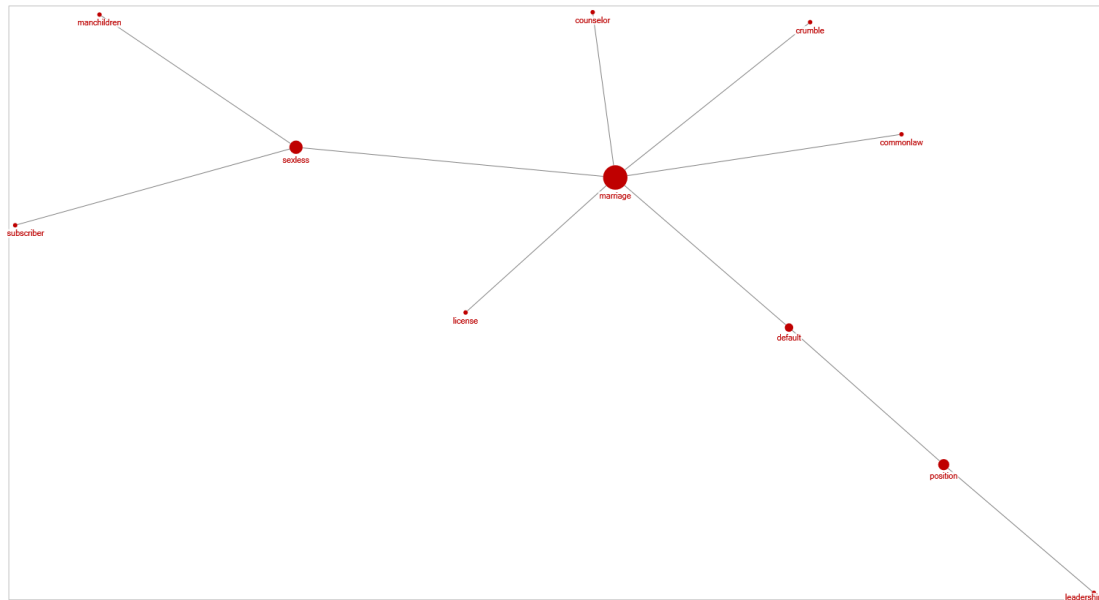
### *Marriage and Divorce*

A prominent conversation within TRP views modern social institutions, like marriage, as inherently designed to disenfranchise men.<sup>21 22</sup> As previously mentioned, TRP portrays men as naturally sex-driven individuals who have a need to engage in multiple sex partners. To them, marriage is a social institution that denies men their true nature and activities. Moreover, men often discuss disappointment in their marriages (and long-term relationships), meaning that these relationships are perceived as not fulfilling their basic needs and interests.

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<sup>21</sup> Over the past 40 years within the United States, divorce courts across the states have moved from a from "the presumption that mothers should be the main, or even sole, caretakers for their children" (Rosin, 2014, para. 3).

<sup>22</sup> According to a 2012 survey of the Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, 56 percent of divorce lawyers in the US have witnessed an increase in women paying child support, and 47 percent have noted an increase in women paying alimony ("More women in the U.S paying their former husbands alimony and child support than ever before", 2014).



**Figure 16.** Conversations about Marriage within TRP.

Figure 16 showcases “marriage” as the central node within the subgraph, and is connected to other nodes like “crumble” and “sexless.” Exemplars of these ideas are evident in the following excerpts from TRP:

I think it's pretty safe to say that most women don't really understand to what degree sex matters in the average man's life. He finds more than a physical release, he finds belonging and acceptance in sex. Sex for a man is knowing you are wanted. The fact is, for most of our lives, we've come to accept that we are not sexually desirable to most (or all) women. Our advances left us crushed and depressed, were treated as creepy or worse than murder. Our relationships left us broken or broke. Our marriages crumbled.

In this excerpt, the user shared experiences of a marriage that “crumbled” because of a lack of sex. To this user (and many within TRP), sex was a form of acceptance, and the absence of sex within a relationship threatened his sense of identity. Sex operated as not only a form of

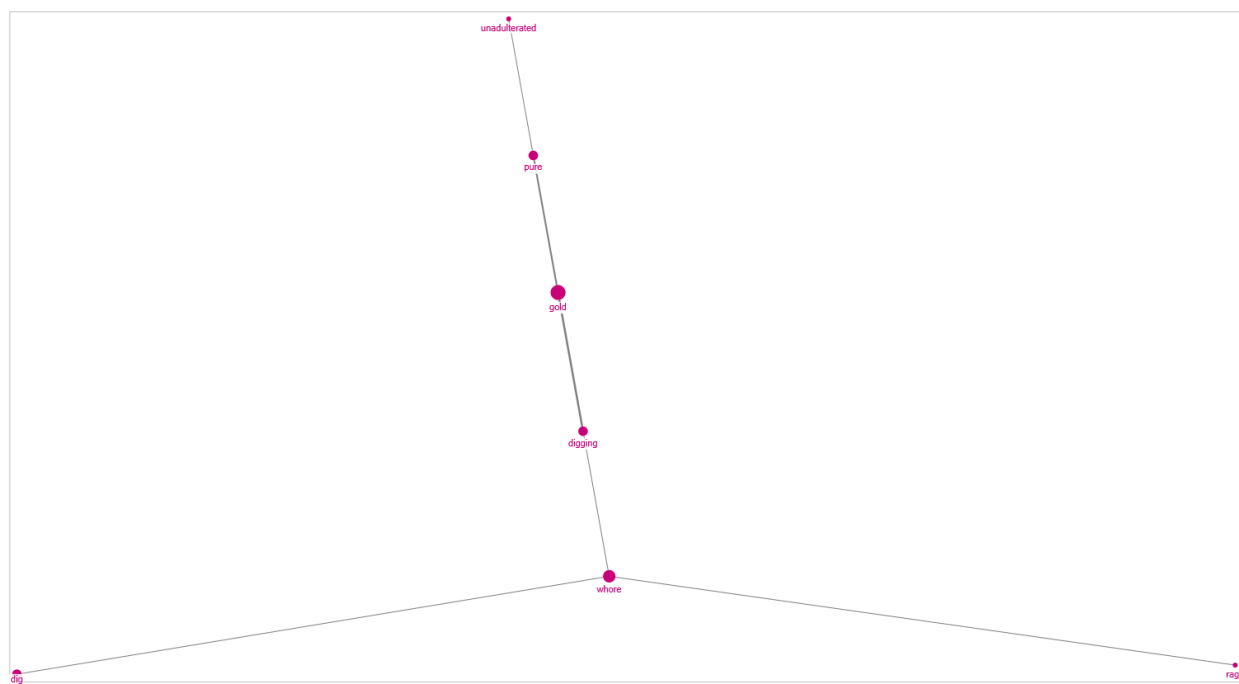
emotional and physical acceptance for men, but also as a form of relational currency. One member described his marriage as both unbalanced and sexless:

I was in a severely unbalanced marriage which counselors, family and most friends suggested I strive to make even more unbalanced. I had been working 80 hours a week to support myself, and my wife, who was mean and overbearing and hadn't had sexual contact with me in over a year...The counselor also wanted to put me on antidepressants, with a major justification being that they would lower my libido, so I'd be happier in my sexless marriage. Hard to be unhappy about unmet needs if you don't have needs.

Sexless marriages and men's general unhappiness with their lives was also mentioned as one avenue that brought men into the TRP subreddit. One user intimated, "Our sexless lives lead us to adopt these views as a last ditch effort to reach sexual success. And most of us stayed here when we realized it was effective." As these two excerpts show, TRP provided a safe space to give voice to their feelings after failed marriages. Oftentimes, members remarked that they found TRP after these relationships ended, and allowed them a space to make sense of the experiences. TRP, as an online organization, created a space for men to address their lack of sexual satisfaction within marriages, as well as lament the breakdown of traditional gender roles that, to them, gave rise to broken marriages and relationships.

Because of these breakdowns, TRP members often villainized women. They argued that most women wanted men to provide for them, and often used men for financial resources. Throughout the text corpus, there were numerous references to the "nightmare scenario" in which women try to take a man's money—or "gold – digging" (see Figure 17). For instance, one user replied, "It's an epidemic of gold digging whores, as a wise man once said." Additionally, members of TRP also describe this type of women as a "whore," as evidenced by Figure 17. One user offered the following advice to a fellow member, "If you can afford to buy them cars, and pay for their school, etc etc etc, you can afford to take some time off and find a real god damn woman, and not any of these filthy gold digging whores." Despite the potential hope that there

are “real women” (as the previous excerpt stated), TRP created the following acronym to describe this type of behavior: AWALT or all women are like that. The role of the villainous, gold digging woman is also prevalent in one of the most visceral issues to TRP members: divorce.



**Figure 17.** Women’s Abuse of Men

TRP members often argued that a key reason men stay in unhappy marriages and long-term relationships are because of the legal system. To them, the legal system privileges women at almost every walk. Figure 18 demonstrates the semantic network of subgraph centered on conversations about the legal system. Important nodes pairs include, “legal – system,” “justice – system,” and “common – law.” These specific nodes are important indicators of institutional systems within the United States that TRP members believe to specifically target men. One specific area that illuminates this idea is divorce.



own. They argue that court systems disenfranchise men, and target men—despite the idea that women, too, engage in sexual activity. Members fight back against the “deadbeat dad” trope, as one member writes,

i [sic] don't understand how retarded someone has to be to not understand that even if she was pregnant and the man wanted nothing to do with her, that it's on her for gobbling the dick of someone who doesn't give a shit about her...‘deadbeat’ dads exist because that is what women want.

To members of the TRP, paternity issues are a nightmare scenario, compounded only by divorce courts. One member commented on another’s post, “he has to work much harder, much smarter, because it's his wife and his children. Unless he fears that he is going to get thoroughly fucked in the ass by divorce court.”

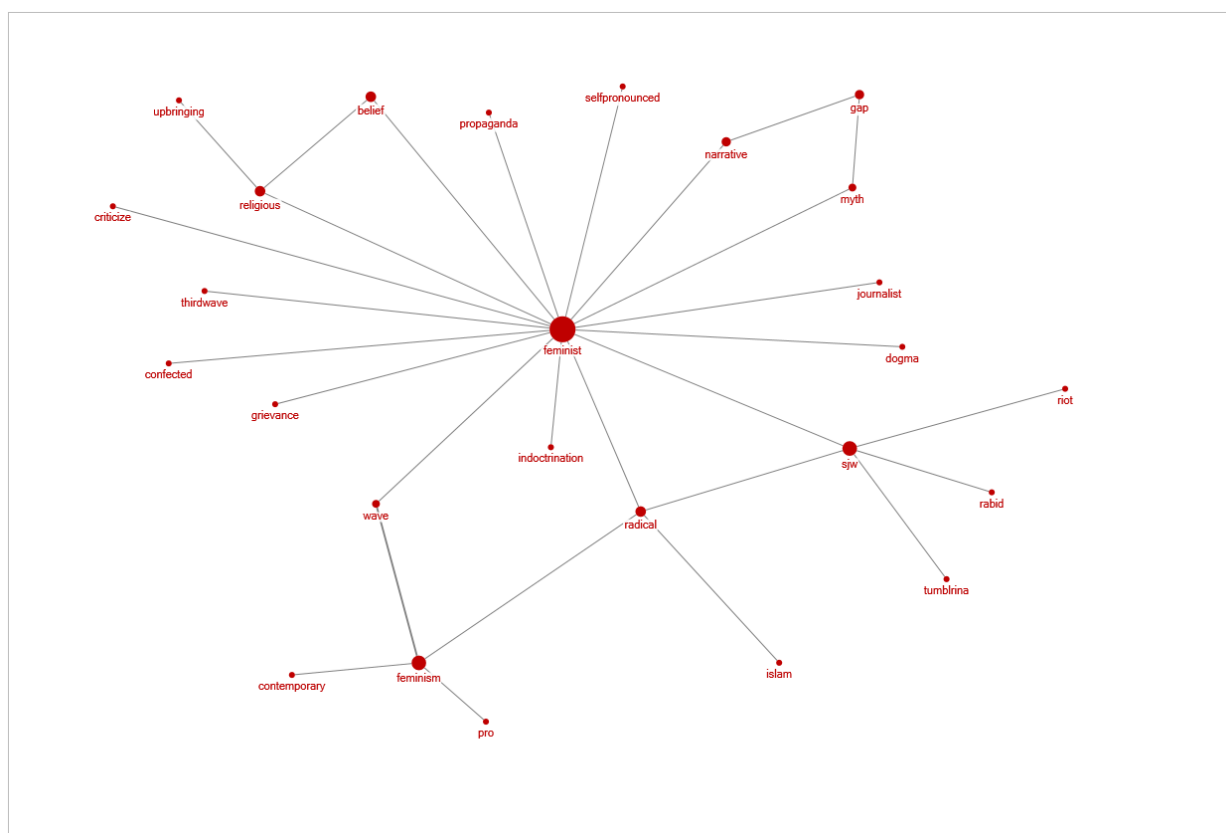
These instances highlight a tension that exists within TRP regarding a loss of personal agency through institutions; they refer to divorce and its corresponding financial and emotional losses as “divorce-rape.” As one user described, “I surmise that many of them are seeing a rise in family, friends, and coworkers getting divorce raped by their wives, and helped by feminist judges.” They believe court systems to be feminist and anti-men. The anti-men institutions wish to subjugate and disenfranchise most men, and, as one user shared, “In the feminist dream world even a dead man must pay child support.” Although legal institutions are specific examples provided of oppression toward men, TRPers frequently assert that it is the feminist and social justice warriors that have cultivated a society where these injustices are made possible.

### *#Feminism is Cancer*

Feminists and social justice warriors (SJWs) received much of the ire and backlash from members of the TRP, as they are viewed as a major source of many of society’s problems. Figure 19’s central node, “feminist” is connected by other nodes such as “radical,” “propaganda,”



“sjw,” and “criticize.” If women are portrayed as villainous throughout TRP, then feminists are the ultimate manifestation of this villainy. First, feminism, as a system of thought, is a destructive force throughout society. One user shared, “#Feminism is cancer. That's how feminism ruins families, towns, countries and civilisation. They stop men from working, from paying taxes, and that's how everything eventually turns into complete shit.” According to this user, feminism destroys men’s desire to better themselves. Another user wrote, “Feminism has broken men in that most boys are raised to hate masculine behavior, which is reinforced both in school and media narratives.” In other words, feminism has eradicated and changed traditional gender roles; although feminism has made positive gains for women, it has had an adverse effect on men.



**Figure 19.** Feminists and SJWs within TRP

Moreover, the users perceive feminists and progressives to be a ruling class within society. In an “Ask Me Anything” with conservative political commentator, Milo Yiannopoulos, one TRP member asked, “how do you think we can fix things when the PC/feminist types seem to love getting jobs in administrative/bureaucracy/curriculum planning areas that control how schools and governments etc. operate?” There is a conspiratorial aspect to their thinking, which legitimizes how and why they view their own experiences as oppressive. To them, society adopts a feminist hegemony. For example, another user lamented, “All I ever hear about is false rape claims, ludicrous child support rules, insane alimony payments, brutal divorce settlements, infuriatingly ignorant and narcissistic feminist protests.”<sup>24</sup> Additionally, TRP members continually lambast “rape culture,” “special snowflakes,” and political correctness throughout society.

To be a man, they argue, is to be politically incorrect. This equation of manhood with politically incorrect values and relationships is evident in the following two comments related to feminism. First one user shares, “Right now, feminist conditioning in society has reached an all-time high...Men are being persecuted and villainized for simply being men.” This comment reinforces the TRP perspective that society is inherently feminist, and presents a unique need for TRP. One user contested that TRP and Feminism are similar in their quest for gender equity; however, TRP is the superior the ideology for their use of “common logic that even animals would pick up on.” To TRP members, feminist and SJWs have created a culture that relies on the “protection and propagation of Feminism and SJWism itself, rather than their stated aims.” To that end, these two systems are rooted in maintaining power within society, rather than seeking

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<sup>24</sup> According to a 2012 National Sexual Violence Resource Center report, false rape allegations make up 2 to 10 percent of all rape allegation. Moreover, a 2005 International Association of Chiefs of Police report determined that “a report of sexual assault is false can be made only if the evidence establishes that no crime was committed or attempted” (qtd in, NSVRC, 2012).

