

Excursions

Volume 8, Issue 1 (June 2018) Networks



Cover photo: Students in Bangladesh protest 7.5 per cent VAT on their tuition fees, 10 September 2015.
© Nahid Sultan / Wikimedia Commons / CC BY-SA 4.0.

Maria Tonini, 'Men are Vulnerable, Too: Analysing the Self-Presentation of Indian Men's Rights Activists in Online Networks'

Excursions, vol. 8, no. 1 (2018)

www.excursions-journal.org.uk

Maria Tonini
Lund University

Men are Vulnerable, Too: Analysing the Self-Presentation of Indian Men's Rights Activists in Online Networks

In this article, I examine the content of online pages of Men's Rights Activists (hereafter MRAs) in India. The objective of my analysis is to illuminate what discursive elements are used by Indian online MRA groups to motivate their existence and their mission. I take online Indian MRA groups as an example of the kinds of activist communities that social media platforms such as Facebook enable via the fostering of online 'safe spaces' where consensus among members is a prerequisite. In this paper I show how the existence and mission of Indian MRAs is justified by manipulating and re-articulating the meaning of 'gender' so that it becomes a useful category only when attached to men. I argue that by manipulating the meaning of 'gender' and using a language that is seemingly consonant with democratic political agendas

about equality, MRA manage to dissimulate their objective, that is, reinforcing patriarchal dominance.

Men's Rights Activists are present worldwide, and their existence predates social media; broadly speaking, their common denominator is the feeling of being ignored and left behind as a result of pro-feminist policies and socio-cultural developments (Kimmel, 2013). I do not claim that Indian MRAs constitute a unique social formation, radically different from their counterparts in the US or Australia for example. I focus on them because the social terrain on which they operate is marked by historically strong gender imbalances that continue to privilege men culturally, socially, and institutionally. By and large, Indian men's privileges have not been eroded, and gender equality is a faraway goal; yet, the men at the centre of my analysis still claim to have become victims of a skewed system that punishes men and favours women. Focusing on them can help us understand the reasons why individuals and groups that occupy hegemonic social positions come to feel and act as marginalised. The Indian case is thus particularly illuminating when it comes to shedding light on the growth of anti-feminist communities at a time when 'masculinist political revival' (Maellström, 2016) is on the rise globally. Additionally, MRA are not only networking to share their grievances and complain about gender equality having 'gone too far', but they are also actively organising to bring about legal changes that would further imperil women. The legal activism undertaken by Indian MRAs indicates how scholars and practitioners concerned with social justice should not overlook the potential of these groups to negatively affect legal and social policy.

Recognition in reverse

With this paper, I aim to contribute to existing research on men's rights groups by developing an analysis inspired by theories of recognition and

justice. In particular, I draw from the arguments developed by Nancy Fraser (1995, 1999, 2000). Fraser defines recognition as ‘participatory parity’ (Fraser, 1995) and points out how some individuals and groups suffer from a lack of recognition because of institutionalised patterns of discrimination at the cultural, social, and institutional level. Women and sexual minorities, for example, have long suffered stigma and discrimination as a result of sexism and homophobia, and thus are denied parity of participation in society. Misrecognition is defined as ‘status subordination’, and to be misrecognised is ‘to be denied the status of a full partner in social interaction, as a consequence of institutionalised patterns of cultural value that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem’ (Fraser, 2000, pp.113–114). Fraser is critical of the ways in which the struggle for recognition is increasingly centred on issues of identity that ignore material inequalities and structural discrimination, and hence argues that achieving recognition demands changing social institutions (Fraser, 2000, p.115).

The claims made by men’s rights groups can be understood within the framework of a struggle for recognition based on the social status of men, except it would be hard to state that Indian men suffer from ‘status subordination’ and stigmatisation, considering how patriarchal values inform Indian society. The argument I put forward in this paper is that Indian MRAs attempt to construct their identity as a misrecognised group by changing the meaning of the terms through which recognition claims can be made. This discursive reversal is made possible by selectively appealing to the language of gender equality, neutrality, and difference; I also show how these recognition claims and the identities on which they are based are easily reinforced and gather particular traction thanks to the ways in which social media platforms favour the creation of ‘safe spaces’ where group identities can be mobilised.

