

CARR Gender Research Unit

Year-in-Review Report

December 2021

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Centre for
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Letter from the Gender Research Unit Head

As we enter the third year of the global pandemic, there is much to reflect on, particularly when it comes to the role that gender and sexuality play in the imaginaries of the far right globally. But before I delve into any of that, I'd like to acknowledge the passing of an intellectual giant in Black feminist theory and public scholarship, bell hooks. The scholarship of bell hooks that stressed the importance of love, community, and accessible theory for the masses to dismantle the structures that oppress millions of people across the world was and will continue to be transformative for generations to come. Her loss at the end of the year was a striking blow to many who had turned to her work to make sense of our current conditions.

Certainly, the pandemic brought to light the social, political, and economic issues that had long been festering under the surface and created portals and outlets for them to escape. The ways that masculinity (particularly white masculinity) and its associated politics and anti-gender, anti-feminist ideologies have taken hold in the world during this global crisis is telling. The ideology that drives misogynistic, xenophobic, white supremacist rhetoric for populist movements interconnects otherwise disparate movements and discourses, but all come from the same base: the desire to power and dominate.

The trials that we saw in the United States for Kyle Rittenhouse (regarding his shooting of two protesters in Wisconsin last year, where he was found not guilty) and Jason Kessler (in response to the Charlottesville Rally) put the role of gender in these movements on front display. The January 6 insurrection at the beginning of the year in particular demonstrated how gender, white supremacy, and power were all intertwined as we saw the insurrectionists descended upon the U.S. Capitol, goaded on by former President Donald Trump. The year 2021 also brought with it its own mass shootings (motivated by misogyny and white supremacy) and other important categorizations of what constitutes "terrorism" in countries around the world.

To be honest, my heart is heavy, and the weight of the importance of our work is often overshadowed by the sensation that it will never end. But there is nothing radical about cynicism, and hope is truly the way forward. In the spirit of bell hooks, I hope that our fellows and other researchers struggling to persevere in this area remember to come to our research from a place of wanting to better and improve the world. In January, I will be stepping down from my position as the head of this unit, and cannot say enough of how proud I am of what we have accomplished during my time as the head. I hope that this report finds everyone in good health, and wish everyone a better 2022.



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Guiding Principles of the Gender Research Unit

The CARR Gender Research Unit focuses on analyzing how gender and sexuality are implicated in radical right and extremist ideology. More specifically, we examine gender both as a demographic variable (e.g. women's and men's representation in radical right parties, women's and men's role in extremist movements) and as an ideological component of extremist ideology. Focusing on not just the Anglophone world but bringing in international perspectives of anti-feminism, the role of gender in extremism, and the ways that misogynistic ideology is used as an organizing principle, the members of the GRU are committed to highlighting the ways that gender - and race - are crucial and critical lenses in understanding the far right.

The overarching themes that capture the unit's work are the following:

Gendering Extremism

Women's participation in radical right parties and extremist movements has traditionally been overlooked by researchers who focused on the front faces of a party or the more vocal and violent expressions of these movements. More recently, however, women's role has emerged either in the form of support from the sidelines or in leadership positions. The shifting landscape of women's involvement in the radical right is important as it may indicate both a change in women's societal roles as well as a form of mainstreaming of radical right ideology. Given the rigidly sexist ideology and blatant racism harbored by these movements, women's commitment needs to be analyzed both as a paradox and as a reliable indicator of larger trends in how the radical right positions itself vis-à-vis minorities and marginalized groups. The Gender Research Unit is committed to understanding how shifts in the "gender gap" of women's participation in the radical right have implications for how we understand the construction of femininity and female empowerment.