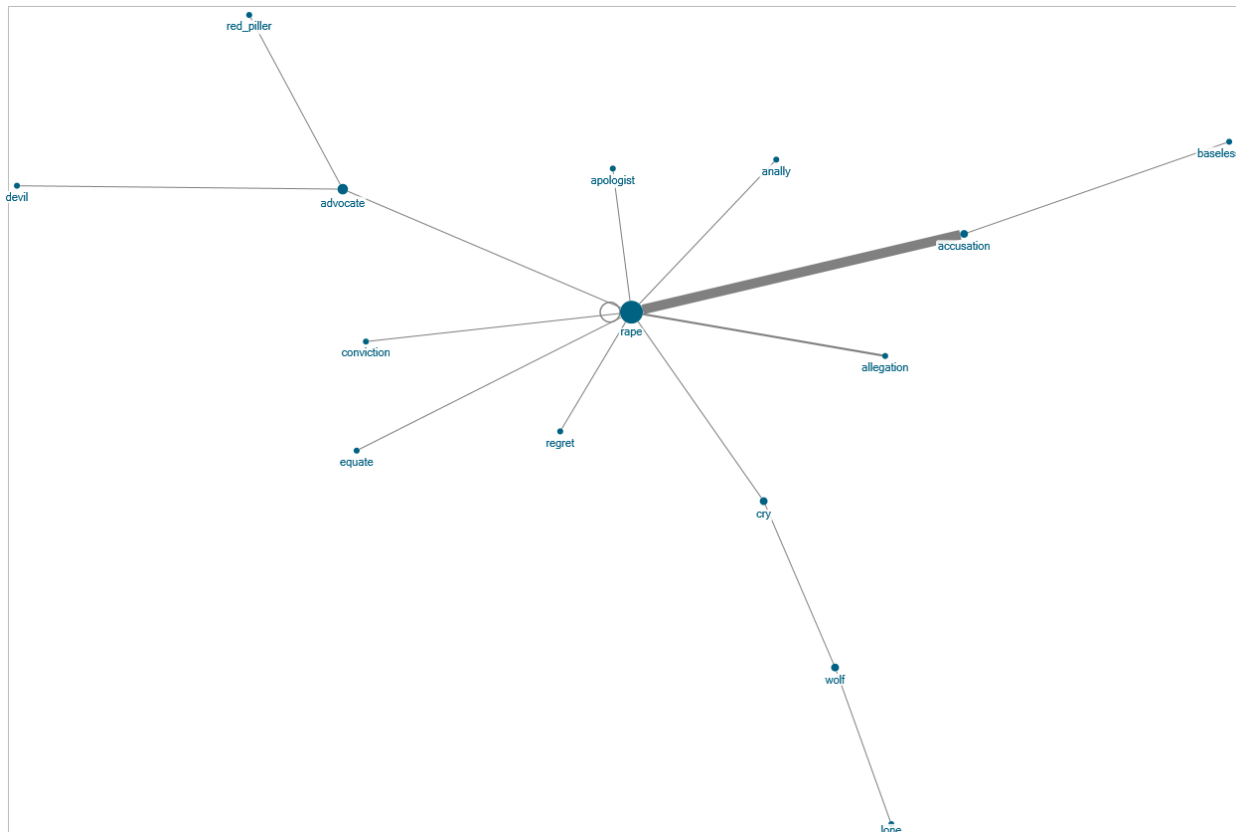
equity. TRPs note that the culture wars throughout the US are an example of these systems—particularly those related to rape.

Whereas concepts like divorce rape strip men of financial power and status, false rape allegations are a nightmare scenario for men. False rape is used as a phenomenon that highlights the intersections of sex, a legal institution designed to oppress men, and villainous women targeting men. The phenomenon of false rape also illuminates the tensions of the TRP identity regarding the social backlashes:

It's typically [Red Pill] to not play the victim and just deal with problems as they arise. The problem is when your own government has it out for you with things like false rape accusations and lack of support for injuries, mental and physical, in the line of duty. I've got enough things to worry about, I don't want my own government out for me.

The following discussion excerpt showcases a nuanced way that the TRP identity coalesces around issues of oppression but not being a victim to these instances; however, they continually acknowledge external institutions that serve to protect women over men. They argue that both women and political institutions like the U.S. government fostered a culture that negatively targets men. Rape issues are an example of these issues adversely impact men.

Discussions pertaining to rape in TRP occur in two primary ways: (1) sharing examples of news items related to false rape cases, and (2) offering strategies for combatting rape allegations. Both are evident in Figure 20 as “rape” is the central node and “accusation,” “allegation,” and “regret” are some of the nodes directly connected to it.



**Figure 20.** Rape Accusations within TRP.

For example, one user defiantly shared, “Most of the discuss [sic] of rape on TRP is about proven false rape accusations, laughable manipulated rape stats (muh [sic] 1 in 4), and how not to be falsely accused of rape.” TRP members discuss rape cases on college campuses, critique governmental policies like the Violence Against Women Act<sup>25</sup>, and claim that women in the military was a horrible idea because of the US military spends more time trying “to keep calm all of the false rape and sexual assault cases coming through every day.” They promote court cases like “the Brian Banks case, where the woman actually admits to making up the false accusation.”

<sup>25</sup> The 2013 Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act provided women the following services: free rape examples, legal aid, and free civil protection orders and prosecution in domestic violence.

When discussing rape and false rape<sup>26</sup>, members frequently portray these issues as women's weaponization of sex: "A false rape accusation is indeed a trump card for women in the West." They argue that most of the false rape cases are "a weapon that crazy women use, and are part of the "feminist propaganda."

TRPers argue that there are always inherent risks with sexual activity. As such, TRPers describe and offer strategies to mitigate these risks:

If you want to be in the sexual marketplace, know the risks. Have a plan for shit like this, have a plan for how to deal with false rape accusations, have a plan to deal with social fallout, have a plan to deal with STDs, etc.

These plans include finding ways to record and verify consent<sup>27</sup>. Some members recalled personal experiences where their text messages saved them prosecution. Speaking hypothetically, one member noted that he would record phone conversations to catch women admitting consent, and "get a wiretapping charge instead of a false rape charge."<sup>28</sup> Moreover, members discuss their knowledge of court proceedings and processes, and share information regarding what evidence is admissible in courts<sup>29</sup>.

Another strategy discussed for some men is to become celibate and remove themselves from the sexual market place altogether. Although this strategy may seem counterintuitive to TRP ideas, these men chose to protect themselves. In other words, celibacy acted as a way to

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<sup>26</sup> The National Sexual Violence Resource Center estimates that false rape allegations occur between 2 and 10 percent, and "are frequently inflated, in part because of inconsistent definitions and protocols, or a weak understanding of sexual assault" (NSVRC False Reporting, 2012, p. 3).

<sup>27</sup> Currently New York and California have adopted "yes means yes" consent laws that mandate that sexual consent can only affirmatively be given; however, college and universities across the United States have adopted similar internal policies that govern their Title IX sexual violence investigations (EndRapeonCampus.com, n.d.)

<sup>28</sup> According to Title 18 of the US Code § 2511(2)(d), in the case of phone recordings, one-party consent is all that is needed; however, 13 states require two-party consent of phone recordings.

<sup>29</sup> According to the Federal Rules of Evidence, Rule 412 outlines that a victim's prior sexual history and sexual activities may be not admissible in the courts unless the case is a criminal case. In that instance, (1) evidence (i.e., semen, a physical injury, or other forms of physical evidence) may be admitted that proves someone other than the defendant is the cause of the sexual violence; (2) evidence that proves consent may be admissible; and (3) evidence may be admitted that without would violate the defendant's constitutional rights.

preserve power. As previously mentioned, a subgroup of TRP members define themselves as men going their own way (MGTOW). This group of men “ignore[d] women because” of the decreasing status of men in society. One user described MGTOW in the following way, “The false rape allegations along with the total power women have over their husbands has caused men stop marrying and having kids.” Overall TRP members argued that sex is a way to channel their resentment at society but MGTOW “[focus] on [their selves] (education, goals, etc) to become truly happy without the need or want of a woman.” Despite this subgroup’s goals, some within TRP posited that MGTOW are reinforcing and supporting feminist goals of “alienating men from society by normalizing male alienation. Victory for us was not "retreating to a basement it's ruling over women and weak men.”

### **RQ2: Who are the influential members within r/TheRedPill**

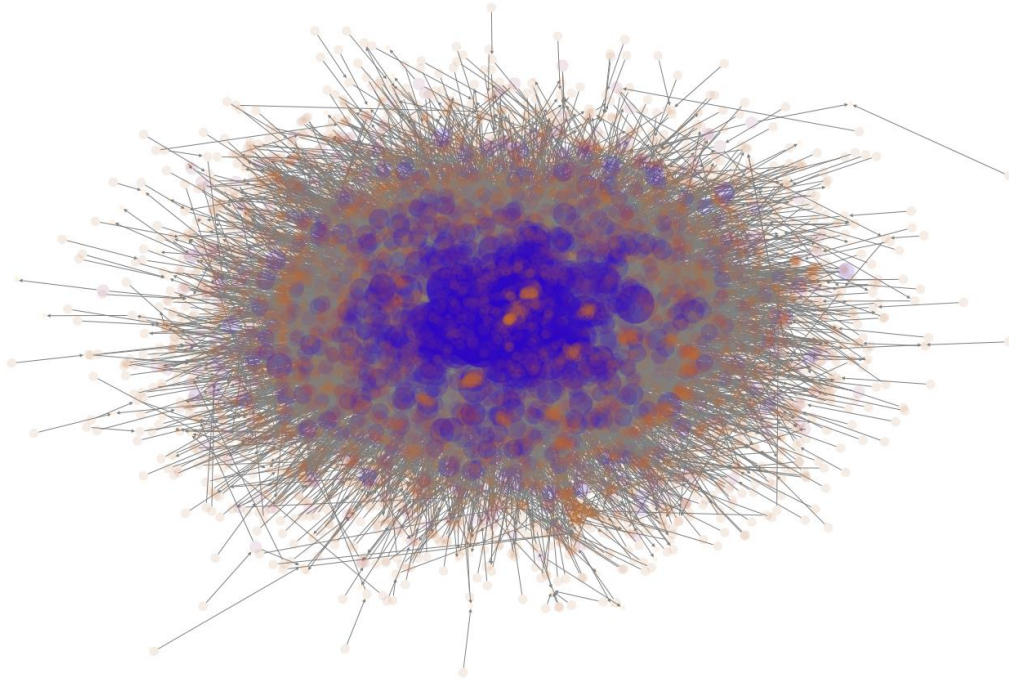
Responding to RQ2, a social network approach was an appropriate method in that it maps the relational connections between others. Given that organizational activity within r/TheRedPill (TRP) operated primarily in the comment threads of subreddit, the user interactions were collected from the Top 100 posts of all time. Overall, there were 35,356 user interactions in total; however, almost a third of the interactions contained user accounts that had been deleted. As such, these interactions were not collected considering that it is impossible to distinguish between one deleted user account from another. The final sample size was 23,398 user interactions, which is 66% of the 35,356 total user interactions.

Influence within TRP is defined as engagement within the online space. In other words, consistent commenting and posting throughout the Top 100 posts of all time was an indicator of influence; moreover, the primary metric that used to measure influence was outdegree centrality. Outdegree centrality measured the number of outward flowing ties that a node had. Basically, in

a directed network, outdegree centrality assessed how much an entity directs communication to others. In the TRP context, outdegree centrality calculated influence based on a user's engagement based on replies throughout the 23,398 interactions within the Top 100 posts of all time. Other metrics of influence included betweenness and eigenvector centralities. Betweenness centrality examined a node's bridging capacity to other nodes. In other words, it showed a TRP user's ability to broker or gatekeep connections between other users in the network. Eigenvector centrality measured influence of a node within a network by a node's connections to other, highly-connected nodes in the network. In the TRP context, this result meant that a user may not have many direct connections, but one of the user's connections might be highly connected to others within the network. As such, this user had high eigenvector centrality because of the connections of their connections.

### **Overall Graph Metrics**

Of the 23,398 interactions, the total network contained 8,890 vertices. In this network, vertices corresponded to TRP members. The network had 17,150 unique edges, which represented replies within the comment section of TRP. The average geodesic distance was 4.34, which is a measure of the average shortest path between users. This score meant that the average distance (or connections) between users was 4.34 users. Finally, the overall density of the network was .02 percent. In other words, although the network was connected, it was not highly connected, but it gave insights into how clustered the conversations are within TRP.



**Figure 21.** The overall social network within TRP’s Top 100 posts of all time. Node size, color, and opacity correspond to outdegree centrality; the deep purple nodes are highly engaged within TRP.

### Node-level Metrics

As Figure 21 showed, within TRP, there was a core group of individuals that were highly engaged in the community. This core was group of highly central individuals throughout the Top 100 posts within TRP. Investigating this key group further, outdegree centrality metrics were calculated within NodeXL to identify the top 25 most central individuals within the social network. Table 5 showed the results of node-level metrics of centrality.



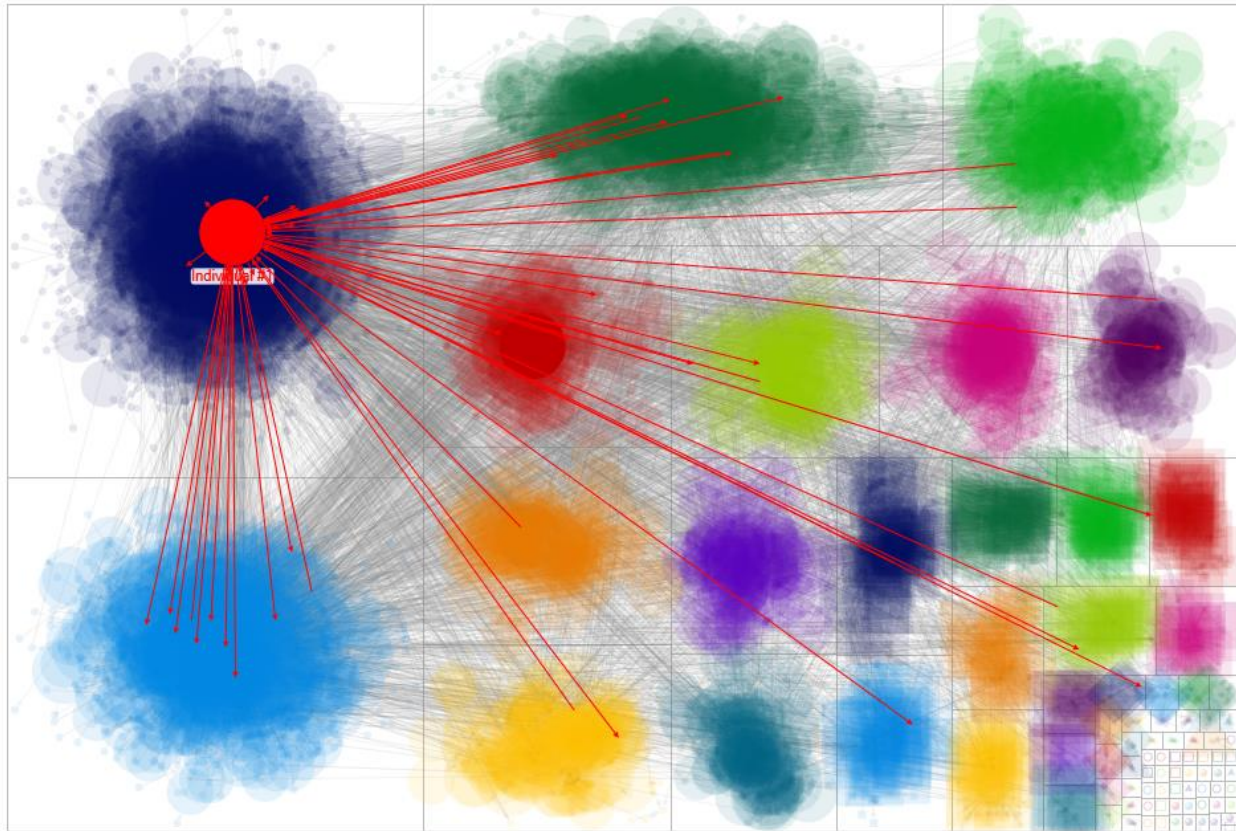
**Table 5.** The Top 25 Users within TRP, ranked by Outdegree Centrality

<i>User</i>	<i>Outdegree Centrality</i>	<i>Betweenness Centrality</i>	<i>Eigenvector Centrality</i>	<i>Leadership Role within TRP</i>
Individual 1	50	1707268.351	0.002	Senior Endorsed
Individual 2	50	1020311.259	0.001	
Individual 3	47	4251150.009	0.003	Senior Endorsed
Moderator 1	47	12655150.720	0.015	Moderator
Individual 4	44	1399857.031	0.002	Senior Endorsed
Individual 5	42	1107218.228	0.002	TRP Endorsed
Individual 6	39	568784.140	0.001	Special Olympian
Individual 7	38	1526412.118	0.001	
Individual 8	37	529543.784	0.001	
Individual 9	36	3217290.564	0.001	
Individual 10	36	562485.413	0.001	
Individual 11	35	850796.446	0.002	
Individual 12	34	2244000.533	0.003	Senior Endorsed
Individual 13	32	427290.976	0.003	
Individual 14	32	1530218.021	0.002	
Individual 15	31	1237817.958	0.002	
Individual 16	31	740343.482	0.001	Senior Endorsed
Individual 17	31	804943.865	0.001	
Individual 18	30	1401181.994	0.002	RedPill Vanguard
Individual 19	30	507679.668	0.001	
Individual 20	29	1083887.509	0.002	RedPill Vanguard
Individual 21	29	223549.511	0.000	
Individual 22	29	512369.191	0.001	
Moderator 2	29	4540390.935	0.004	Moderator
Individual 23	28	543723.610	0.001	

The two most central individuals within the network were users, Individual 1 and Individual 2.