Material and method: online safe spaces

The spread and growth of online MRA groups can be seen as part of the larger phenomenon of how communities and networks are increasingly created as ‘safe spaces’. In recent years, it has emerged in public and academic discourse how Facebook (and other social media platforms such as Twitter and YouTube), rather than connecting people and favouring dialogue and debate, fosters the creation of communities that look like ‘bubbles’ or ‘echo chambers’, where users end up only connecting and communicating with people whose opinions they share.¹ This has been seen as a contributing factor to the polarisation of socio-political debates at large (Bakshy, Messing and Adamic, 2015; Crawford, 2009; Eslami et al., 2015).

On the other hand, the bubble culture can be seen to have the important function of enabling the creation of tight communities joined by common interests and causes. That is the case, for example, for LGBTQ people, feminists, diverse activist groups, who through Facebook are able to freely create pages that become ‘safe spaces’ for sharing, connecting, and organising (Craig and McInroy, 2013; Mehra, Merkel and Peterson Bishop, 2004).

The idea of safe spaces originally emerged as a response to the felt need for spaces free from oppression, abuse, and humiliation expressed by women, feminists, queers, and ethnic minorities (Kumashiro, 2000). Over the last few years, the existence of and the idea behind safe spaces has been vocally criticised by some political and cultural commentators, as it is seen as itself exclusionary, creating isolated environments that exalt people’s fragility and entitlement, rather than encouraging a healthy exchange of opinions (Heller, 2016; Lukianoff and Haidt, 2015). What critics of the idea of safe spaces have overseen is how it is not only marginalised groups who seek and build safe spaces, on and offline, but how the basic concept of creating a space where only people who agree with each other are welcome,

has been greatly utilised by neo-fascists, white supremacists, and MRAs (Caren et al., 2012; Mantilla, 2013).

For this article, I have collected and analysed content posted on the Facebook pages and websites of five Indian MRA organisations.² All the organisations I selected claim to be either non-funded registered NGOs, or volunteer-run associations. On their website and Facebook pages, the organisations normally ask for donations from supporters.³ While the number of MRA online groups is much higher, I chose these five sources on the basis of their popularity in terms of followers, because they are particularly active (the administrators post new content almost on a daily basis) and the webpages are up to date.⁴ I adopted these selection criteria as a way to orient myself among the maze of MRA groups that Facebook kept listing every time I typed ‘men’s rights India’ and similar search words; additionally, each page I visited ‘followed’ or ‘liked’ other similar pages, which were presented to me as new suggestions. While this type of algorithm-steered snowballing is a methodological issue arising when conducting online qualitative research, it is also inextricably connected to the rhizomatic character of social media networks and the publics they engage (Boyd, 2010; Castells, 2015; Deleuze and Guattari, 1980).

I did not intervene in the pages I followed by posting comments of questions, nor did I contact administrators or users for interviews. This is because I was interested in observing and analysing the ways in which MRA construct their narratives of marginalisation and misrecognition in spaces that are potentially visible to everyone (who has a Facebook profile and an internet connection); in other words, how Indian MRAs construct their ‘front stage’ (Goffman, 1959; Trammell and Keshelasvili, 2005). While the online pages I analysed certainly lend themselves to ethnographic analysis, for this paper I view them as discursive arenas where texts are produced that form the discursive basis and the terrain where concepts are re-articulated and manipulated.

I focus on the self-descriptions offered by the sources I selected, either on the homepage or in the ‘about us’ section. There are a number of reasons for my selection: firstly, these texts are longer than single posts or user comments, thus enabling me to analyse the way in which the discourse is constructed; second, and relatedly, these texts have the purpose of introducing and explaining the purpose of MRA groups in a way that doesn’t undermine their legitimacy. Hence, while even a cursory view of the comments posted by users on MRA Facebook pages often reveals an unsurprisingly misogynist stance, the texts I will analyse mostly steer clear of gross or offensive statements such as blatant misogynist slur, since they are aimed at reaching the general public. In this regard, it is worth noting that the Facebook pages I followed and selected for this paper are ‘open’, which means that a user is not required to be approved by the group administrator.