Exploring the Manosphere

While the larger framework of the radical right is steeped in racist ideology, ranging anywhere from xenophobia to ethno-centrism, white nationalism, white supremacy and Nazism, it is also apparent that these beliefs are closely associated with patriarchal dogmas. In fact, research has shown that misogyny is a gateway to white supremacy, with men finding their way into extremism through their collective sense of aggrieved entitlement. The Gender Research Unit is dedicated to exploring how the growth of the radical right parallels the expansion of the manosphere: incels, MGTOW (men going their own way), PUAs (pick-up artists), MRAs (Men's Rights Activists) and red-pilled men. Though different in their organizational structure and choice of platform, these loosely associated groups share a

pervasive conviction that feminism is the root of both their personal problems and societal ills. The manosphere's virulent form of misogyny views women as manipulative, uncontrollable and even predatory in accusations of sexual abuse. The Gender Research Unit monitors how extremist violence and radical right manifestos exemplify forms of male supremacy that justify acts of terror through claims of victimization. To this end, the CARR Gender Research Unit maintains close collaboration with the newly founded [Institute for Research on Male Supremacism](#) which offers an intersectional perspective on how male supremacy is channeled through white supremacy, anti-Semitism, anti-gay and anti-trans ideologies.

Gendered Backlash

The Gender Research Unit follows global trends of the so called "anti-gender" campaigns which align ideologically with the manosphere and usually play out at the policy sphere with various levels of success. These campaigns have capitalized on the conservatism of the Christian Right and Hindu Right, and brought into the fold a variety of actors that view women's reproductive rights, protections for violence against women and LGBTQ+ minority rights as a threat to the institution of the family. The CARR Gender Research Unit follows both the institutionalization of these campaigns through conferences (for example, The World Congress of Families) and their exploitation by radical right parties to garner support. Phenomena related to attacks against Gender Studies programs, abortion rights and valorization of "tradwives" are indications of how the concept of the "family" is weaponized by the radical right. The aim of the CARR Gender Research Unit is to demonstrate links between these ideologies and other forms of extremism.

Commitment to Justice

Finally, and most importantly, the members of the GRU are committed to examining extremism through the lenses of gender, race, and nationalism to better comprehend and propose ways to engage in restorative justice. Not just focusing on our specific research projects, many of the fellows in the GRU are also committed to ensuring that institutions and organizations engage in best practices in protecting researchers - particularly women and people of color within the research area. To this end, members of the GRU are also committed in examining the role of technology in spreading extremist ideology in regard to gender, supporting fellows when they are the victims of vicious harassment and attacks, and engaging in conversations that aim to better protect researchers who are doing dangerous work.

Gender and Extremism in 2021

January:

The January 6 U.S. Capitol Insurrection

On January 6, 2021, a mob descended on the U.S. Capitol during a session of congress to certify the results of the November 2020 U.S. presidential election, won by Joe Biden. Trump supporters gathered as a part of the greater "Stop the Steal" movement that emerged in the aftermath of the announcement of the election's results. Congressional hearings and trials are still ongoing, and many of those arrested were found to have had in their possession weapons, zip ties, and pipe bombs were also found in the vicinity of the Capitol.

Fellow Dr. Cat Tebaldi wrote about the circumstances of the January 6 Insurrection for *Fast Capitalism* here:

<https://fastcapitalism.journal.library.uta.edu/index.php/fastcapitalism/article/view/421/502>

February:

Proud Boys are listed as a terrorist group by the Canadian Government

In February, the neo-fascist and white nationalist group the Proud Boys are listed as a terrorist group by the Canadian government, alongside the Islamic State and Al Qaida. The decision was partially influenced by the group's involvement in the January 6 U.S. Capitol Insurrection, and the terror designation means that Canadian banks and other institutions to freeze their assets and makes doing business with the group a criminal offense.

- Source: <https://www.npr.org/2021/02/03/963682181/canada-lists-proud-boys-as-a-terrorist-group-alongside-isis-and-al-qaida>

March:

Atlanta Shooting

A 21-year-old white man shoots and murders 8 people, six of them Asian women, at three different Asian-owned massage parlors, citing his need to eliminate the "threat" of his sexual desire. Police are hesitant to name the attack a hate crime, even stating that the man had had a

"bad day" during a press conference to explain his actions. The racist misogyny on display ignites a nationwide discussion for the growing hate crimes targeting Asian Americans in the U.S. since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the role that white supremacy played in these shootings. Dr. Julia DeCook wrote more about the shootings for the Global Network on Extremism and Technology: <https://gnet-research.org/2021/03/19/the-issue-isnt-incels-its-racist-misogyny/>

Canadian Trial of Misogynistic Incel Attack

Alek Minassian, the infamous 2018 Toronto Van Attacker, is found guilty of murder after the trial comes to a close. Minassian was one of many in a string of "incel" attackers who claimed he had carried out his attack driven by misogyny and online forums where misogynistic discourse ran rampant. However, the details around his motivations are still murky, due to Minassian's claims to have been in contact and communication with Elliot Rodger and other claims that cannot be verified. Minassian is found guilty of 10 counts of first-degree murder and 16 counts of attempted murder.

- Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/03/toronto-van-attack-guilty-murder>

June:

Biden Administration Reveals Strategies for Countering Domestic Terrorism

The U.S. White House released their plan, the National Strategy for Countering Domestic terrorism, in June and lists white supremacy and anti-government movements, signifying a shift in including a broader range of ideologies and movements. Dr. Jessica White writes more about the strategy for Rantt Media: <https://rantt.com/what-the-biden-admins-countering-domestic-terrorism-plan-is-missing>

August:

Shooting in Plymouth, England

On August 12, a 22-year-old man shoots and kills five people on a murder spree, including his own mother and a 3-year-old child. Citing similar grievances like the incels community online, the shooter uploaded multiple videos to YouTube speaking about incelism, the "Black Pill," and expressed misogynistic and homophobic views and was also active on gun enthusiast forums. The shooter's mother reportedly expressed concern over her son's misogynistic views in the month leading up to the attack.

- Source: <https://www.msn.com/en-gb/entertainment/celebrity/plymouth-killer-had-clashed-with-mother-and-first-victim-maxine-davison-over-his-extreme-views/ar-AAJnr09?ocid=msedgntp>

A stabbing occurs on a Japan subway

A Japanese man wounds 10 people on a Tokyo commuter train, citing his rampage on his rage at seeing "happy women," and told police he had wanted to kill women. There are no fatalities.

- Source: <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/knife-attacker-tokyo-commuter-train-wanted-kill-happy-women-nhk-2021-08-07/>

The U.S. Leaves Afghanistan

On August 30, the United States military leaves Afghanistan, sending the country into turmoil as thousands of Afghan citizens and others attempt to leave the country as the Taliban moves in to the capital city of Kabul. Dr. Jessica White discusses this, and the need for women to be more involved in counter-terrorism, in a piece for Rantt Media: <https://rantt.com/why-we-need-more-women-working-in-counter-terrorism>

October:

Man in Joker costume injures 17 in knife attack on Tokyo subway

A 24-year-old man dressed in a Joker costume carries out an attack on a Tokyo subway dressed in a Joker costume on Halloween (October 31). He sets a train car on fire, sprays pesticide into passengers' eyes, and starts stabbing and attacking people. The attacker told police that he had wanted to receive the death penalty (due to carrying out the attack) after struggling with work issues and losing his friends.

- Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-59103664>

November:

Australia lists Neo-Nazi organization "The Base" as a terrorist organization

The Australian government announces in November 2021 that they will list The Base as a terrorist organization, also stating that they would consider adding more right-wing and far-right extremist groups in the future under the umbrella of "ideologically motivated" organizations.

Dr. Jessica White speaks on this move by the Australian government for ABC News Australia: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6Mo1fWavnk&ab_channel=ABCNews%28Australia%29

Spotlight on GRU Members

PUBLICATIONS BY GRU MEMBERS:

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Clark, Roland (2021). 'The Shape of Interwar Romanian History,' *Journal of Romanian Studies*, 3, no.1, pp. 11-42.

Clark, Roland (2021). 'The Romanian Right: Images of Crisis, the Press, and the Rise of Fascism'. In *Conservatives and Right Radicals in Interwar Europe*, edited by Marco Bresciani. London: Routledge, pp. 193-214.