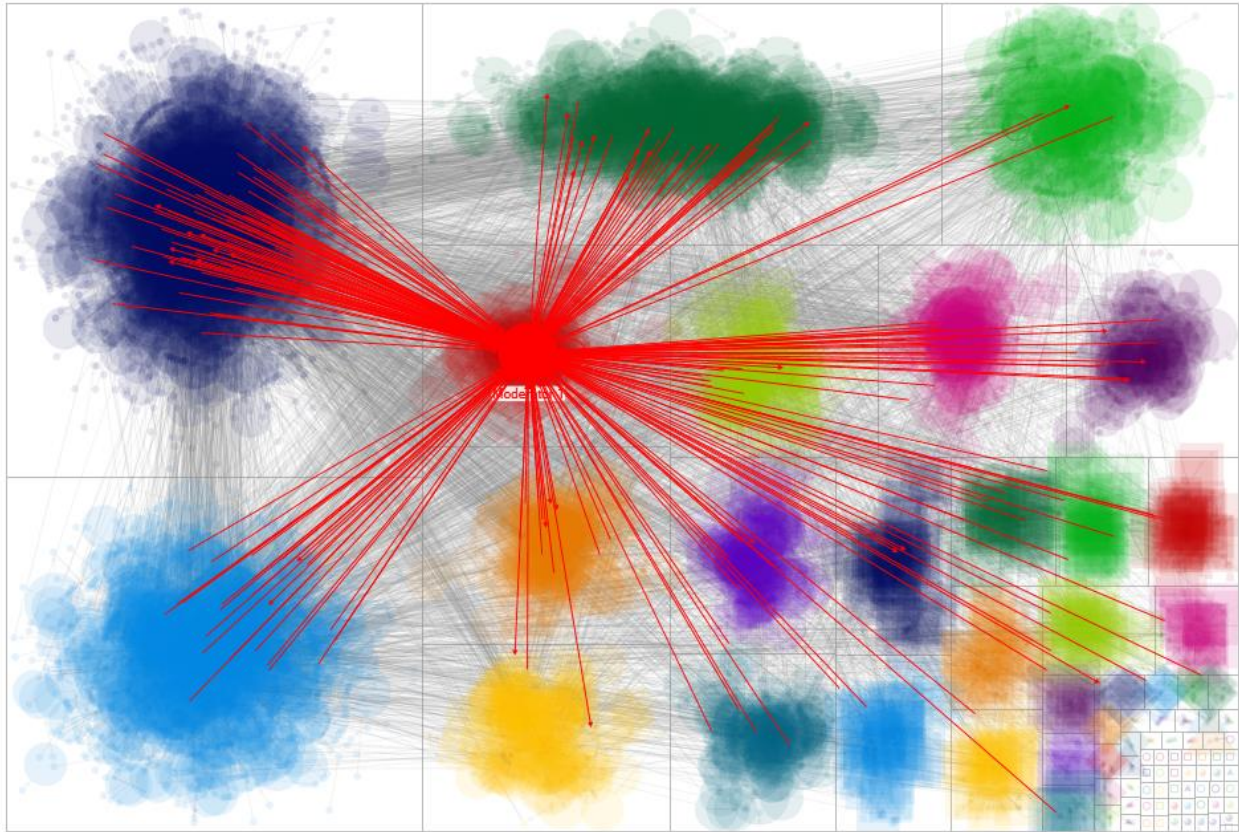
They both had an outdegree centrality of 50. This centrality score meant that throughout the network, they were highly engaged across the discussions about the TRP. Although both users shared a similar outdegree, Individual 1 had a higher betweenness centrality of 1,707,268.351 than Individual 2's betweenness centrality of 1,020,311.259. As mentioned, betweenness centrality indicated a level of brokerage within networks. In other words, a user with a high betweenness centrality could be considered a gatekeeper of information within a network;

however, despite being highly visible within the social network, it is important to note that Individual 1's betweenness centrality is the 25<sup>th</sup> highest overall.



**Figure 22.** Individual 1's connections throughout TRP.

The user with the highest betweenness centrality was Moderator 1 (12,655,150.720). Moderator 1 also had the highest eigenvector centrality within the network as well. Eigenvector centrality represented a users' connection to other highly influential and connected nodes within the network. Additionally, Moderator 1 is one of 21 other site moderators for TRP. As shown in Figure 22, Moderator 1 was highly connected throughout the network. Whereas, users like Individual 1 and Individual 2 were highly engaged within the network considering both their outdegree and betweenness centralities, Moderator 1's engagement within TRP was arguably the most influential of the Top 25 users in the total network.



**Figure 23.** Moderator 1's connections throughout TRP

Also, worth noting was the user, Individual 10. In Table 5, Individual 10 had the 11<sup>th</sup> highest outdegree centrality within the network. Although the users within Figure 23 were highly engaged, Individual 10 centrality was not indicative of his overall engagement. Individual 10's outdegree centrality was based on his consistent replies within a post that he authored. In other words, anytime that a user would comment, "Great post," Individual 10 would directly reply to every comment within his TRP post. Whereas other users within the Top 25 engaged throughout TRP, Individual 10's overall engagement in TRP was limited and inflated. The other 24 users in Table 5 were engaged in numerous posts within and throughout TRP's Top 100 posts.

**Cluster Analyses within TRP**

In considering the Top 25 users, cluster analyses revealed underlying social structures and cliques between these individuals. The Top 25 nodes spanned six of the 83 cliques within the TRP network. The six groups also represented 62.3% of the population of nodes within the total network, and nearly 50 percent of the overall interactions between all members within the Top 100 posts of all time. As shown in Table 6, 17 of the top users of TRP were part of the same cluster, Group 1. Group 1 represented nearly 20 percent of the total network—both in users and connections between users.

**Table 6.** The Top 25 Users within TRP by Cluster

<u>Group</u>	<u>Number of Vertices (% of Total)</u>	<u>Number of Edges (% of Total)</u>	<u>Top Users within the Groups</u>
1	1719 (19.33%)	3313 (19.32%)	Individual 1; Individual 2; Individual 3; Individual 4; Individual 5; Individual 6; Individual 7; Individual 8; Individual 9; Individual 11; Individual 13; Individual 16; Individual 15; Individual 19; Individual 18; Individual 20; Individual 23
2	1284 (14.44%)	1978 (11.53%)	Individual 14; Individual 22; Individual 21
3	1092 (12.28%)	1544 (9.00%)	Moderator 2
4	624 (7.02%)	764 (4.46%)	Individual 10; Individual 17
5	436 (4.90%)	473 (2.76%)	Moderator 1
8	385 (4.28%)	426 (2.48%)	Individual 12

These individuals were highly connected both within their clusters *and* throughout the clusters.

In other words, these individuals' central role within the TRP network was indicative of their specific role within the organization. Although only two of the Top 25 individuals are moderators for the subreddit, nine of the other users were either been endorsed as important contributors or have other membership tags associated with their engagement within TRP. In considering how these individuals shape and inform conversations within TRP, RQ3 examines the Top 25's individual contributions by examining the four categories of users in Table 6: the Moderators ( $n = 2$ ), the Endorsed Contributors ( $n = 9$ ), and the Members ( $n = 14$ ).

### **RQ3: How do the influential members within TRP shape organizational activity?**

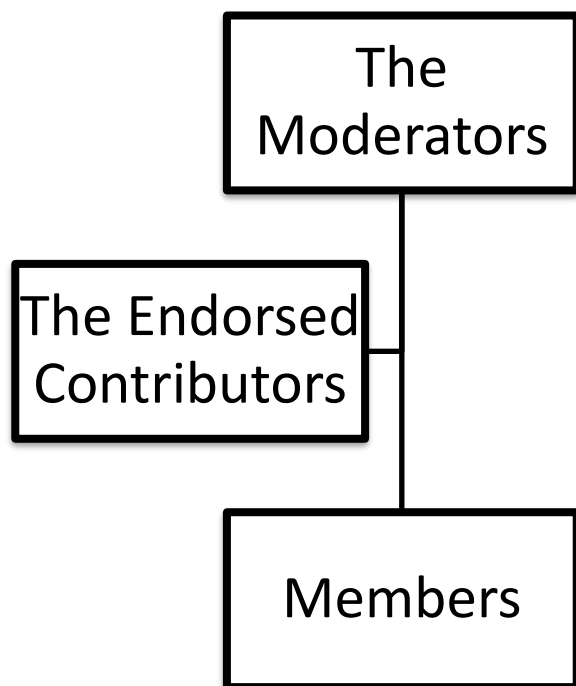
As mentioned in Chapter 3, The Red Pill (TRP) was an active online organization. It was the 455<sup>th</sup> (out of over 1.2 million subreddit communities) most popular subreddit, which made it within the top one percent of all subreddit communities. In considering the organizational

activity of TRP, RQ2 investigated the social network of these active users, and identified 25 central individuals that take an active role and are highly engaged throughout TRP.

Again, RQ3 examines the roles that these individuals take in shaping and influencing TRP. Existing online scholarship has demonstrated that online leaders are centrally located within discussion threads, contribute and engage with other members regularly, and may have a long tenure in the spaces (Huffaker, 2010). Additionally, online spaces are sustained by leaders. Taken together, these traits aid in cultivating leader credibility, which is, leaders are able to influence others by the depth and quality of their relationships and contributions to their online space.

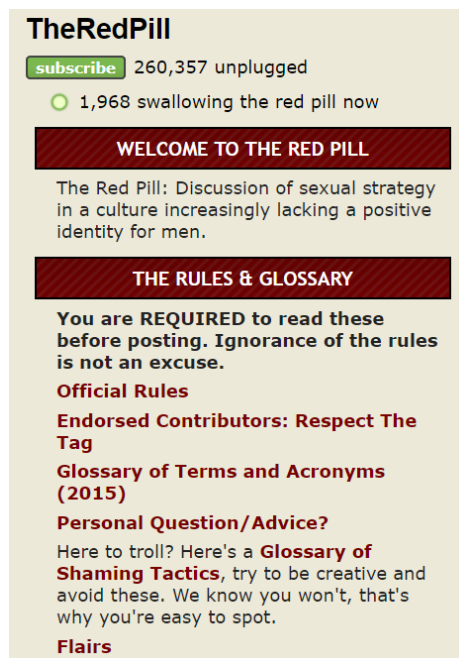
### **The TRP Organizational Structure**

The roles of key members within TRP were often threefold; however, the organizational hierarchy within TRP was simple.



**Figure 24.** The Organizational Chart of the Top 25 Members of TRP

TRP is guided by specific rules for engagement and posting (see Figure 25).



**Figure 25.** TRP Sidebar reminding users about the rules of engagement.

These rules served two functions. First, they created a constant reminder of etiquette for posting and engaging within TRP, but also offered glimpses into understanding the TRP language that is shared throughout the space. Rules of engagement included, “Stay on topic,” “No moralizing,” “Do not announce that you are a woman,” and “Personal advice questions go to /r/asktrp” (“The Red Pill”, n.d.). Second, these rules served to structure engagement and participation within the organization and can “also be used as reasons to report or ban.”

The power and editorial control to remove both topics and users who violated the TRP rules came from the “leadership” within TRP who moderated user engagement. There are currently 21 different moderators (Mods), with varying tenure within the organization. Along the sidebar, mods included links to not only site rules, but also subsets called, “The Complete Mod Policy Rundown.” These policies provided examples for potential users and members of



examples of reasons why Mods remove comments and posts, as well as enforcing temporary or permanent bans on individuals.

After Mods, there were two similar levels of organizational leaders known as the Endorsed Contributors and Vanguarders (lumped together within the policy as “ECs”). According to TRP, these individuals have established a track record of “providing good content” (“The Complete Mod Policy Rundown”, n.d.). In other words, their engagement was considered high-quality by the Mods and was shown through sound advice and visibility within TRP. The ECs were veterans of the TRP; however, their role was not permanent in that they can lose this status at any time. ECs would lose their status when they ceased to provide value to the leadership team within TRP. Finally, the members comprised a majority of the TRP. Moreover, the organization itself is highly active and engaged. With over 260,000 subscribers, at any given time, TRP has close to 1,900 active users.

Of the Top 25 users, there were four types of roles that leaders within TRP take: the Moderators, the Endorsed Contributors, and the **Members**. In what follows, a description of how these roles emerged throughout TRP is examined. Using TRP’s own leadership structure as a framework for membership, I explain more specifically *how* these members’ use their roles to shape TRP identity.



**Table 7.** Description of Membership Roles of the Top 25 Users within TRP

<b><u>Roles</u></b>	<b><u>Users in these Roles</u></b>	<b><u>Description</u></b>
<i>The Moderators (Mods)</i>	Moderator 1; Moderator 2	The Moderators are editors of content; control membership; establish vision of TRP
<i>The Endorsed Contributors (ECs)</i>	Individual 1; Individual 3; Individual 4; Individual 12; Individual 16; Individual 6; Individual 5; Individual 18; Individual 20	The ECs promote and provide live experiences in adopting and practicing TRP ideas. The EC group has three subgroups: Senior Endorsed, TRP Endorsed, and Vanguard.
<i>The Everyday Members</i>	Individual 2; Individual 7; Individual 8; Individual 9; Individual 10; Individual 11; Individual 13; Individual 14; Individual 15; Individual 17; Individual 19; Individual 21; Individual 22	The Members make up the largest contingent of the TRP organization. They interact and engage with one another daily.

### **The Moderators**

As mentioned, moderators have the only legitimate power within TRP in that they have editorial control of everything that is shared within the organization. Of the Top 25 members within TRP, only two served in formal moderator roles for TRP: Moderator 2 and Moderator 1. Both have been members of TRP since 2013 and focus on anchoring the TRP conversation within two main bodies of conversation: sexual activity and backlash. Despite their similarities, each user adopted a different approach in their organizational leadership styles. On one hand, Moderator 1 was a highly visible and engaged moderator whose singular focus exists on continually stoking the “war on men” ideology that festers throughout TRP. Moderator 1’s role was often to be TRP’s culture warrior. On the other hand, Moderator 2’s engagement focused mostly on promoting and mentoring individuals on channeling their sexual strategies. In other words, Moderator 2’s role was that of a sexual coach for members. These two roles were

indicative of two of the communicative identity subthemes shared within RQ1: backlash and sexual activity. These two identity subthemes were dialectically intertwined within TRP at every turn throughout most discussions.