Background of the MRA movement

A common factor among MRA groups in different parts of world is a general sense of discontent with social, political, and cultural changes in gender relations that are perceived as eroding men’s status. Often, these groups tend to form in response to legal provisions that seem to favour women over men, or that fail to take into account men’s vulnerabilities (Chowdhury, 2014a; Coston and Kimmel, 2013; Kimmel, 2013; Maddison, 1999). The realm of the law is a concrete catalyst and an initial anchor for the protests and grievances of men. In this respect, the Indian MRA partly differs from similar movements in countries such as the US in that its members are more often mobilised in their capacity as husbands rather than coalescing around issues of child custody and father’s rights, which are more prevalent issues in western locales (Collier and Sheldon, 2006). The family as an institution remains a central locus of contention for MRA worldwide, and in the

narratives of Indian MRA, the most problematic relationships are those between the husband (and his family) and the wife.

In particular, Indian MRAs focus on legislation that is seen as unfairly pro-women.⁵ The main target of MRAs discontent is Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code, a section dedicated to the issue of marital cruelty. Section 498A, enacted in 1983 to curb the incidence of abuse and even murder of married women (so-called ‘dowry deaths’), prescribes arrest and punishment for the husband or any member of his family who is accused of physically or psychologically abusing a wife. In its current form, 498A does not cover instances of violence and abuse committed by the wife toward the husband: that is, only the husband and his family are punishable. This gendered aspect is purportedly what MRAs criticise and campaign against, arguing that abused husbands don’t have any legal protection within the Indian legal system, and that 498A is misused by embittered wives as a weapon with which to destroy a men’s (and their family’s) lives (Chowdhury, 2014a).

Recent works on western MRAs online networks note that the movement seems to have progressed from fathers’ and/or husband’s rights to a more general antifeminist backlash, questioning, among other things, the reality of rape and the ways in which gender equality politics have changed heterosexual relationships to the detriment of men (Gotell and Dutton, 2016; Menzies, 2007). A similar shift can be observed in the Indian context, as evidenced in the work of Sharmila Lodhia (2014), Romit Chowdhury (2014b) and Srimati Basu (2015). Lodhia (2014) approaches the MRA from an anti-violence perspective, warning about the potential effects of the spread of masculinist ideology on policies and laws that are supposed to protect women in India. Lodhia’s contribution shows that it cannot be understated how the patriarchal dividend (Connell, 1995) in India strongly favours men, so that the actions—not only the rhetoric—of MRA activists can have a direct effect on policy and law-making.

Romit Chowdhury (2014b) examines the meanings ascribed to the ideas of family, femininity, and feminism, by men's right groups; he shows how these terms are mobilised to build a group identity among men whose masculinity (heterosexual, hegemonic) has been rendered 'not only visible, but culpable' (Chowdhury, 2014b, p.199) by family laws intended to curb violence against women. A similar argument is proposed by Srimati Basu (2016), who concludes that MRAs legal mobilisation and its misogynist undertones reveal deep anxieties about changes in the gender order. It is thus crucial to understand how MRAs construct discourses that attempt to reconfigure the meaning of gender relations without resorting to overtly traditional tropes.

Men's rights as gender neutral rights

Gender neutrality is presented over and over again as the main goal of several MRA groups. Spearheading the fight for gender neutrality is the question of gender neutral laws, whereby victims and perpetrators should not be defined by their gender. The number of gender-specific laws within India's civil and penal code mostly relates to issues of spousal abuse, divorce settlements, child custody, and sexual violence. It should be noted that the divorce rate in India is barely above one percent (Government of India, 2011), while violent crimes against women are seldom reported to the authorities for fear of retribution and ostracisation (Bhattacharya, 2013).

While gender-specific laws have been implemented as an attempt to redress the various vulnerabilities that Indian women face in a patriarchal society (see Agnes, 2011), it is not difficult to see how these laws become larger than life for MRAs, since they directly affect gender relations, particularly within marriage, which remains the central institution in Indian society (Palriwala and Kaur, 2013). Critiquing existing laws is thus a core

element of the way MRA groups present themselves and ground their arguments.

