

## Thesis (working title)

The reframing and recontextualization of sexual violence as an online radicalisation tool by right wing extremists

## Research question relevant to this poster

- How do ascribed identities vary depending on the narrative components within the discourses produced by the *Manosphere* [a network of websites that are customarily right wing and misogynistic]?

## Overview

Research into the communication of extremist groups has found that narratives “are often used to promote the adoption of beliefs, attitudes, and intentions that are consistent with the group’s ideology” (Braddock and Horgan 2016, p. 385). This is achieved through encouraging identification with story characters; stimulating emotional responses; and re-establishing in-group and out-group boundaries (Braddock 2015, p. 50). This analysis explores how narrative components are arranged to enable rhetorical framing (Kuypers 2010) within the blog posts and how social actor representation shifts between these narrative components to reinforce that rhetoric.

## The Data

The analysis shown in this poster is from one subcorpus from the project: 15 blog posts (12,742 words) from the Manosphere that have been classified as *news narratives*. These posts contain narrative elements in accordance with Hoffman’s (2010) definition of narrative and reference a news report on rape and/or sexual assault.

## Theoretical Frameworks

- The narrative discourses were tagged using XML at a lexical level to mark up social actor representation and at a clausal level to mark up the narrative components as follows:

**Abstract:** signals to the reader that a narrative will follow

**Orientation:** introduces the characters, places, time, and background information of the narrative

**Complicating Action:** describes the sequence of events that make up the body of the narrative

**Resolution:** signals the end of the story and its consequences

**Evaluation:** demonstrates the author’s attitude to the elements in the story and explains its relevance

**Coda:** brings the reader to the present day, shifting the narrative to a current relevance

(Adapted from: Labov & Waletzky 1967, 1997, Eisenlauer & Hoffmann 2010)

- The rhetorical move analysis was adapted from Swales (2004).
- Identity constructions were analysed using van Leeuwen’s (2008) social actor framework. The category of *identification* is defined as: “what [the social actors], more or less permanently, or unavoidably, are” and the category of *functionalisation* as: referring to social actors in terms of an activity or by what they do (*ibid*, p. 42).

## Questions

I am planning on presenting an extended, detailed version of this part of my thesis at the CADS 2020 conference in June. Is the overall concept of the analysis clear (e.g. what I am trying to achieve)?

What questions about my methodology do you think could arise?

## Narrative Structure

Prototypical narrative (Fig. 1): this shows repeated use of the evaluation to frame the action events of the story in line with the ideology of the authors. The authors’ voice is present throughout the narrative, given credibility by the use of hyperlinks at the beginning (Myers 2010). The second half of the narrative is a repeated pattern of evaluation and coda to highlight the relevance of the rape case to the male reader.

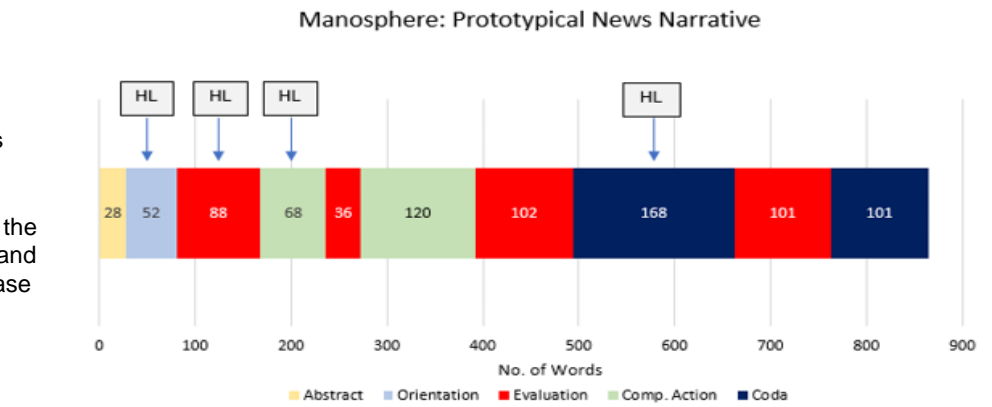


Figure 1: Manosphere prototypical news narrative (hyperlink (HL) positions shown)

## Identity representation shift across three narrative components

Using Sketch Engine to analyse the XML social actor tags at the beginning of the narratives (in the abstract/orientation) and in the components relating to the distal and proximal relevance of the narratives (evaluation and coda), shifts in ascribed social actor categories were analysed. Figures 2 & 3 show how women accusing men of sexual violence and men accused of sexual violence are indexed through the narratives.

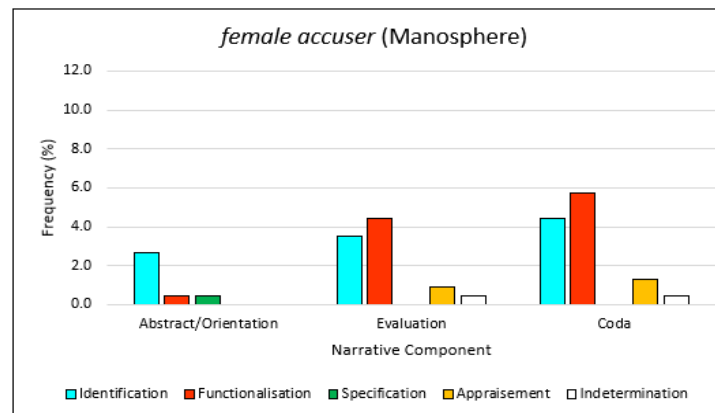


Figure 2: Shift in 'female accuser' social actor representation (Manosphere)

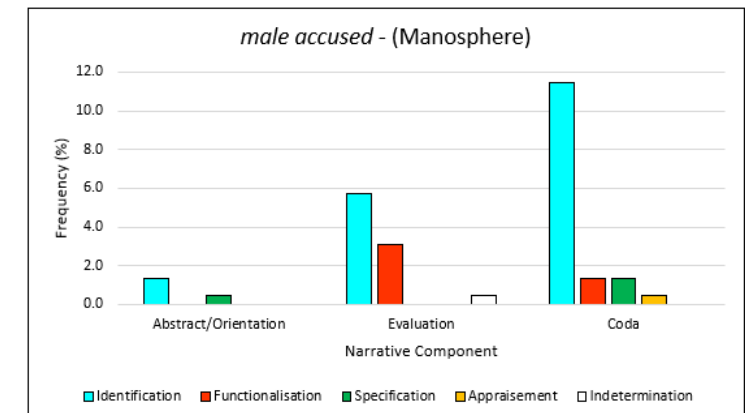


Figure 3: Shift in 'male accused' social actor representation (Manosphere)

Summarising the main features (in line with the context and literature), for ‘female accusers’ there is a change in focus from indexing through identification (e.g. *daughter, woman*), when the narrative is introduced (2.64%), to functionalisation (e.g. *accuser*) in the evaluation and coda (4.41% % 5.73% respectively). This relates the women to a threatening out-group and part of a disrespected legal system. For the ‘male accused’ category, this reference to their legal status is not present. The use of identification (e.g. *men*) as a social actor category is most frequent in the coda (11.45%) moving the rhetoric from a focus on specific individuals accused by women of sexual violence to a hyperbolic narrative of proximal male victimhood.

## References

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