### ***Moderator 1: The Culture Warrior***

Considering TRP's consistent conversations about the oppression of men within society, Moderator 1's role within TRP was indicative of how he interacts with others. As stated, Moderator 1 had been a member of TRP since 2013, lead the organization as the head moderator, and engaged with others consistently on issues of misandry in society. Often throughout TRP, these sentiments were invoked vis-à-vis reminders about the continual growth of the organization. For example, in his post, "100,000," Moderator 1 rallied members to consider their outlandish and politically incorrect communication as a strength as he writes,

It's incredible that what we're doing - just looking for and sharing information - is so dangerous and damaging to the status quo, that we actually ruffle feathers. When I took over TRP with under a thousand subscribers, I expected to be ignored, perhaps made fun of a bit. But I did not expect what we have experienced- mainstream attention in a campaign against us of fear, shame, and censorship. Maybe I'm a bit drunk, but at 100,000 users I think it's fair to excuse me as I raise my glass and share some of my emotions with you guys because, fuck, this has been the most incredible ride of my life. Not only have I found a group of likeminded individuals, but we have helped others find belonging as well. And that's something that our culture has severely lacked- belonging for men: A place for men to be among peers and friends, comrades, people to connect with. Some have been luckier than others. I counted myself among the unlucky until now.

Unpacking this statement, Moderator 1's rallying cry for members argued that TRP was purposively provocative, and challenged the mainstream ideas of manhood. Later in the post, Moderator 1 argued that with the growth of TRP there may be a desire to adopt a more mainstream approach to language; however, Moderator 1 countered this idea. He wrote,

When we adopt a more politically correct format, something very important is taking place: we are tempering our speech to satisfy the feminine imperative; that is to say: we are modifying ourselves to please women- to gain female approval. And as our subject matter happens to be one that women tend not to approve of, you can only imagine the effect that might have on our subject matter if we were to temper ourselves to appease them.

In other words, the provocative language and subject-matter throughout TRP were designed to do two things. First, it was designed to garner attention from mainstream audiences who have largely ignored this organization and these men. Second, it was strategically used by Moderator 1 to motivate members to continue engaging with TRP. This rallying call was echoed by Moderator 1 in another post celebrating the organization's growth to 250,000 subscribers. Moderator 1 recalled specific popular culture references to TRP as indicative of the group's increasing prominence within the US culture.

Additionally, users expressed their admiration and gratitude for his leadership and willingness to take a hardline approach to curating content within TRP. For instance, in January 2018, Moderator 1 enacted a two-day moratorium on posting within TRP except for moderators and ECs to refocus and return to TRP tenets. Moderator 1 articulated that a primary motivation for this move was to realign TRP with Manosphere content-creators, "Part of our stagnation has been limiting the voices of our manosphere bloggers - who undoubtedly have more interesting things to say than the 17 year old [sic] kid on holiday break telling us about how he touched a boob once." In other words, Moderator 1's leadership within TRP was predicated on his willingness to continually anchor conversations and content within TRP on the status of and oppression toward men in society. Inspired and emboldened by a purist view of TRP, Moderator 1's influence spanned from content curation to his willingness to anchor his contributions in the anger and provocation in his vision for TRP: one that remembers a time when men were taken seriously and not villainized for their masculine nature. This view was evident in the following

recollection of times past, “just remember that 10 years ago, being white wasn't considered a threat on its own. Now look. Simply being white is a crime. Remember when being a man was okay?”

### ***Moderator 2: The Sexual Mentor***

Whereas, Moderator 1's role as a moderator was that of a cultural warrior, Moderator 2's role in TRP was that of reaffirming the TRP's vision of sexual activity to channel members' resentment. In a similar way to Moderator 1, Moderator 2's contributions and leadership within TRP engendered a vision that conceptualized sexual activity in multiple ways; however, as Moderator 1's cast his focus at social institutions and constructions of oppression, Moderator 2 proffered a vision connected to self-betterment and improvement.

First, TRP engendered a vision where sexual activity is a way to better oneself—not change systems of oppression. As explained in RQ1, a central thread of the TRP identity was constituted in discourses centering on sex that are framed in liberatory ways throughout TRP. Men's individual renewal and reassertion of their sexual identity was one way that Moderator 2's moderation and contributions appear to echo this essential part of the TRP identity. An example of this vision was apparent in the following comment made by Moderator 2:

TRP solutions don't change the system, they don't change laws, they don't change anything except for yourself. In the long run that'll have an effect though. Just look at what's happening in Japan and how they're trying to figure out how to get their version of MGTOWs to reengage with society. They're about to lose 1 million people a year as their population dwindles because they're not having sex/kids. When more men in the US begins to follow suit, just watch things change.

Focusing on oneself, rather than institutional change, was an important way that TRP leaders continue to promote the TRP ideology: one focused on personal agency. Moderator 2 further contended,

rather than blaming the world because your'e [sic] fat and women don't like you, focus on hitting the gym, lose the gut, and change things for the better. It's forcing men to own up to their mistakes and do better, which in doing so empowers them.

That is, as men began to honestly and authentically address their limitations and misgivings, there was liberation. Because Moderator 1's focus on culture wars, Moderator 2, at times, was flippant about these issues. To Moderator 2, there were certain issues within society that created challenges for men, but these issues were not the sole focus for TRP. He wrote,

It's almost comical seeing the change in their face as they realize it's not about a bunch of faceless neckbeards out to rail about feminism and hate on women or bang on drums because they can never get laid. It's all about rounding out the rough edges and making men aware of the fact they can say no to women who are toxic.

In other words, TRP offered not only the skills for betterment, but also provided men a necessary perspective on toxic relationships with women. Because of moderators like Moderator 2, members were exposed to alternative visions and constructions of romantic relationships.

Despite the misconceptions, ironically TRP members claimed to rever women, and saw their efforts of improvement as a sign of this fealty toward women. For instance, Moderator 2 claimed, "If guys truly hated women they wouldn't be reading, hitting the gym, and doing all that they do to date/have sex with/marry them." These material expressions of manhood, while being focused on individual betterment, were intertwined with attempts at increasing sexual activities. Additionally, ideas of marriage are utilized only *if* a man willed it to happen. In other words, TRPers can marry women; however, to do so required full agreement, control, and power within the relationship. Women who are "marriage material" also partake in the sibling community, r/RedPillWomen, whose complementary goals are marriage and keeping men happy. Considering sexual activity as an important thread of TRP identity, Moderator 2 (and others) promoted sex as a form of power within society. Arguing that progressives weaponize sex, Moderator 2 acknowledged this point in the following way:

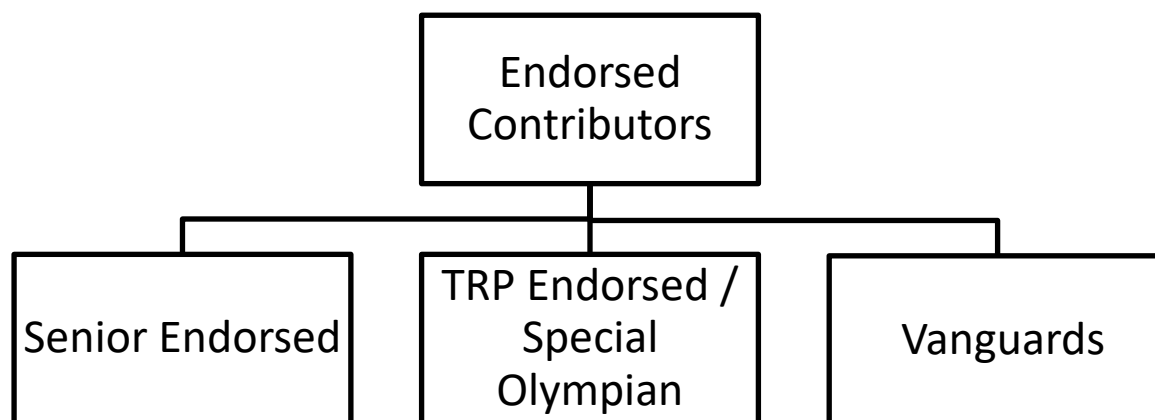
even the feminists and social justice warriors of the world denouncing sex as that important have made our manhoods (and therefore rights to have or speak an opinion at all) entirely dependent on our access to sex. Why would being a virgin or a neckbeard matter, unless sex truly does matter to our manhoods? The grand irony is how feminists get upset by things like saying a guy "throws like a girl" is a slight against girls and women, as if being a girl is a pejorative. Yet they turn around and do the same exact thing when it comes to men and their ability to get sex, that if a man can't get laid then it's because of or makes him a loser. Says a lot about their thought process, doesn't it?

In other words, Moderator 2 proffered a complementary notion of TRP's influence within society. Writing that, "Feminism is a shit test writ large upon society," TRP cultivated an alternative construction of society. Considering the alleged prevalence of feminism and women's advantage throughout society, Moderator 2's use of "shit tests" reaffirmed a central tenet of Red Pill theorizing that argues feminism was used as a sexual choice strategy used by women. He argued that sex was a form of power and capital within society, and alpha traits were present within both men and women.

Both Moderators were central individuals in framing and promoting the dual TRP identity subthemes. Often these threads converged in how both moderators contribute to TRP, but their individual focus were different. Regardless of these differences, their leadership and engagement within TRP discursively constructed and enacted the backlash and sex dialectic vision within TRP.

### **The Endorsed Contributors**

The Endorsed Contributors (ECs) within TRP represent nine of the Top 25 users. This group's role within TRP was to share their lived experience in adopting and practicing TRP in offline settings. As mentioned, the ECs were selected by moderators for their valued contributions to the organization. Moderators provided the vision and trajectory for TRP, and the ECs contributed to this vision by creating and sharing content to Red Pill members in the space.



**Figure 26.** Endorsed Contributor Sub-groups of TRP

These contributions emerged through a variety of categories of posts, conversations, rants, examples, and field reports. Of the Top 25, nine of the users served in specific roles within TRP as ECs; however, there were different subgroups of ECs. Within the EC group, there were three subgroups: Senior Endorsed Contributors, the TRP Endorsed and Special Olympians, and the Vanguards.

### ***The Senior Endorsed***

The Senior Endorsed group were chief content creators within TRP. Five of the Top 25 users within TRP were members of this group. Each of the five ECs promoted Moderator 1 and Moderator 2's vision in different ways. The user, Individual 1, contributed to the Red Pill ideology by reflecting on his lessons learned in adopting and applying the organization's ideas. More specifically, Individual 1 authored a post entitled, "One year today I found TRP" and

“Tested myself, learned more and verified TRP.” Individual 1 confidently celebrated and affirmed Red Pill ideas as he writes,

A lifetime chasing bullshit and paying for it because I wasn't being true to my nature, and listening to my inner voice that told me, don't trust this ho, don't do that, get off your ass and get busy with your goals. Its [sic] been a year, and though my life is still on hold in many ways, its [sic] moving forward in others. I am a better man now than I ever have been before, and I care most about the only person that has ever cared about me.

These reflections and field reports in TRP often invoked similar sentiments that adopting Red Pill ideas and practices have changed or saved lives.

Likewise, other ECs like Individual 3 contribute to TRP by offering self-help and how-to posts. Individual 3's posts included topics pertaining to talking with women. His posts were titled, “The Talk – How to Talk Back” and “How to Be One Charming Motherfucker.” For instance, Individual 3 often provided users with prototypical language and phrases that they can adopt when approaching women:

"well if you change your mind come by and say hi" or something to that effect. Yeah... if anything will turn it around it's this. "Ok... cool... well if you want to talk I'll be over there" demonstrates value. it is very common for people to be passive aggressive and mean to people when rejected and you really stand out when you aren't like that.

Moreover, in TRP, Individual 3's contributions were designed to help members with tools and hints on “game” strategies. Other ECs also contributed to TRP by offering members advice on understanding women. ECs like Individual 4 offered this advice throughout TRP and engaged throughout discussion boards by providing pseudo-psychological reasonings behind women's actions. This advice was evident in the following comment,

In many ways, the force that keeps a woman with an alpha is analogous to addiction. Because it is. It is the same part of the brain at work--the mesolimbic pathway. Just like rats, pull Chad's cock and get a dopamine cookie.



These users provided other members with ways for men to pick up women as well as rationalizing women's sexual behaviors and attitudes. As mentioned in RQ1, the alpha discourse pertaining to masculinity emerged as an important part of the TRP aspirational identity, as well as sex as an indicator of this organizational identity.

Although some ECs focused on sexual strategies, others reflected on and shared examples of Red Pill ideas in everyday examples and terms. These became important framing techniques utilized by ECs to provide lived experiences of TRP members. For instance, Individual 12 contributed primarily to posts containing the "The Red Pill Theory" category. His posts included "Why TRP Always Tells You to Lift Weights (Mandatory for NonLifters)," "If you settle for a Deadbedroom or Duty-Sex, You're a Loser," and "Women's Hierarchy of Feelings Dog Shit, and Baseball." These posts extended and supported TRP, as theory, into both fitness, sports, and relationships. Relatedly, the Endorsed Contributor, Individual 16, also extended TRP theory, but also contributed specific examples of Red Pill issues within society. Posts of his included, "Crisis of European Masculinity – a Russian example" and "Why women aren't into Nice Guys (amusing somewhat majority compatible introduction into some red pill ideas)." Within TRP, Individual 16 often created content that introduced potential members to the organization. For example, Individual 16 argued, "being RP [Red Pill] means that you're on some level sexist by default - you just have to get rid of the notion that this is a bad thing," which served to ease potential members into TRP.

### ***The Endorsed***

Two of the ECs, Individual 6 and Individual 5, contributed to TRP in different ways, but were endorsed for their valuable content. Individual 6 was an EC known as "Special Olympian." This honorary title facetiously referred to the Individual 6's consistent creation of discussions

posts tailored to men's rights issues within the sports industry. More specifically, Individual 6 often provided examples about double standards within the sports industry. Examples included discussions about sexism pertaining to female referees in both the National Football League and the National Basketball Association:

Apparently in the Clippers vs. Cavaliers game, a woman official Lauren (something german) called a technical foul on Chris Paul. He was trying to move the ball quickly and he said she goes "uh-uh" and he asked "why uh uh?" and BOOM She gives him a Technical foul. For those of you who don't follow basketball, this is essentially a personal foul, and is reserved for serious infractions. After the game Chris Paul said about the issue "that was a terrible call, this career might not be for her". He didn't emphasize "her", but people are calling his comments sexist. (He's only saying it cuz she's a woman!)...

Now any criticism of her terrible work is being considered sexist. How dare he call her on her consistently terrible line of work and tell the rookie ref that this might not be for her! Some sports commentators said the logical thing the next day: If this was a man, nobody would blink an eye. Now because it's a woman we can't criticize her? If you're all really for equality, then she should be equally culpable. But of course, she's above any criticism and any attempt to do so is SEXZZZZM!!! [sic]

Issues like the aforementioned one were also evident in Individual 6's discussion of women's soccer player, Hope Solo's, legal issues pertaining to assault that were dismissed by the legal institution. In an aside, Individual 6 wrote, "I think if this was man we'd be hearing about for months (like Ray Rice, though he did knock his wife the fuck out, she DID spit on him and punch him first)."

In a similar vein, the other user within this group, Individual 5, often provided commentary on the "pervasive" issues of misandry and the "monstrosity called feminism" throughout society. Oftentimes, Individual 5 generated content that invokes his professional work within academe. In his post, "BluePill Professor's Manifesto: Why I am a Radical Advocate of Men's Rights and What Do We Can Do Next [sic]," he wrote,

I have studied the great social movements from Suffrage to Civil Rights and the great movers of social change from Marx and Lenin, to Friedan and Dworkin and from to Gandhi and MLK to Mao and Pol Pot. The common thread of all these movements which succeeded in enacting stunning social change is this: Social change is accomplished by force and power and the exercise thereof. Gladly power does not equal violence because peaceful resistance is a form of force and power. A very potent form.