Insaaf Awareness Movement India, a self-described non-funded registered NGO headquartered in the northern state of Punjab, describes itself as follows:

Insaaf Awareness Movement is an organisation of fighters, who are fighting for Men's Rights. Our fight is for neutrality in a system ailing with gender bias and women centric laws that are anti-men, anti-women and anti-family. Marriage breakdown has very far reaching consequences on the social structure of country as found by sociologists. The existing anti-family laws will have far reaching consequences on the social structure of our country. (Insaaf Awareness Movement, 2017a)

In Insaaf's statement, it seems as if the whole legislative apparatus of India favours women over men. Not only is the whole system 'gender biased' against men, but 'women-centric' laws are seen as detrimental not only to men, but to women too, and particularly to the family. By claiming to work for the benefit of families and marriage, and by accusing current laws of being anti-family rather than simply anti-men, Insaaf implicitly equates the rights of men with family rights and positions itself as defender of the Indian family (see Chowdhury, 2014b). This can be seen as a way to widen the scope of the organisation and circumvent the possible accusation that men's rights are inherently anti-women.

On Insaaf's Facebook page (which has more than 13,000 followers) the mission statement reads slightly differently but completes the equivalence of men with family by extending it to the level of the nation:

Our aim is to reduce legal interference in simple inter-personal relationships, and to avoid victimisation of families by way of misuse of gender-biased laws, stop parental alienation of the children from non custodial parent by the custodial parent going through divorce, strengthen fatherhood and families. Last but not the least to instill a sense of value, and to inspire bonds based on

respect and love, in both the partners who forms the basic building block of a family and hence a Nation. (Insaaf Awareness Movement, 2017b)

In the above sentence, the word *men* is not even mentioned, whereas *parent*, *fathers* and generic *partners* are the supposed target audience. The statement can be seen as an effort to concretely construct a gender-neutral language, by purposely not mentioning men and women as opposed categories. Values such as respect and love, associated with the institution of the family and the nation, are appropriated by Insaaf: in doing so, not only does the organisation make a moral claim, but it implicitly frames gender-specific provisions (and its beneficiaries) as anti-national.

A large umbrella organisation called Save Indian Family Foundation (SIFF) frames the issue slightly differently, while continuing to promote gender neutrality as the main objective:

The primary goal of SIFF is to put an end to the epidemic of false dowry, false domestic violence and false rape cases in India, to create gender neutral laws and end discrimination of men and male disposability. (Save Indian Family Foundation, 2017)

SIFF explicitly refers to the consequences of current laws, explicitly calling them *false*. The repeated use of *false* calls to mind recent debates about ‘fake news’ and ‘post-truth’, whereby the veracity of facts can be questioned for political purposes (Bhaskaran, Mishra, and Nair, 2017; Mair, 2017). But this statement also carefully avoids a tout-court denial of the realities of dowry, violence, and rape, placing the blame instead on the ill faith of the unnamed accusers (i.e. women). The statements I presented seek to highlight several dimensions of men’s lives (emotional involvement, morality, and national values) that gender-specific legislation supposedly fails to recognise; at the same time, by invoking gender neutrality as a solution, MRAs frame their recognition claims as more than identity-based, and thus conducive to inclusive justice (Fraser 2000).

Men, the ignored gender

When the category of men does appear in MRAs descriptions and mission statements, it is inevitably associated with their problems and the many responsibilities they must bear in a society which ignores their difficulties. SIFF laments ‘male disposability’; Insaaf’s slogan is ‘men are vulnerable too’; the website The Male Factor (The Male Factor, 2017) carries the tagline ‘on behalf of the ignored gender’; Men’s Rights Association, operating from Pune (Maharashtra) and counting more than 12,000 followers on its Facebook page, invites people to support them in ‘improving life of the most ignored section of Society’ (Men’s Rights Association, 2017).