Clark, Roland (2021). 'Oskar Scheuer and Student Anti-Semitism in Vienna Negotiating Jewish Difference'. *S.I.M.O.N.*, 8, no. 3, pp. 33-47.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/17539153.2021.2005099>

DeCook, J. R. (2021). r/WatchRedditDie and the Politics of Reddit's Bans and Quarantines. *Internet Histories: Digital Technology, Culture and Society*. 1-18.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/24701475.2021.1997179>

DeCook, J. R., and Yoon, M. H. (2021). Kung Flu and Roof Koreans: Asian/Americans as the Hated Other and Proxies of Hating in the White Imaginary. *Journal of Hate Studies*, 17(1), 119–132. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33972/jhs.199>

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the Precursors to Online Extremist Cultures. *Internet Histories: Digital Technology, Culture and Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24701475.2021.1919966>

Luger, Jason and Schwarze, Tilman (2021) Cafés, cocktail coves, and “empathy walls”: Comparing urban and exurban everyday life through a Lefebvrian lens, *Geoforum*, Volume 127, Pages 151-161.

Tebaldi, Catherine. (2021). The Terrorist and the Girl Next Door: Love Jihad in French Femonationalist Nonfiction. *Religions*, 12(12), 1090.

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MEDIA WRITING/APPEARANCES BY GRU MEMBERS:

Clark, Roland. 'What Happens When Governments Deny Racism Exists?' *Open Democracy*, 22 April 2021.

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/countering-radical-right/what-happens-when-governments-deny-racism-exists/>

Clark, Roland. 'How the Radical Right Bullied Professors in 1920s Austria', *Fair Observer*, 10 June 2021.

<https://www.faiobserver.com/region/europe/roland-clark-austria-austrian-news-vienna-wien-carr-alfons-leon-far-right-politics-world-news-34892/>

Clark, Roland. 'Exhibiting Fascism', *Fair Observer*, 23 September 2021.

<https://www.faiobserver.com/region/europe/roland-clark-fascist-movements-europe-radical-right-history-news-14431/>

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DeCook, Julia. "From Radicalization to Insurrection: A Reckoning for Big Tech." RANTT Media, 10 January 2021. <https://rantt.com/from-radicalization-to-insurrection-a-reckoning-for-big-tech>

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White, Jessica. 'What The Biden Admin's Countering Domestic Terrorism Plan Is Missing', *RANTT Media*, 6 July 2021. <https://rantt.com/what-the-biden-admins-countering-domestic-terrorism-plan-is-missing>

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White, Jessica. 'Extremists using video-game chats to spread hate', *BBC*, 23 September 2021. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-58600181>

White, Jessica. 'Australia lists neo-Nazi group 'The Base' as terrorist organization', *ABC News: The World Programme*, 25 November 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6MolfWavnk>

EXHIBITION

Together with Tim Grady and Barbara Warnock, Roland Clark curated an exhibition at the Wiener Holocaust Library in London entitled *This Fascist Life: Radical Right Movements in Interwar Europe*, which is running from 6 October 2021 - 4 February 2022. Drawing upon The Wiener Holocaust Library's unique archival collections, first assembled in the 1930s by Dr Alfred Wiener as part of his fight against fascism, as well as the expertise of an international group of experts in interwar fascism, this exhibition focuses on the experiences of rank-and-file members of fascist movements in the interwar period. It explores the world of the young and socially diverse fascist activists and examines their motivations and activities.

Fascist political parties, militia and movements emerged across Europe in the years after the First World War. United by ultra-nationalist ideas and similarities of style and action, these movements shaped, and in some places remade politics and society. They mobilised on the

streets to attack their opponents and to support the accession to power of fascist parties in countries such as Italy, Germany and Austria. Later, they helped to enable German occupations and the Nazis' policies of persecution and genocide across Europe. A series of seven talks on interwar fascism accompanied the exhibition, along with a one-day conference on Echoes of Fascism: The Radical Right in the Twenty-First Century, organised by The Wiener Holocaust Library, The European Fascist Movements 1918-1941 project, the Centre for the Analysis of the Radical Right and HOPE not Hate. For more information, see <https://wienerholocaustlibrary.org/exhibition/this-fascist-life-radical-right-movements-in-interwar-europe/>

PANELS AND PODCASTS

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White, Jessica. 'A Woman's Place: Reflections on Women in CT since 9/11', ICCT Event, 9 September 2021. <https://icct.nl/event/a-womans-place-reflections-on-women-in-counter-terrorism-since-9-11/>

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