His background within the academy provided fodder for the other members as he reflected on campus issues and even the Academy that supported a feminist and women's rights agenda that many within TRP abhorred.

### ***The Vanguard.***

Whereas the Moderators and the Endorsed Contributors focused on the importance, adoption, and enactment of TRP principles, a subset group of Endorsed Contributors called the Vanguard group had a wholly different role within TRP. The two individuals within the Top 25 (Individual 18 and Individual 20) often were the organization's innovators and provocateurs. In other words, their content innovated and pushed the Red Pill boundaries. Individual 18 and Individual 20's role as Vanguards served to provide controversial and politically incorrect content that (1) creates new Red Pill ideas and (2) garners attention to TRP.

As innovators of Red Pill teachings, these two users created new machinations and configurations of Red Pill ideas. Both ECs provoked and pushed boundaries of Red Pill theorizing. Individual 18's content includes, "Sic Parvis Magna: How to Triumph Over Loneliness and Hardship During Your Red Pill Transformation" and "Individual 18's Guide to Managing Your Bitches." These posts provided contextual and processual explorations of "taking the red pill," a process referenced throughout TRP but rarely discussed in detail. In the latter, Individual 18 argued,

The key trait of the modern western woman is her absolute lack of concern for the desires of men. Our cuckold state has all but replaced men as husbands and providers, and so it would seem like the traditional relationship is basically obsolete – that women will never again need to concern themselves with OUR wants. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Additionally, both of Individual 18's posts promoted the notion that equality was a feminist social construction to equate men and women, and was used by women to disadvantage men.

Across TRP, Individual 18 shared similar sentiments like the following statement, "'Fairness' is just a word women [sic] use to get free stuff. Once their stomachs stop growling they don't know what the word means."

These two ECs used provocation and controversy as a way to garner attention for their ideas, and potentially increase membership. Individual 20, a Vanguard from Canada, promoted ideas on biological differences between men and women; however, his focus was on biological sex drives. He argued,

Biologically we are not monogamous beings. Both male and female sexual strategy involves mating with more than one partner. It just so happens that the optimal strategy for females is obtaining mates spaced out a little further apart. The only things keeping humans from acting on their base instincts is cultural override. That's why we say to find traditional or religious girls. Short of mental reprogramming, all women will have the urge to chase new dick, eventually.

His posts in TRP included, "Women Do Not Want Your Love," Sluts & Studs: Why Promiscuity is Acceptable for Men and Not Women," "You only get what you incentivize," and "On Transitioning From Anger to Acceptance." In one post about women's rape fantasies, Individual 20 argued, "I made this post knowing it would be highly controversial and hated. Newbies need to start challenging their ingrained ideas." In other words, the controversial and politically incorrect content was a discursive strategy to challenge socially-accepted ideas, but also to garner attention for TRP. This strategy is evident as Individual 20 wrote, "Someone will mention TRP elsewhere on reddit as a result of this post, and the subscriber count will rise."

## **The Everyday Members**

The final group of influential users were the everyday users. As discussed throughout, the prevailing conversations within TRP were focused on sex and men's rights issues. Over time, their engagement had communicatively constructed both the organization and the organizational identity. Their conversations converged on issues pertaining to sex as a manifestation of power, agency, and identity. The loss of sex activity, coupled with their perceptions of the social degradation of men's status in society, converge to create a contentious TRP identity. With these two threads of identity, gender emerged as the conceptual landscape that these identity subthemes are woven together, which will be discussed in the final chapter. The final chapter further explicated this communicative construction of organizational identity.

## **Summary**

In responding to RQ1, the TRP organizational identity is rooted in contrasts. Gender becomes a central organizing discourse within TRP. It becomes the primary theme that informs, impacts, and intersects the other two identity themes. TRP members define men in terms of alpha and beta masculinities; men should aspire to be alphas, even if they never reach "alpha status." The second contrast focused on sexual activity. Conversations about and framing of sex within TRP views sexual activity as an integral way to channel their frustrations about society. Put differently, the discourse regarding sex contained agentic and liberatory components, and functioned as a symbol of men's liberation from a society aligned toward and advantaging feminists. Sexual activity proves one's alpha status; however, men who do not have numerous sex partners continued to reinforce the beta masculine identity. Finally, if sex is a material manifestation of men's resentment, TRP member's resentment, too, becomes an important

organizing discourse. In sum, these three threads of identity discourses communicatively constitute the TRP organizational identity.

Whereas RQ1 examined the semantic network within TRP, RQ2 and RQ3 investigated the social networks that created the semantic networks. Specifically, RQ2 mapped the nearly 24,000 user interactions that occurred within the comment threads of TPR and identified a core group of 25 users that were highly connected and engaged throughout the TRP network. As identified by RQ2, 11 of the Top 25 users occupied key leadership roles within TRP. RQ3 further examined how the top 25 members of the TRP participated throughout the online organization. Three classes of member roles were uncovered, with each providing a different role in shaping, aligning, and reproducing Red Pill beliefs—namely, those related to ideas about manhood and masculinity, the role of sexual activity, and outrage and backlash about misandry in society. These findings further supported the themes discovered through RQ1, and provided a richer portrait inside organized, online sexism.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION**

This dissertation has been guided by a research goal of understanding organizational activity within r/TheRedPill (TRP) pertaining to organizational identity. In examining these processes within TRP, this dissertation's results revealed the nature through which organizational identity is enacted within the organization and uncovered three discourses that served to construct the TRP identity. Moreover, in examining the semantic and social networks of TRP, a richer portrait of online, men's rights activist organizations are crafted.

This chapter discusses this portrait's implications in three distinct areas: theoretical, methodological, and practical. In what follows, I situate the results from RQs 1-3 within a broader scholarly conversation about men's rights organizing online and give attention to this dissertation study's contributions to organizational identity. Then, I provide and comment on the practical implications of this study—particularly considering the anecdotal, demographic age of these members.

### **Theoretical Contributions**

In considering the theoretical contributions this dissertation makes, there are three specific areas that are enriched by this study. First, this dissertation examines an online communal space from an organizational lens. Drawing from organizational communication traditions, I argued for the importance of viewing online spaces as organizations, which explained and underpinned organizational activities. In considering men's rights activist organizations, this dissertation added a much-needed perspective on how men's rights activist organizations cultivate and sustain an organizational identity. One that is increasingly becoming visible and networked in both off- and online spaces. Second, in considering TRP as an

organization, its collective organizational identity was enacted in the intersection and contradictions that emerge throughout the conversations within TRP. TRP's organizational identity was woven together through three simultaneous threads that often emerge through contradictions. These dual discourses are organized on and around issues pertaining to both men's disenfranchisement *and* sexual activity.

### **TRP as an Organization**

Scholars have examined men's rights organizations in both on- and offline contexts. Both Messner (1998) and Ferber (2000) proffered a deeper understanding of how offline men's rights organizations discursively construct and organize themselves around hegemonic, disenfranchised masculinities. Couched within the politics of men's liberation, these offline studies were extended by Kimmel (2013) in examining the attraction men have to these types of organizations. Given the rise of computer-mediated technologies and Web 2.0, these types of organizations and spaces have proliferated within recent years (Schmitz & Kayzak, 2016). As such, scholars have examined men's rights activism online as products of technocultures (Ging, 2017; Massanari, 2015, 2017). Others have examined how collectivities frame misandry in reflecting on men's disenfranchisement (Marwick & Caplan, 2017). Finally, other research has examined the interconnection between the affordances of social media as these men collect and troll others (Hodapp, 2017; Mantilla, 2015). Whereas these scholars have responded to Schmitz and Kayzak's call for creating a richer portrait of men's rights organizing, they have not made explicit how these collectivities enact organizational forms in online spaces.

Using the metaphor of an 'organization' is an apt approach as the organizational metaphor. As shown through RQ1-3, this dissertation considers TRP to exist an online, networked organization. Adopting Miller's (2014) organizational framework as a heuristic



application to study online organizations, RQ1-3 showcased how social structures are built from micro, everyday conversations that occur within TRP and spanned throughout the embedded Reddit network (i.e., the evidence of central users' engagement throughout the text corpus and discussion posts *and* users' engagement throughout Reddit network). While TRP does demonstrate elements the 'community' metaphor, which center the role of relationships and personal connections as an important organizing stance (Parks, 2011), the semantic content shared within TRP showcased the constitutions of organizational structures, norms, and individual and organizational goals. That is, this organizing enactment is evident through their discussion of sexual strategies for individual men, but *also* in their willingness to reassert and reclaim their masculine status within society. In other words, their engagement served dual purposes—personal and organizational. The inclusion of a desire for collective activity aimed at changing men's perceived loss of status is an important consideration in conceptualizing TRP as an organization. Moreover, the social engagement of influential users enacted organizational hierarchies and structures that is evident through moderator and endorsed contributor roles within TRP. These communicative structures created the organizational structure that exists in TRP.

Perhaps most importantly, the findings from RQ 1-3 further suggest the central role that language/text plays within online organizations. Building on Pilny, Dinh, and Bryan's (2017) suggestion that prototypical communication enact normative rules for how individuals communicate with one another in dark, online organizations and contribute to identification in online spaces, RQ1-3 illustrated text-based conversations within TRP as both normative and formative of the organizational activities in the subreddit. The conversations are normative in their use of terminology and slang to describe their experiences. For instance, concepts like

“divorce-rape,” “alphas,” “Chad J. Thundercock,” and acronyms like, “AWALT,” are frequently used within TRP to describe men’s experiences within a society they see as perpetually oppressing white men. They are formative in that are strategically used to frame men’s experiences as victims of a feminist society.

Moreover, TRP’s existence *and* persistence in a society corresponds to what both Cheney (1995) and Buzzanell et al. (1997) described as an alternative organization that operates counter to mainstream organizing and organizations. Leadership roles within TRP are utilized to maintain and reaffirm Red Pill ideologies and messages. According to Buzzanell et al. (1997), in alternative organizations, leaders “are centrally positioned within information coordination and community liaison activities because they emphasize the ecology of leadership” (p. 289). Within TRP, the leaders (in the form of moderators and endorsed contributors) are positioned throughout the web of social relations of the Top 100 posts of all time, which anchored Red Pill ideologies via the content shared within the subreddit. In the case of Moderator 1, his social reach (via connections within the social network), his editorial control, and his willingness to reassert TRP values is further evidence that the TRP not only represents an organization, but an alternative organization with structures and ideologies rooted in “opposition to conventional thinking”—namely a feminist society (Buzzanell et al., 1997, p. 291). The alternative organizing within TRP also impacts and effects how identification processes are enacted to constitute the TRP identity.

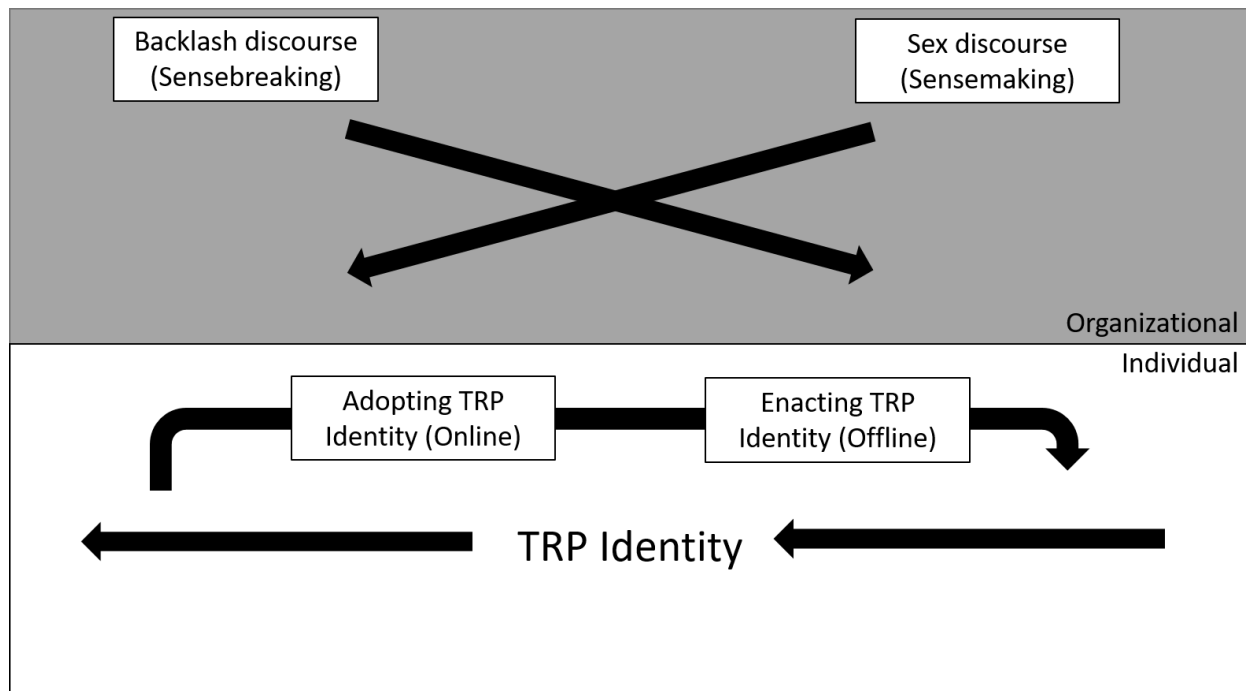
### **Online Organizational Identity within TRP**

Again, organizational identification is the process of linking oneself to a larger, social collectivity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Cheney, 1983). Within an organization, identification matters, as it “is the process by which people come to define themselves, communicate that definition to others, and use that definition to navigate their lives, work-wise or other” (Ashforth,

Harrison, & Corley, 2008, p. 334). That is, identification processes aid in the construction of organizational identities.

Identification processes adopt both sensebreaking and sensemaking perspectives that foster identity construction. Whereas sensebreaking is concerned with issues of identity crises or enduring questions surrounding identity, within the TRP context, men's frustration, concern, or confusion about the status of men within society examples of this phenomenon. Moreover, when considering new users' socialization into TRP and the larger Red Pill ideology, sensebreaking processes are anchored in users' willingness and desire to connect with others that similarly feel a sense of their own identity confusion. Sensebreaking discourses in TRP are a product of the perception of men's disenfranchisement within society.

Similarly, Ashforth et al. (2008) argue that sensemaking processes explore how individuals connect and adopt meaning to their experiences—what Kramer and Miller (2014) refer to as “retrospectively assign[ing] meaning to [their] experiences” (p. 528). For TRPers this meaning making occurs through their channeling of sexual activity. In other words, as demonstrated throughout RQ1-3, sex is framed in a variety of ways, but ultimately became symbolic of men's reclamation of their identity. When framed as both liberatory and an expression of men's rage, the discourses surrounding sex provided an important sensemaking process that organized part of the TRP identification process. In considering TRP, this process is catalyzed through a converging backlash and sex discourse. Whereas Ashforth et al. (2008)'s model adopts sensebreaking and sensemaking as separate processes within the organizational identification process, I argue for a modified model. Within the online, alternative organizational context of TRP, the sensebreaking and sensemaking discourses converged to impact how individuals construct and enact the TRP Identity (see Figure 27).



**Figure 27.** A model for TRP Identity

In an online context, the sex/backlash discourses are essential parts of the how the TRP identity is discursively enacted. Due in part to an online technoculture that amplified the ‘viscerality’ of the written text within TRP, their adoption of uncivil language is used to both incite anger within their members *and* garner attention from outsiders (particularly newcomers). They are collectively saying, “We are reclaiming our identities as men, you **will** listen to us.” In framing the organizational identification process as a convergence of both backlash and sex discourses, the resulting process enacted an inherently gendered TRP identity.

### **An Intersectional Organizational Identity: TRP Identity**

The TRP organizational identification process communicatively enacted an exaggerated, gendered organizational identity woven together by three, dualistic, and contradictory threads: gender organized the primary thread, and backlash and sex operated as twin communicative threads whose meanings converge and diverge throughout TRP.