The latter group offers a detailed list of the issues they fight for, among which ‘breaking the false myth of Male dominated society ... fighting against misandry (male-hatred) prevailing in society ... and making people aware of the fact, that Men are human too’. In a discursive reversal of the gendered imbalances affecting Indian society, these short descriptors together construct the idea of men as gendered beings suffering in a system that denies them the recognition it affords the ‘other’ gender, i.e. women.

Men’s Rights India, which operates in the southern state of Kerala and has about 3,500 followers on its Facebook page (Men’s Rights India, 2017), provides an articulate answer to the question of why an association for men’s welfare is needed:

Ask someone about the problems of women and a list would emerge that would never seem to end. Ask about men’s problems and all one sees is blank faces. Does that mean that men do not have any problem? Or is it that there is no awareness of it amongst the general public, or, it is just that men are simply taken for granted?

If we look back, in the last 62 years of independent India not a single rupee has ever been allocated for men’s welfare from the Union Budget.

Not a single constitutional or quasi-constitutional body has ever been formed to identify redress problems peculiar to men.

Not a single attempt has ever been made to recognise that men too have problems

Not a single scheme ever been envisaged for men's welfare.

On the other hand men are always discriminated against in the guise of women empowerment.

Hence, in the backdrop of this emptiness, the men of India thought enough is enough and we have to join together and have our voice heard!

And it is this void of non-recognition that has led to the formation of AIMWA⁶ to study men's issues and demand for a National Commission for Men and Men's Welfare Ministry. (Men's Rights Association, 2017)

The above statement is illuminating in that, through its first rhetorical questions, it pinpoints the main issue affecting Indian MRAs: that of being taken for granted. Further the statement condemns the lack of institutional provisions for men, and singles out 'women empowerment' as a tool for discriminating against men. What Indian men are confronted with is *emptiness* and the *void of non-recognition*. Following Men's Rights India's argument, recognition would imply not only the enforcement of gender-neutral laws, but the presence of specific, men-centric legal and social provisions that would address issues that are particular to men.

At the level of discursive construction, what Men's Rights India advocates goes a step forward in the direction embraced by other MRA groups: if men as gendered beings are taken for granted, and their problems are misrecognised because their gendered nature is, gender neutrality will not be enough to redress the 'gender bias' of Indian society. The proposal to form a ministry of men's welfare can be seen as a concrete attempt to recognise men's gendered difference, and a refusal to continue to be taken as the norm. There are concrete suggestions envisaged by MRA groups as to how to care for the needs of men not only institutionally but in everyday life. Among the purposes of the Men's Rights Association are:

Breaking the Myths of Protector and Provider role.

Protest against incorrect representation of men in media.

Spreading awareness on unfair treatment by society to Men throughout his lifetime- As a child, as a young boy, as a married man, and when he is old.

Rebel against social mindset of assumption of Men being born criminals.

Train men's emotion and groom for a better life. Identifying, understanding and fighting stress-points in a man's life (Men's Rights Association, 2017).

In the list above, the proposed course of action indicates a reconfiguration of the roles traditionally associated with men in Indian society. If, on the one hand, the statement falls within the narrative of male victimisation and the crisis of masculinity (Messner, 1998; Yekani, 2011), what the text suggests is not a return to a past of male dominance, but rather the embrace of new, softer versions of manliness and masculinity thanks to which men can liberate themselves from the constraints engendered by their hegemonic position. I argue that presenting themselves in these terms enables Indian MRAs and their followers to be perceived as benevolent and open to change (see Connell, 2005; Segal, 2007), and thus as legitimate actors within the social milieu of contemporary India.

Conceptualising men who feel marginalised

Felicia Garcia (2016) uses the word 'neo-traditional' to describe the practices and behaviours of men (in her study, young men living in contemporary Ireland), which while reclaiming tradition and referencing a past where masculinity was more easily dominant, are nonetheless new. These men she thus calls neo-traditional because their beliefs and practices are not simply a transposition of old-school masculine tropes, but are the result of new and profound socio-economic changes that left young men disoriented.