**Gendered Discursive Themes within TRP.** Whereas West and Zimmerman (1987), Butler (1999), and Deutsch (2007) discussed how social constructions of gender can both done, performed, and undone; this dissertation showcased the possibilities of gender “overdone.” Put differently, the viscosity, the amplifications, and the echo chambers of TRP suggested that their gendered, organizational identity is often communicatively enacted to overcompensate and intensify their online manhood performance. Evidence of this identity is found throughout TRP’s consistent references to aspirational, hegemonically masculine heroes like Chad J. Thundercock. Chad represented the man who has it all: a high-paying career, fast cars, physical prowess, and has a bevy of attractive and sexually-satisfied women that he can call upon at any time. Moreover, the exaggerated machination of Chads and Alphas echoed what Connell (2005) refers to as *exemplar masculinities* that communicate normative ideas of how men should behave, who they should be, and how they should exercise their power. In online settings, these exemplar masculinities offered TRP members a template of how they should engage and interact in their offline lives. For instance, their need for fitness tips, conversations about the male psyche, frequent discussion of testosterone levels, and their reliance on pick-up strategies to increase sexual activity proffered an exemplar and exaggerated gender identity.

More specifically, the social network structures and influencers uncovered in RQ2 and described in RQ3 offered an important revelation in how the TRP organizational identity is regulated and controlled by influential users—an application of Alvesson and Willmott (2010)’s identity regulation modes. Alvesson and Willmott (2010) provided nine modes of how identity is regulated including: (1) defining characteristics of individuals who are members, (2) defining individuals as a contrast to others, (3) providing an alternative vocabulary and references to create a worldview, (4) promoting specific organizational values and morals, (5) adopting

specific skill sets, (6) membership, (7) a social hierarchy, (8) organizational norms and rules for engagement, and (9) articulating the specific context and cultural milieu through which identity is enacted.

These nine modes contribute to how Moderator 1 and Moderator 2 reiterated and promoted both a vision and script for Red Pill men. This identity is predicated on characteristics like “alpha” and is defined as a contrast to what, they argue, is a feminist socialization of men within society—indicative of modes one and two. The adoption of specific terminology and values about the world (i.e., “spinning plates” or “divorce-rape”) combined with pick-up and sexual strategies are indicative of modes three through six. The Endorsed Contributors contributed to the normative communication enacted within TRP. Finally, membership, hierarchy of contributors, norms of how members should contribute, and consistent references to misandry are indicated of modes seven through nine. In other words, the TRP organizational identity is gendered in a primary, exaggerated masculinity that is regulated and controlled by organizational leaders. While the central identity thread is well-regulated and controlled, its intersections with the second and third threads within TRP illustrated the contradictory and dualistic way that both individually and organizationally constructed and organized vis-à-vis the sex/backlash discourse.

### ***Sex and Backlash Discursive Themes within TRP.***

This organizational identity is woven together through discourses related to sex. Within TRP, sex is power, status, a physical expression of gender identity, and a way to channel their resentment toward a society that discriminates against men. Ultimately, though, sex discourses also become a central way through which masculinity is communicatively constituted within TRP as a maintenance of what Brittan (1989) calls a “hierarchic heterosexuality.” In the TRP

context, hierarchic heterosexuality reasserts gender binaries (men and women), returns to traditional gender hierarchies (men over women), and resituates traditional gender differences as ways to subvert a feminist society. These manifestations of hierarchic heterosexuality illuminate the contradictory gender paradoxes that exist within TRP.

According to Putnam and Ashcraft (2017), organizations are rife with paradoxes pertaining to gender that highlight the contradictory ways in which members engage with one another. Often, the men are pulled together as they reflect on their experiences of oppression within workplaces, romantic relationships, on college campuses, etc. They share a fealty for one another as they believe that there is a “crisis of masculinity;” however, the crisis caused by a feminist society. As shown in RQ1, the men argued that society has turned men into weak, beta males. TRPers crafted and shared horror stories about legal systems and other institutions that deliberately discriminated against men in favor of women. Women are cast as villains, gold diggers, “divorce-rapists,” and liars (i.e., false rape allegations). If women are villains, it is reasonable that men would reject and ignore them altogether (as some do within subgroups of MGTOW indicate); however, within TRP, the contradiction existed in their *need* for women. Almost everything within TRP subreddit addressed the centrality of women: in their adoption of “strong frames” to pick up women, fitness and testosterone levels to impress women, and engaging in multiple sex partners at one time (“spinning plates”). One could assume that the centrality of women within TRP might indicate a respect for women; yet within TRP, the sex/backlash discourse that converged within their organizational identity to operationalize women as objects of desire, sex, and used for men’s pleasure.

Gendered contradictions emerged through men’s relation to women within TRP. As RQ 1 and 3 showcased, discussions of men’s discrimination, their lost relationships, their struggles

making sense of their identity are primary; however, this relevance is often cast because of women. These dualisms of women and men illustrated the binary ways through which TRP identity is predicated on backlash, which is mitigated through sexual activity. In a similar fashion, as TRP members share ideas and discussions about masculinity, they mean nothing without a relationship to femininity in society (Brittan, 1989). Additionally, whereas feminisms seek to reduce and eliminate the dualities and inequalities that exist within organizations, TRP's organizational identity and organization seeks to reassert these inequalities, differences, and regain their lost power and status within society—*through sexual activity*. In other words, by adopting Red Pill beliefs, men decry women and feminists for destroying society while simultaneously noting that they need to adopt and practice Red Pill practices to increase their chances of impressing and having sex with women. In sum, these findings showcase the contradictory nature that gender, sex, and backlash converge to communicatively craft and enact the TRP identity in online spaces.

### **Methodological Contributions to the Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO)**

At the onset of this dissertation, CCO was adopted as an epistemological grounding in that the text-based nature of TRP offered a foundation of investigating the organizational activities within TRP. The Montréal School approach to CCO asserts that an organization is communicatively constituted through a transactional relationship between text and conversation that produce meanings; moreover, throughout time, communication episodes evolve into an organization. More specifically, in their discussion of the major threads within CCO scholarship, Cooren described the Montréal School's approach in the following way:

More generally, an organization is embodied or incarnated, or materializes, in anything or anyone that can be recognized as representing it, that is, making it present, whether a spokesperson (who speaks on its behalf), a logo (that marks its



presence), an employee (who works for it), a text (that spells out its policies), a product (that represents its style, qualities, or character), or a building (that encompasses most of its activities). (Schoeneborn et al., 2014, p. 292)

These micro forms and symbols of organizational activity communicate and, over time, enact organizations. While CCO studies within the Montréal School have largely adopted smaller, qualitative studies (for a review of CCO studies, see Brummans et al., 2014), this study adopted a multi-level, computational analysis to examine a large, text-based unstructured dataset.

In examining the Top 100 posts of all time, and 35,256 overall comments, my use of multiple methodologies to investigate online organizational process is unique based on volume of data, the affordances that (1) cultivate normative uses of engagement and communication and (2) structure the environment that engenders communication between users. The relationship between users, the technocultural ecosystem of Reddit, and messages shared therein extend CCO approaches in two main ways.

First, RQ1 adopted a large, unstructured thematic analysis to uncover topical areas that richly describe TRP conversations. The collection of text within TRP captured the conversations (and topics) that contributed to the communicative constitution of the TRP organization. According to Lambert (2017), text mining and semantic network analyses are an adept method at discovering and richly describing the ever-growing bodies of text that are communicated in and by organizations; however, the claims and themes uncovered through semantic networks need to be situated within the larger contexts of text and spaces. To that end, in RQ2 and RQ3, the use of social network analysis and observation illustrated both the utility and importance of how these methods can be paired with text mining and semantic network analyses to investigate organizational communication spanning micro-levels (individual users' comments) to macro-levels (overall text corpus and social networks).

Second, the use of multiple network methodologies to study CCO within online context challenges scholars to consider the multiple levels of organizing, sustaining, and legitimizing organization. Whereas Blaschke, Schoeneborn, and Seidl (2012) and Blaschke (2017) argued that the Montréal School's approach to CCO is an apt area of inquiry from a network perspective, Weber, Fulk, and Monge (2016) expanded this theorization in their study of social networking sites as an organizational form. This dissertation drew upon both traditions to study the networks of meanings, topics, users, and identities that were constructed throughout TRP to create an organizational identity. As shown in RQ1, networks of meanings and conversations cultivated a networked and contradictory organizational identity. These networked identities developed into consistent, fragmented contradictory threads. Moreover, RQ 2 and 3 demonstrated the centrality of influencers and leaders within both the social network and the organizational network that promote, regulate, and, at times, reassert TRP's organizational identity.

### **Pragmatic Contributions**

Pragmatically, as hate-filled rhetoric is mainstreamed and normalized (Jane, 2014), it is a likely that the open exchange of ideas and innovation in online spaces excludes the voices of marginalized identities. There are economic costs of an increasingly polarized, socially unjust, and harassment-filled online society; a 2017 Pew Center study noted that sites like Reddit and 4Chan profit from the increased engagement due in part to the hateful rhetoric and extremist ideas promoted within online spaces (Rainie et al., 2017). Problematically, online spaces are “incentivizing the spread of salacious and titillating content over fact-based discourse and driving corporate collection of vast troves of information about our habits and activities”

(MacKinnon, 2017, para. 16). While free speech is threatened by these spaces, there are also opportunities for preemptive education.

This dissertation sought to understand and create a portrait of The Red Pill (TRP) as an online organization. In examining TRP, the content shared throughout RQ1 and RQ3 suggests an important need in helping to address men offline. According to a 2016 Pew Research survey, nearly 70 percent of Reddit's users are men, with 59 percent of this group ranging in the 18-24 age group. Considering these demographics, this dissertation is an important step particularly aimed at college men. Berkowitz (2011) challenged educators to consider programs and interventions on college campuses that enable college men to unpack their own experiences and expectations in the gendered identity. Writing that many college men remain silent—particularly in offline settings--“because we wrongly assume that most other men believe what we have been taught to be as men, and also because we fear their disapproval were we to reveal the truth” (Berkowitz, 2011, p. 161). This dissertation uncovered and unearthed an online organization that these men are engaging in their experiences, their frustrations with manhood, and their desire for connections.

In unearthing and unpacking these issues, there are important and necessary opportunities for college educators to further create spaces and programming to engage men offline. As shown in both RQ1 and RQ3, often members of TRP argue that political correctness has run amok throughout society; however, given the current socio-political milieu following President Donald J. Trump's election, free-speech issues are erupting on college campuses throughout the United States (Harris, 2018; Kerr, 2018; Quintana, 2018). Rather than continuing to perpetuate these perceptions about American colleges and universities, it is becoming vitally important for educators to engage in conversations that may be messy, problematic, but centered in civility and

respect for others. In other words, the way through is to disrupt this perception about society is through engagement. By engaging these men in offline settings, the issues of diversity and inclusion, social justice, and feminist activist are truly being enacted; moreover, in creating a space to engage these men, it is possible that these men may begin to feel valued and respected. As Kimmel (2013) writes, “Diversity, when done right, means *everybody can get the opportunities and rewards they deserve*. Listening to the voices of *everyone* means just that” (p. 209, emphasis in original).

### **Future Research**

This study investigated the subreddit of The Red Pill that acts as an organization and enacts identity through converging and contradictory threads of gender, sex, and backlash. Future research should adopt these threads in the sibling threads within Reddit and other blogs or communities within the Manosphere (the network of blogs, forums, and social networking sites focused on misandry within society)—including r/MensRights, blogs like Return of Kings, and other subcommunity networks affiliated with The Red Pill (i.e., r/RedPillWomen or r/RedPillParenting).

Furthermore, as mentioned in RQ3, many Moderators and ECs are connected to various sub-subreddit organizations linked to The Red Pill (r/RedPillWomen, r/RedPillParenting, r/AskTRP, and r/AltTRP). Future research could continue to research this vast network of sub-organizations to provide more context to how Red Pill ideologies are sustained or potentially redefined within these unique contexts. Whereas TRP’s focus on men’s experiences, these other sub-groups seemingly contradict the prevailing ideas espoused throughout TRP. In researching these various evolutions, it is possible that this organization’s ideology and Discourse can be illuminated.

Next, research should also investigate the debate spaces within TRP's networks. Throughout RQ1, there were specific references to r/thebluepill. Often, these spaces created the landscape where ontological debates about the nature of society are argued. Moreover, one of TRP's moderators, Moderator 1, stated that as TRP gained more notoriety and attention, it has blended more "Blue Pill" ideas. To that end, TRP members created r/ThePurplePill, which operates as a "neutral" space to engage in discussions about sex and gender issues.

Additionally, in mapping the social network, users throughout TRP adopted specific naming conventions for their usernames. On one hand, users often created temporary accounts known as "throwaway" accounts as their primary TRP account. This strategy indicates a potential site affordance of anonymity to engage in TRP. On the other hand, the usernames also adopt recurring permutations of "Red Pill" within their usernames. Future research should use these usernames as they frame their engagement within TRP, and create richer taxonomies of users.

Finally, an important addition would also come from conducting life story interviews to learn more about members of TRP in offline settings. This line of research would aim to ask questions like the following: what brought them to TRP; when did they feel like a member of TRP; what do they gain from TRP? These questions can provide a thicker description of the members of TRP, and supplement the findings of this dissertation. More specifically, these findings would seek to uncover why members have adopted TRP in their life, and further explicate how TRP ideologies are practiced in offline settings (i.e., in careers, relationships). This study would further interrogate how TRP helped men understand their gendered identity.

## **Conclusion**

This dissertation explored how men's rights activists formed their collective interactively and constituted an online organization. Through member engagement in the Red Pill subreddit

(TRP), members of the TRP enacted a distinctive organizational identity connected through dualisms pertaining to gender, sexual activity, and backlash. These three themes framed the TRP identity as a contra-organization by the formal and informal leaders within TRP. The social network analysis and observational data illustrated how these leaders fomented frustration and ire about the status of men in society and promoted an ideology that proffered sexual activity as a pathway to men's collective liberation. Considering the traditionalist nature of TRPers' desire to reassert, reclaim, and redefine masculinity and manhood, these findings suggested that gendered organizing in online spaces is performed in amplified and "overdone" ways through their strategic use of problematic, abrasive, and politically incorrect language. Building off TRP's strategic use of language, the dual discourses surrounding sex and backlash aided in contributed to TRP's organizational identification processes insomuch that they helped members to align and engage in the collective interactions. Next, this dissertation provided an important first step in applying computational methodologies to investigate the Montréal School's approach to the Communicative Constitution of Organization in an online context through adoption of a large, unstructured semantic and social dataset. These methodological choices provided insights into how organizations "scale up" from discussion board threads to organizational activity through the interplay of conversation and text in online spaces.

Most importantly, this dissertation created a nuanced, complicated, and direct glimpse into how men's rights activist organizations engaged online. Whereas scholars examining these organization often adopted macro-level approaches designed to examine how misandry is framed online, how recruitment occurs through targeted messages, and cultural observations of online spaces, this dissertation utilized a different approach that considered three levels of analysis. These three levels of analysis focused on a bottom-up approach that examined the conversations

that occurred between members, how these members' social networks helped to shape the TRP organization, and how influential members utilized specific Red Pill topic areas to promote the TRP identity. Adopting this approach, this dissertation offered a richer portrait of The Red Pill, as an organization, that is defined through a perpetual, collective frustration with themselves, manhood, and society that they believe aligns with feminists who have emasculated them. These frustrations, anxieties, and amplifications of members' collective experiences captured an organizational identity centered in a vast network of outrage, complexity, and contradiction.

## EPILOGUE

In August 2015, Reddit CEO, Steve Huffman, unveiled the content policy known as “quarantining,” aimed at limiting the spread and access of problematic and harassing content on Reddit’s platform. Specifically, quarantining “entails applying a set of restrictions to a community so its content will only be viewable to those who explicitly opt in. [Reddit] will Quarantine communities whose content would be considered extremely offensive to the average redditor” (spez, 2015). Additionally, quarantining also removes community posts from appearing on the Reddit’s front page (dubbed “the front page of the Internet”), and does not generate revenue for the site (Reddit, 2018). Examples of quarantined communities include r/incel and r/The\_Donald—both of which were connected to offline instances of violence (Vigdor & Chokshi, 2019). Thus, the quarantine act is the first step for the Reddit platform to enforce and reprimand communities that continually violated Reddit’s content policy. Additional disciplinary steps include banning and removal from Reddit.

On September 28, 2018, Reddit quarantined a variety of subreddits connected to the spread of hate speech and white nationalism (Sommer, 2018). Citing the regressive and negative constructions of masculinity and misogynistic discourse, Reddit quarantined r/TheRedPill (Copland, 2018).

When I heard the news of the quarantine, I was conflicted. The scholarly rabbit hole that this dissertation took me down inspired complicated feelings as I strove to understand the worldview constructed by r/TheRedPill. On one hand, the quarantine strategy that Reddit utilizes is a useful tool to rid problematic and hateful forms of communication from its technoculture. Presumably, this is a good thing as it illustrates Reddit’s action against promoting problematic and harmful content on its site. Additionally, Reddit provided a link to Stony Brook University’s



Center for the Study of Men and Masculinities (Copland, 2018). “Well, that’s good, right?” I tried to reassure myself as I sent several text messages to friends knowledgeable about my dissertation work. Still, I felt unsettled as I processed the news. I struggled to find the positive of the situation.

I quickly wrote a text message to a friend, “But does it do anything?” I feared that Reddit’s quarantine was more symbolic and performative than anything else. That is, it was a strategy that Reddit could employ that would not solve anything. My knowledge of the conversations and conspiracies shared throughout r/TheRedPill led me to understand that the agility and adaptability of both r/TheRedPill and the broader Manosphere often built contingencies for *when* they would be removed from their spaces. Their removal from sites and online spaces was often foretold; as such, most of these Reddit spaces constructed redundancies vis-à-vis discussion boards platforms hosted on other web platforms or the Dark Web that would allow them to continue their community. Acts like quarantining were an inevitable result of and practice espoused by the larger institutional forces that sought to disenfranchise those who spoke out. Thus, users often theorized that Reddit and other spaces were simultaneously scared of the “dark truths” shared throughout r/TheRedPill and were actively trying to censor them. It was the second point about censorship that made me feel the most uneasy and concerned. The language of r/TheRedPill had become increasingly mainstream and legitimized through conservative media outlets (Fearnow, 2019; Stossel, 2018; Trump, 2019). As technology companies began to enforce stricter content guidelines, conservative pundits (e.g., Donald Trump Jr., and Candace Owens) began to decry these actions as censoring of conservative speech.

As I continued to reflect on the unsettling feeling, I wondered aloud to myself, “So instead of talking about the content that’s being shared in these spaces, we’re talking about the

actions that companies are taking to address the content. We're losing sight of the arguments that are being made in spaces for both why these men make these claims and the horrific nature of their content." It was at that point I realized how much further down the rabbit hole goes, and how much more work there is to be done.

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## APPENDIX

**Table 8.** Top 100 Posts of All Time in r/TheRedPill

#	Post Title	<u># of</u> Comments	TRP Category
1	Google Fires Ph.D. Biologist/Engineer for Claiming	881	Culture
2	How to get laid like a warlord	815	Red Pill Theory
3	I've been practicing stoicism	185	Building Power
4	[META] Reddit rolls out first ban wave	975	META
5	Man gets his ex-gif to pay child support	343	Men's Rights
6	1000 migrants in Germany sexually assault, rob, and rape women	948	META
7	Collective Advice and Methods for Beginners	322	Red Pill Theory
8	The most important part of the game is not being emotionally invested	157	Red Pill Theory Blue Pill
9	I lost my marriage, my career, and my kid	339	Example
10	Getting ready to black-knight a high school girl	433	Red Pill Example
11	Three ways to consciously manipulate women	393	Red Pill Theory
12	Millionaire releases surveillance video of his ex-fiancée	271	Blue Pill Example
13	How to Talk to Everyone You See	277	Red Pill Example
14	Twitch Streamer	726	Red Pill Example
15	The main lessons I've learned after 3 years of implementing TRP	180	Red Pill Theory
16	The Red Pill Cheat Sheet	255	META
17	To those nervous about going to a gym	247	Fitness
18	FR - My Story	468	Field Report
19	AWALT Confirmed	292	No Category
20	You got a stranger pregnant: a guide	489	Field Report
21	r/TheRedPill is the SUBReddit of the Day	238	META
22	I was asked to train a new female employee to do the promotion I got passed on	519	Rant/Venting
23	For all you newbies, this is for you	299	No Category
24	Red Pill Video Compilation Nuke	246	META
25	Men are not happy	434	Rant/Venting
26	The red pill are a bunch of bigots who can't get laid	497	META
27	Bullet Points	220	Field Report
28	The Five Triggers for Sexual Attraction	100	No Category
29	Some of My Personal Life Lessons for Those Under 30	349	Rant/Venting
30	Quick tips to staying Lit	345	Red Pill Theory

31	Australian trial finds POSITIVE	144	Men's Rights
32	Calling your wife/girlfriend fat	518	Men's Rights
33	Saw TRP in Action at my Job; I buy it now	389	Finance
34	Tips from my tinder success	346	No Category
35	Honest Observations after 8 years in the game	235	No Category
36	I'm pregnant and you are the father	474	Rant/Venting
37	Nikola Tesla explains why he never married	393	Culture
38	I'm Milo Yiannopoulos, AMA	1059	META
39	Technical conference cancelled	296	Men's Rights
40	So you're a boring fuck: How to become interesting	284	Men's Rights
41	Women marries millionaire husband after he insists		
41	on prenup	621	Men's Rights
42	All Women Are Whores	278	Off Topic
43	An AWALT Classic	420	No Category
44	Aristotle	71	Red Pill Theory
45	Sweden's Liberal Youth Party	290	Men's Rights
46	Successful people aren't demi-gods	150	Building Power
47	Man wins right to sue rape accuser	91	Men's Rights
48	If you weren't sure there's a war on men, check it out	391	Red Pill Example
48	The Golden Rule: How to Not Get Fucked in		
49	Business	326	Red Pill Example
50	Dirty Sheets	378	Field Report
51	Stoicism 101	148	Red Pill Theory
52	Beta for 10 years	279	Red Pill Example
53	No, Plastics are not lowering your testosterone	250	Science
53	I'm in fucking tears right now. A woman used the		
54	justice system to ruin my life.	735	No Category
55	Letter at 50 to a younger self	176	No Category
55	Women thinks her guy friend is being an 'asshole'		Blue Pill
56	because he's no longer doing nice things for her	418	Example
56	Once you realize what interested women will do for		
57	you with little effort on your part	299	Red Pill Theory
58	To the man shooting 3's in the gym today	188	Red Pill Example
59	No you're don't have to be an asshole	138	No Category
59	How I accepted that I was using weed everyday as an		
60	escape from my own inner problems	202	No Category
60	Today was the day that Reddit almost swallowed the		
61	pill	443	Red Pill Example
61	Unless you're a hot girl or a guy from a well off		
61	family, your younger years (<25) are supposed to		
62	suck	270	Rant/Venting
62			Blue Pill
63	Elon Musk is Fucked	614	Example
64	Dopamine Decoded	182	Science
65	Equality is a bitch, Ain't it?	461	META

66	Remember, you're good enough	246	Red Pill Theory
67	After the death of my child and girlfriend,	151	Rant/Venting
68	improvement is all I've got left	337	Men's Rights
68	Amy Schumer admits to raping a guy	179	Men's Rights
69	Johnny Depp's now ex-wife Amber Heart was	205	Rant/Venting
69	arrested for domestic violence in 2009	398	Rant/Venting
70	The Intelligent Alpha	179	Field Report
71	Today I saw firsthand how chicks use guys like an	399	Fitness
71	ATMs	193	Red Pill Theory
71	Feminist journalist decided to live as a man for 18	390	Red Pill Theory
72	months	343	META
73	Girls are attracted to a level of muscularity	482	No Category
74	The guide to accepting yourself	214	Red Pill Example
74	[Career] You'd be surprised how simple it is to create	740	MGTOW
75	value	387	No Category
76	Guy exposes a cabal of reddit SJWs	449	Red Pill Theory
76	As soon as he sells his companies, his wife leaves and	333	Rant/Venting
77	takes half the money	232	Men's Rights
78	You can have the best year of your life		Blue Pill
79	The Sexodus in action	447	Example
79	[X-Post] My BF broke up with me because I booked	734	No Category
80	a week vacation with my EX in Amsterdam	358	Red Pill Example
81	Quick and dirty tips and tricks for aspiring alphas	581	META
81	You're not good enough, you're not smart enough,	65	Men's Rights
82	and people don't like you	84	Red Pill Theory
82	TIL just deleted a post about male victims of	474	Red Pill Theory
83	domestic abuse	198	LTR
83	#1 Trending Video on Youtube today is titled "Alpha	281	Rant/Venting
84	Males Do Not Exist"	293	Red Pill Theory
84	Guy is secretly loaded with cash but does not tell his	191	Men's Rights
85	gf	339	No Category
86	Married man from r/DeadBedrooms	205	Men's Rights
87	I'm Karen Straughan		
87	Amherst Student Expelled for Sexual Misconduct		
88	Can't Defend Himself		
89	Must-read red pill content		
90	Counterfeit Red Pills		
91	She acts like a child because she is happy		
91	Last Night I got 3 women arrested for groping and		
92	assault		
93	The agony of being too beautiful to be faithful		
93	Swedish man acquitted of rape charges thanks to		
94	audio recording		
95	Holy Fuck men, always protect yourself		
96	A male birth control		

Girl I am seeing gets visibly upset when I take out a		
97	condom	273 No Category
98	100,000	342 META
99	Attention visitors from CNN	334 META
100	Remember the girl who dumped her boyfriend	387 No Category

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# VITA

## SEAN M. EDDINGTON

*July 2019*

### EDUCATION

#### **Ph.D., Purdue University, Brian Lamb School of Communication**

August 2019

Major: Organizational Communication  
Minors: Career Issues  
Research Design (Qualitative Methods, Social Network Analysis, Computational Methods, Content Analysis, Quantitative Methods)  
Advisor: Patrice M. Buzzanell, Distinguished Professor Emerita, Purdue University; Professor and Chair, Department of Communication, University of South Florida  
Committee: Stacey Connaughton, Natalie Lambert, Seungyoon Lee, Kevin Stainback (Sociology)  
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### AWARDS & HONORS

- 2018 Alan H. Monroe Graduate Scholar, awarded annually on basis of excellence in scholarly activity for a graduate student
- 2018 American Society of Engineering Educators' Action on Diversity – Best Diversity Paper Finalist
- 2018 Purdue University Student Organization Advisor of the Year Award, competitively selected as the recipient of the award and nominated by undergraduate members of Beta Theta Pi
- 2018 Electrical and Computer Engineering Outstanding Research Assistant Award
- 2018 Graduate Mentoring Award Nominee– nominated for strong mentoring and teaching service at Purdue University

- 2017 and 2018 Bruce Kendall Teaching Award Nominee – nominated for exemplar teaching and service within the Brian Lamb School of Communication
- 2017 House Director/Advisor of the Year – Beta Theta Pi, competitively selected as the recipient of the award and nominated by undergraduate members of Beta Theta Pi
- 2017 Wayne State University Doctoral Seminar on “Resilience in Career” – competitively selected as one of 17 other doctoral students to attend
- 2016 Purdue Interfraternity Council Father Phil Bowers Outstanding Chapter Advisor – Beta Theta Pi
- 2013 Advisor of the Year, Purdue University Residence Hall Association

## SCHOLARSHIP

### Journals and Proceedings

#### *Published*

1. Eddington, S. M. (2019). Zoltowski, C. B., Brightman, A. O., Corple, D., Buzzanell, P. M. (2019). Tensions in applying a design thinking approach to address barriers to increasing diversity and inclusion in a large, legacy engineering program. *Proceedings of the 2019 ASEE Annual Conference*, Tampa, FL, June 2019.
2. Corple, D., Zoltowski, C. B., **Eddington, S. M.**, Brightman, A. O., Buzzanell, P. M., (2019). What you need to succeed: Examining culture and capital in biomedical engineering undergraduate education. *Proceedings of the 2019 ASEE Annual Conference*, Tampa, FL, June 2019.
3. Eddington, S. M. (2018). The Communicative constitution of hate organizations online: A semantic network analysis of “make america great again.” *Social Media + Society*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1177/2056305118790763
4. **Eddington, S. M.**, Zoltowski, C. B., Brightman, A. O., Joshi, R. Buzzanell, P. M., & Torres, D. (2018). Diversity and inclusion in engineering: Students’ perceptions of learning and engaging with difference. *Proceedings of the 2018 ASEE Annual Conference*, Salt Lake City, UT, June 2018. **(Top 5 Finalist – Best Diversity Paper)**
5. Joshi, R., Zoltowski, C. B., Brightman, A. O., **Eddington, S.**, Buzzanell, P. M., & Torres, D. (2018). Evaluating the impact of design sessions on participants’ perceptions of diversity and inclusion in the professional formation of biomedical engineers. *Proceedings of the 2018 ASEE Annual Conference*, Salt Lake City, UT, June 2018.
6. Zoltowski, C. B., **Eddington, S. M.**, Brightman, A. O., Buzzanell, P. M., & Joshi, R. (2018). Exploring diversity and inclusion in the professional formation of engineers through design sessions. *Proceedings of the 2018 Frontiers in Education Conference*, San Jose, CA, October 2018.
7. Long, Z., Pauly, J., **Eddington, S.**, Hughes-Kirchubel, L., Buzzanell, P. M., & Kokini, K. (2016). Understanding the participation, perceptions, and impacts of engineering faculty learning communities: A mixed method approach. *Proceedings of the 2016 ASEE Annual Conference*, New Orleans, LA, June 2016.

#### Handbook Chapters

1. **Eddington, S.**, & Buzzanell, P.M. (2018). Tensions within bullying and career resilience in higher education. In R. West & C. Beck (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Bullying and Communication* (pp. 178-186). New York, NY: Routledge.
2. **Eddington, S.**, & Buzzanell, P.M., (forthcoming). Gender and Conflict Management Strategies in Organizational Settings. In M.C. Goins, J.F. McAlister, & B.K. Alexander (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Communication and Gender*. New York, NY: Routledge

### Book Chapters & Case Studies

1. **Eddington, S., & Pauly, J.A.** (forthcoming). Big shoes to fill: Organizational culture, mentorship, and networks during career change. In M.W. Kramer & R.S. Bisel (Eds.), *Case Studies in Organizational Communication: A Lifespan Approach*. New York, NY: Oxford.
2. **Eddington, S., Hughes-Kirchubel, L., & Buzzanell, P.M.** (2018). Millennial organizing for help and support: hashtag work-life balance. In M. Z. Ashlock & A. Atay (Eds.), *From theory to practice: Examining millennials reshaping organizational cultures*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

### Conference Papers & Panels

1. **Eddington, S. M., Corple, D., Buzzanell, P. M., Zoltowski, C. B., Brightman, A. O.,** (2019). *Organizing design for organizational culture change in engineering*. Paper presented at the Organizational Communication Division Research Roundtable at the annual conference of the International Communication Association, conference held in Washington, D. C.
2. Eddington. S. M. (2019). *"Taking the red pill": A semantic network analysis of alternative forms of resilience and social support within r/theredpill*. Paper presented at the Interpersonal Division at the annual conference of the Central States Communication Association, conference held in Omaha, NE.
3. Eddington, S. (2018). *Failing forward: An exploration of career resilience in student affairs*. Paper presented to the Applied Communication Division at the annual conference of the National Communication Association, conference held in Salt Lake City, UT
4. Hughes-Kirchubel, L., & **Eddington, S.** (2018) *Tweeting, resisting and imagining: An analysis of the communicative enactment of global resistance, resilience and social change*. Paper presented to Human Communication and Technology Division at the annual conference of the National Communication Association, conference held in Salt Lake City, UT
5. Eddington, S. (2018). *"Playing" with ethics in organizational research: Communicating the embodied dilemmas of early career scholars*. Competitively selected panel resented at Organizational Communication Division at the annual conference of the National Communication Association, conference held in Salt Lake City, UT
6. Eddington, S., (2018). *Resilience at play: Communicative approaches to understanding, researching, and extending resilience research*. Competitively selected panel to be presented at the Applied Communication Division at the annual conference of the National Communication Association, conference held in Salt Lake City, UT
7. Eddington, S., (2018). *The Importance of communication research for scholarly and public conversations about bullying: Introducing the routledge handbook of communication and bullying*. Competitively selected panel presented at the Applied Communication Division at the annual conference of the National Communication Association, conference held in Salt Lake City, UT
8. **Eddington, S., Zoltowski, C., Brightman, A., Joshi, R., Buzzanell, P. M., Torres, D** (2018). *Diversity and inclusion in engineering: Students' perceptions of learning and engaging with difference*. Paper presented at the annual conference of American Society of Engineering Education, conference held in Salt Lake City, UT.
9. Joshi, R., Brightman, A., Zoltowski, C., Torres, D., **Eddington, S., Buzzanell, P.M.** (2018). *Assessing design thinking as a tool for shaping a more diverse and inclusionary culture within engineering disciplines*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the American Society of Engineering Education, conference held in Salt Lake City, UT.