In a similar vein, I propose that Indian MRA constitutes a social formation whereby a nostalgic view of a society where gender roles were clearly defined is accompanied by the alleged desire to realise gender equality as a social goal. Speaking the language of gender equality, and at the same time recasting men as gendered being with specific needs rather than the unmarked norm enables MRAs to position themselves as a social group

in need of recognition. This element marks Indian MRAs as partially different from the men that Michael Kimmel described as affected by ‘aggrieved entitlement’ (Kimmel, 2013). Kimmel speaks about aggrieved entitlement to define the state in which many right-wing men find themselves, feeling that their once immutable privilege has been lost and there is little that they can do to get it back. Similarly, Jonathan Allan (2016) concludes that US men’s rights movements are essentially reactive, in that ‘it has located its problem, namely women and feminism, but it has yet to outline a theory of its call to action’ (Allan, 2016, p.25). In many cases, Indian MRAs display traits of aggrieved entitlement and reactive mentality too, when they lament the social consequences of women’s opportunities in the workplace, or women’s actions against sexual abuse.

Yet the case of India is partly different from what Allan and Kimmel observed because these men not only feel that they can do something about it, but are actively doing it converting their grievances into petitions filed to courts at the local and national level (see Chowdhury 2014a, 2014b; Lodhia 2014). A recent case involves the issue of marital rape, which is currently not a criminal offense in India. An MRA organisation called Men’s Welfare Trust filed a petition to the Delhi High Court in August 2017, demanding that the Court consider the consequences of men who could become victims of false accusations by their wives. The Central Government intervened in support of the MRA petition, arguing that criminalising marital rape ‘may destabilise the institution of marriage’. While their attempt to fashion a discourse that grounds their claims doesn’t constitute a coherent theory, by appealing to existent categories and concepts MRAs are able to construct a group identity and mobilise a call to action that targets institutions directly.

How does one claim to be misrecognised, to be in dire need of social, cultural and legal recognition when one already occupies a dominant position in these spheres? Firstly, this claim is made possible by a purposeful exaggeration of the power of feminism and the equality agenda; but most

importantly, MRAs claims are based around a recasting and re-signifying of the terms through which recognition can be sought. Gender becomes a relevant category only when it is applied to men; family values, emotional and moral virtues—traditionally ascribed to women—are appropriated; social dominance is recast as a burden. These discursive reversals, coupled with activist mobilisations against legal institutions, configure an attempt to position the status of men as subordinated. India’s men’s rights groups have emerged in response to wider socio-political changes (Chowdhury, 2014a) that have enabled minoritised social groups (women in primis) to be heard; for MRAs, recognition is imagined as a competition between a multitude of groups that can access outlets to organise, express their claims, and create affinities, and social space is destabilised by a perceived excess of diversity. In the multiplicity of voices, that of men has been lost. The growth and spread of MRA in India, both on and offline, can be seen as a response to a feeling of being a social group (Young, 2011) without proper representation and recognition in an era where every social identity seems to be given a safe space and a voice.

Hence, the charges made by MRAs against women and feminism can be seen as an attempt to re-simplify the social space, bringing it back to a fundamental division of roles and responsibilities, a binary system that guarantees social order: yet in order to avoid being seen as antiquated, this restorative operation is conducted under the guise of a call for gender neutrality and a reconfiguration of the gender roles attributed to men.

Concluding discussion

In this paper I have presented and analysed the self-presentations of online MRA groups in India. Having discussed how the infrastructure of social media facilitates the creation and growth of these networks, I have argued that the networks which Indian MRAs are building are premised on an idea

of social progress, rather than regression; but, importantly, progress for them means a re-articulation of the meaning of gender, in a paradoxical epistemology where gender both needs to be divorced from women and made neutral, *and* needs to be connected to men. Indian MRAs are thus not simply traditional in that, if we follow their vision, they want to make an intervention into current gender equality debates, on which they display an acute, if distorted, knowledge.

By analysing the discursive elements in the statements I selected, I showed how MRA groups both disavow gendered difference when it comes to legislation, and embrace it when it comes to highlighting their particular grievances. This double act enables activists and their publics to, on the one hand, frame their issues as not simply about men, but about the survival of the family and the nation; and on the other hand, to single out the specificity of men's problems in terms that are compatible with the image of modern and suitable masculinities.

What the discourse presented here dissimulates is a cunning attempt to foster alternative versions of patriarchal hegemony; exalting the plights of men as gendered beings who wish to move beyond the limitations imposed by traditional patriarchy, and proposing concrete suggestions both at the grassroots and institutional level, is nothing but a concerted effort to reconstruct a patriarchal mentality that fits within current ideas about gender, equality, and recognition in a democratic country.

Notes

¹ Hess (2017), on 'How to escape your political bubble for a clearer view', *New York Times*, 3 March 2017.

² The organisations are: Save Indian Family Foundation (SIFF); Men's Rights India; Insaaf; The Male Factor; Men's Rights Association.

³ It is worth noting that while this paper focuses solely on MRAs online presence, all the organisations claim to provide counselling and assistance through helpline.

⁴ The organisations I selected have a few thousand followers each. While this number doesn't seem impressive in relation to the population of India (well above a billion people), one needs to consider that social media presence is only one facet of men's rights activism, and arguably one that caters largely to media-savvy, middle-class audiences. In addition, despite Indian MRM not being a mass movement in terms of numbers, it is extremely active in terms of intervening and petitioning politicians and courts, as I explain further in the paper.

⁵ For example, the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005); sections of the Hindu Marriage Act and the Special Marriage Act; Section 304B of the Indian Penal Code (assumed dowry death of married women) (see Chowdhury, 2014a).

⁶ AIMWA stands for All India Men Welfare Association.

Bibliography

- Agnes, F., 2011. *Family Law: Volume 1: Family Laws and Constitutional Claims*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Allan, J.A., 2016. Phallic Affect, or Why Men's Rights Activists Have Feelings. *Men and Masculinities*, 19(1), pp.22-41.
- Bakshy, E., Messing, S. and Adamic, L.A., 2015. Exposure to ideologically diverse news and opinion on Facebook. *Science*, 348(6239), pp.1130-1132.
- Basu, S., 2016. Looking through Misogyny: Indian Men's Rights Activists, Law, and Challenges for Feminism. *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, 28, pp.45-68.
- Bhaskaran, H., Mishra, H. and Nair, P., 2017. Contextualizing Fake News in Post-truth Era: Journalism Education in India. *Asia Pacific Media Educator*, 27(1), pp.41-50.
- Bhattacharya, R. 2013. *Behind Closed Doors: Domestic Violence in India*. New Delhi: Sage.
- Boyd, D., 2010. Social network sites as networked publics: Affordances, dynamics, and implications. In: Z. Papacharissi, ed., *A Networked Self*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Caren, N., Jowers, K. and Gaby, S., 2012. A social movement online community: Stormfront and the white nationalist movement. In: J. Earl and D.A. Rohlinger., eds. *Media, Movements, and Political Change*. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited. pp.163-193.
- Castells, M., 2015. *Networks of outrage and hope: Social movements in the Internet age*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.

- Chowdhury, R. 2014a. Conditions of Emergence: The Formation of Men's Rights Groups in Contemporary India. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 21(1), pp.27-53.
- _____ 2014b. Family, femininity, feminism: Structures of feeling in the articulation of men's rights. In: K.B. Nielsen and A. Waldrop, eds. *Women, Gender, and Everyday Social Transformation in India*. London: Anthem Press. pp.189-202.
- Collier, R. and Sheldon, S. eds., 2006. *Fathers' Rights Activism and Law Reform in Comparative Perspective*. Oxford, UK: Hart.
- Connell, R.W., 1995. *Masculinities*, 2. ed. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- _____ 2005. Change among the gatekeepers: Men, masculinities, and gender equality in the global arena. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 30(3). pp.1801-1825.
- Coston, B. and Kimmel, M., 2013. White men as the new victims: Reverse discrimination cases and the men's rights movement. *Nevada Law Journal* 13(2), pp.368-385.
- Craig, S.L. and McInroy, L., 2014. You can form a part of yourself online: The influence of new media on identity development and coming out for LGBTQ youth. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health*, 18(1), pp.95-109.
- Crawford, K., 2009. Following you: Disciplines of listening in social media. *Continuum*, 23(4), pp.525-535
- Eslami, M., Rickman, A., Vaccaro, K., Aleyasen, A., Vuong, A., Karahalios, K., Hamilton, K. and Sandvig, C., 2015. I always assumed that I wasn't really that close to [her]: Reasoning about Invisible Algorithms in News Feeds. In: *Proceedings of the 33rd Annual ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. New York: ACM. pp.153-162.