10. Eddington S. (2017). *#TrumpThatBitch: The communicative constitution of hate organizations on #makeamericagreatagain*. Paper presented to the Organizational Communication Division at the annual conference of the National Communication Association, conference held in Dallas, TX.
11. Eddington, S. (2017). *Alpha males, warlords, boring fucks, and red pillers: A semantic network approach to online organizational identification of r/theredpill*. Paper presented to the Organizational Communication Division at the annual conference of the National Communication Association, conference held in Dallas, TX.
12. Eddington, S. (2017). *Outsiders-within: Contradictions and standpoints of men working in women's centers*. Paper presented to the Student Division at the annual conference of the National Communication Association, conference held in Dallas, TX.
13. Hughes-Kirchubel, L., **Eddington, S.** (2017). *Nasty Women Unite! Buzzanell's theory of the communicative constitution of resilience in the digital domain*. Presented to the Research-in-Progress Division at the annual conference of the National Communication Association, conference held in Dallas, TX.
14. Eddington S., (2017). *Networks of outrage and identity: Organizing and identification within /r/theredpill*. Competitively selected panel presentation to the annual Organizational Communication Mini Conference, Athens, OH.
15. Pauly, J. A., Long, Z., **Eddington, S.**, Hughes-Kirchubel, L., Buzzanell, P. M., Kokini, K. (2017). *The communicative constitution of faculty learning communities: A four flows approach to new faculty organizing*. Paper presented at Organizational Communication Division at the annual conference of the International Communication Association, conference held in San Diego, CA.
16. Eddington, S. (2016). *Career stories: An introduction to identity and interviewing*. Activity presented to the Great Ideas for Teaching Division at the annual conference of the National Communication Association, conference held in Philadelphia, PA.
17. Eddington, S. (2016). *Theorizing transgressive social change among intersectional identities, spaces, and places*. Competitively selected panel presentation to the annual conference of the Organization for the Study of Communication, Language, and Gender, conference held in Oak Park, IL.
18. Long, Z., Pauly, J., **Eddington, S.**, Hughes-Kirchubel, L., Buzzanell, P. M., & Kokini, K. (2016). *Understanding the participation, perceptions, and impacts of engineering faculty learning communities: A mixed method approach*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the American Society for Engineering Education, conference held in New Orleans, LA.
19. Eddington, S. (2015) *'Hollaback!': Responding to gender-based harassment in online and offline contexts*. Competitively selected panel presented at Feminist and Women's Studies Division at the annual conference of the National Communication Association, conference held in Las Vegas, NV.
20. Eddington, S. (2015). *It's Messy: Navigating and negotiating everyday life as a male-identified feminist*. Paper presented at the annual conference of Organization for the Study of Communication, Language, and Gender held in Bowling Green, KY.

21. Eddington, S., (2015). *(Un)Contested Feminist Ideological Terrains*. 2015, Organization for the Study of Communication, Language, and Gender. Competitively selected panel presentation to the annual conference of the Organization for the Study of Communication, Language, and Gender, conference held in Bowling Green, KY.
22. Eddington, S. (2015) *Converging on career: Career development activities and strategies for the communication classroom*. Competitively selected panel presented at the annual conference of the Central States Communication Association, Madison, WI.

### Industry Publications

1. Eddington, S., Series Editor, *Men in Student Affairs: Stories from 13 Student Affairs Professionals*, Student Affairs Collective
2. Endersby, L., & **Eddington, S.** (2014). Failing Fast and Forward. Case Study and Discussion Guide for the “5 Habits of Innovative Educators” online professional development course.

### RESEARCH TEAMS

1. **“Understanding the Professional Formation of Engineers through the Lens of Design Thinking: Unpacking the Wicked Problem of Diversity and Inclusion”**

*(Funded by the National Science Foundation; Spring 2017 – present)*

**Project Supervisors:** Dr. Carla Zoltowski (Assistant Professor of Engineering Practice of Electrical and Computer Engineering), Dr. Patrice M. Buzzanell, Dr. Andrew Brightman (Assistant Head of the Weldon School of Biomedical Engineering and Associate Professor of Engineering Practice)

- *Co-designed interview protocol, collected data via observation, interview, and survey.*
- *Developed design curriculum geared toward understanding engineering curriculum and college culture.*
- *Analyzed and created reports related to findings.*
- *Worked on a grant with input on progress, creating NSF reports, and meeting with external evaluators for the grant.*

2. **“Information-Seeking Process and Online Breast Cancer Narratives”** *(Spring 2017 – present)*

**Project Supervisors:** Dr. Natalie J. Lambert & Dr. Evan Perrault

- *Implemented text scraping applications to collect narrative data online.*
- *Designed coding scheme for narratives related to breast cancer patients.*
- *Mentored research team on data collection methods.*
- *Collaborated with software developers for text mining service.*

3. **“New Faculty Orientation, College of Engineering, Purdue University”** *(Fall 2014 – Spring 2017)*

**Project Supervisors:** Dr. Klod Kokini (Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the College of Engineering and Professor of Mechanical Engineering), and Dr. Patrice M. Buzzanell

- *Co-designed survey and interview protocols designed to understand new faculty’s orientation to the College of Engineering.*

4. *“Navigating the Feminist Landscape as a Male Feminist,” Brian Lamb School of Communication, Purdue University* (Spring 2015)

**Project Supervisor:** Dr. Patrice M. Buzzanell

- *Designed interview protocol intended to understand the tensions and everyday identity negotiations of male college educators who espouse feminist beliefs and praxis.*

## ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

### INSTRUCTOR

**Brian Lamb School of Communication | Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN**

COM 411 – COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL NETWORKS Spring 2018, Fall 2018, Spring 2019

Instructor of record for Communication and Social Networks course; developed standalone syllabus, lecture, and pedagogy designed to provide undergraduate students opportunities to understand, design, and implement research projects using social network methodologies.

COM 325 – PRINCIPLES OF INTERVIEWING Summer 2018

Instructor of record for Principles of Interviewing course; developed syllabus, lectures, and pedagogy designed to provide students opportunities to understand interview processes, design and implement interview protocols, and practice effective communication skills in employment, motivational, and journalistic interview processes.

COM 324 – ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION Fall 2017

Instructor of record for Introduction to Organizational Communication course; developed syllabus, lecture, and pedagogy designed to provide undergraduate students opportunities to engage and apply organizational communication theories and topics

COM 320 – SMALL GROUPS COMMUNICATION Summer 2017, 2019

Instructor of record for small groups theory class; developed syllabus, lectures, and course content for summer session of 24 students.

COM 114 – FUNDAMENTALS OF PRESENTATIONAL SPEAKING Fall 2016 – Spring 2017

Instructor of Record for BASIC Presentational Speaking course to undergraduate classroom of 25 students per section; developed interactive activities and lessons that helped students understand presentational speaking including elevator pitches, interviews, and research presentations.

### INSTRUCTOR

**Department of Educational Psychology | Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN**

EDPS 105 – ACADEMIC AND CAREER PLANNING Fall 2014 – Spring 2016

Instructor of record for three-credit hour major/career exploration course that connects personality, academic majors, and the world of work to decision-making processes

## SERVICE

### *Departmental Service*

COMMUNICATION GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION: Mentor to 1<sup>st</sup> Year PhD Student  
2017-2018

COMMUNICATION GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION: Panelist, <i>Managing Time and Work-Life Balance as a Graduate Student</i>	September 2017
COMMUNICATION GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION: Annual Conference	2015 – 2018
Respondent, Pedagogy/ Practical Communication	February 2018
Lunch host for Keynote, Rahul Mitra	March 2017
Reviewer for the Communication Graduate Student Conference	2015 – 2017

### *Professional Service*

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION: ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION  
DIVISION

<i>Social Media and Website Manager</i>	2019
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JOURNAL REVIEWER (AD HOC)

<i>Journal of Applied Communication Research</i>	2019
<i>Western Journal of Communication</i>	2018
<i>Social Media and Society</i>	2018
<i>New Media + Society</i>	2018

NATIONAL COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION

Reviewer Human Communication and Technology Division	2017-2019
Reviewer Student Section	2017

AMERICAN COLLEGE PERSONNEL ASSOCIATION – COALITION ON MEN AND MASCULINITIES

Vice Chair for Scholarship and Research	March 2015 – March 2016
Vice Chair for Convention Programming	January 2013-March 2015

## GRANTS

2016 PURDUE COMMUNITY SERVICE/SERVICE-LEARNING STUDENT GRANT PROGRAM (**Total \$1,500**)

*The Purdue Community Service/Service-Learning Student Grant collaborated with the Tippecanoe Arts Federation to provide support for art supplies and reception for local art students at Jefferson High School development and coordination of an outdoor mural in downtown Lafayette, IN.*

2014 APSAC PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAVEL GRANT (**\$750**)

*The APSAC Professional Travel Grant is competitively selected and is available only to Administrative Professionals at Purdue University. The grant supports professional development travel for conferences and workshops.*

## PROFESSIONAL & INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

### RESEARCH ASSISTANT – ELECTRICAL AND COMPUTER ENGINEERING

Purdue University, January 2017 – present

- Developed design curriculum geared toward understanding engineering curriculum and college culture
- Co-designed interview protocol to understand organizational cultures of engineering programs, and to understand the impact of design curriculum
- Collected data via observation, interview, and survey, and analyzed and created reports related to findings to university and industry stakeholders
- Worked on a National Science Foundation grant with input on progress, collaboration, and production of annual reports on project

### GRADUATE TEACHING MENTOR - LAMB SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION

Purdue University, 2017 – 2018

- Mentored first-time graduate student instructor for BASIC Course in Presentational Speaking.
- Supported instructor through bi-weekly coaching meetings and regular teaching observations.
- Assisted in goal-setting, classroom management, grading issues, and cultivation of a pedagogical philosophy.
- Provided monthly documentation to Course Director about topics and goals discussed with instructor.

### GRADUATE ASSISTANT - SUSAN BULKELEY BUTLER CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE

Purdue University, June 2016 - May 2017

- Designed and coordinated marketing materials for program events throughout the year.
- Organized and managed Twitter and Facebook platforms for program events throughout the year.
- Reviewed fellowship and award submissions by faculty, students and staff.
- Wrote and edited content for redevelopment of the Center's website.
- Assisted Director in various tasks, meetings, and projects.

### ACADEMIC ADVISOR – EXPLORATORY STUDIES

Purdue University, May 2014 – August 2016

- Advised and mentored 150 exploratory, undecided, undergraduate students exploring major and career options prior to selecting a college/school or major.
- Facilitated interpretations of students' personality and career test results; including, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Strong Interest Inventory, Five Factor Inventory, Self-Directed Search, Strengthsquest, and Forced Choice Values.
- Served on EDPS 105 Curriculum working group, which redesigned EDPS 105 curriculum and lesson plans.

### RESIDENCE EDUCATION COORDINATOR

Purdue University, June 2012 – May 2014

- Supervised and supported 12 Resident Assistants that facilitated community building, educational opportunities and social programming to meet their community's needs in a residence hall of 1200 students.
- Served in an on-call rotation for an on-campus zone population of over 2000 students.
- Coordinated and facilitated training for 280 Resident Assistants and Staff Residents to prepare and empower them in their residential leadership roles.
- Collaborated with cross-campus partners including Intercollegiate Athletics, Counseling and Psychological Services, Purdue Rec Sports, and the Office of the Dean of Students in programming efforts garnered toward student success.
- Collaborated with peers to create departmental assessments opportunities surveying departmental perceptions of social justice and inclusion efforts. Implemented student wellness initiatives devoted to men's development and resilience, which allowed students to learn and engage in opportunities to find ways of thriving in their personal lives.
- Facilitated and co-led a weekly residential leadership seminar for 30 prospective Resident Assistants
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## STUDENT LIFE COUNSELOR

Ball State University, July 2011 – May 2012

- Mentored and advised wing community of 22 male junior and senior gifted and talented high school students (ages 16-18) in a residential environment. Enforced Indiana Academy and Ball State University Residential Life policies within a residence hall of 300 students.
- Implemented and responsible for innovative educational programming for gifted and talented students in a diverse living-learning community.
- Collaborated with parents as the Indiana Academy staff liaison to the Indiana Academy Parents Organization, and worked to successfully create renewed fundraising efforts that benefitted the Indiana Academy community

## RESIDENTIAL COUNSELOR

Northwest Missouri State University, August 2008 – May 2011

- Mentored and supported a community of 35 high-achieving male first-year and second-year college students (ages 16-18) and helped students to become successful during their first two years of college.
- Coordinated and implemented a cultural transition program, which acclimated 22 first-year international students from Korea, China, and Panama into the US college system.
- Enforced Missouri Academy and Northwest Missouri State University Residential Life policies within a residence hall of 170 students.

## PROFESSIONAL & TEACHING WORKSHOPS

1. Eddington, S. (2016). Balancing expectations: Lessons from the tightrope on losses, leadership, and life. West Lafayette, IN: Indiana Greek Student Leadership Conference.
2. Barnes, B., **Eddington, S.** (2016). He with we. 2016 West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University.
3. Endersby, L., Tormey, T., Defresne, T.D., **Eddington, S.**, Hyman, K., Kovaleski, B. (2016). NASPA open book: Discussing current literature in student affairs and higher education. Indianapolis, IN: National Association of Student Personnel Administrators.
4. Kerr, K., Gasser, H.S., Hart-Steffes, J., Pearson-Wharton, S., Perillo, P., Eddington, S., Payne-Kirchmeier, J. (2016). Feminist leadership: Power, principles, politics, & practice. Montreal, QB, Canada: American College Personnel Association.
5. **Eddington, S.**, Endersby, L., Potts, C. (2015). The other f-word: Practicing failure in higher education. Tampa, FL: American College Personnel Association.
6. Eddington, S. (2014). Modeling the way: values matter! First-year leadership series. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University.
7. Eddington, S. (2014) Embracing vulnerability: Developing thriving cultures in all-male environments. Indianapolis, IN: American College Personnel Association.
8. **Eddington, S.** & Robertson, M. (2013). From connecting to connection. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University.
9. Christian, K. & **Eddington, S.** (2013) Student leadership development. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University.
10. Eddington, S. (2013) Thriving college men. Redlands, CA: National Association of Student Personnel Administrators Region 6 Men and Masculinities Knowledge Community.
11. Eddington, S. (2012) SJI and You. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University.
12. Eddington, S. (2011) Leadership identities: Know your role. Maryville, MO: Northwest Missouri State University.

## PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- National Communication Association (2015 – present)
- Academy of Management (2018 – present)
- International Communication Association (2015 – present)
- Association of Internet Researchers (2017 – present)
- Central States Communication Association (2015 – present)
- Organization for the Study of Communication, Language, and Gender (2015-2016)
- American College Personnel Association (2012 – 2016)
- National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (2012 – 2016)

## REFERENCES

### DR. PATRICE M. BUZZANELL

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 Professor and Chair, Department of Communication,  
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