- Fraser, N., 1995. From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Post-Socialist' Age. *New Left Review*, (212), 68-93.
- _____ 1999. Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition and Participation. In: L. Ray and A. Sawyer, eds. *Culture and Economy After the Cultural Turn*. London: Sage.
- _____ 2000. Rethinking recognition, *New Left Review*, (3). pp.107-120.
- Garcia, F., 2016. *Coping and Suicide amongst the Lads: Expectations of Masculinity in Post-Traditional Ireland*. New York: Springer.
- Goffman, E. 1956. The Presentation of Self. In: D. Brissett and C. Edgley, eds. 2005. *Life as Theater: A Dramaturgical Sourcebook*. New York: Routledge. pp.129-140.
- Gotell, L., Dutton, E., 2016. Sexual Violence in the 'Manosphere': Antifeminist Men's Rights Discourses on Rape. *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy* 5(2). pp.65-80.
- Government of India, 2017. *Age Structure and Marital Status*. [online]. Available at:
<http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_And_You/age_structure_and_marital_status.aspx> [Accessed 5 November 2017].
- Heller, N. 2016. The Big Uneasy: What's Roiling the Liberal-Arts Campus?. *New Yorker* [online] 30 May. Available at:
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/05/30/the-new-activism-of-liberal-arts-colleges> [Accessed 5 November 2017].
- Insaaf Awareness Movement, 2017a. *Home*. [online]. Available at:
<www.insaafindia.in> [Accessed 5 November 2017].
- _____ 2017b. *About*. [Facebook], no date. Available at:
<https://www.facebook.com/pg/insaafawarenessmovement/about/?ref=page_internal> [Accessed 5 November 2017].

- Kimmel, M., 2013. *Angry white men: American masculinity at the end of an era*. New York: Nation Books.
- Kumashiro, K. 2000. Toward a Theory of Anti-Oppressive Education. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(1), pp.25-53.
- Lodhia, S., 2014. 'Stop Importing Weapons of Family Destruction!': Cyberdiscourses, Patriarchal Anxieties, and the Men's Backlash Movement in India. *Violence Against Women*, 20, pp.905-936.
- Lukianoff, G. and Heidt, J. 2015. The Coddling of the American Mind. *The Atlantic*, [online] September. Available at: <<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/09/the-coddling-of-the-american-mind/399356/>> [Accessed 5 November 2017].
- Maddison, S. 1999. Private Men, Public Anger: the Men's Rights Movement in Australia. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Gender Studies*, 4(2), pp.39-51.
- Maellström, U., 2016. At a Time of Masculinist Political Revival. *NORMA: International Journal of Masculinity Studies*, 11(3), pp.135-138.
- Mair, J., 2017. Post- truth anthropology. *Anthropology Today*, 33(3), pp.3-4.
- Mantilla, K., 2013. Gendertrolling: Misogyny adapts to new media. *Feminist Studies*, 39(2), pp.563-570.
- Mehra, B., Merkel, C. and Bishop, A.P., 2004. The internet for empowerment of minority and marginalised users. *New Media & Society*, 6(6), pp.781-802.
- Men's Rights Association, 2017. *About*. [Facebook], no date. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/mensrightsassociation/about/?ref=page_internal> [Accessed 5 November 2017].

- Men's Rights India, 2017. *About*. [Facebook], no date. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/MensRightsIndia/about/?ref=page_internal> [Accessed 5 November 2017].
- Menzies, R., 2007. Virtual Backlash: Representations of Men's 'Rights' and Feminist 'Wrongs' in Cyberspace. In: S.B. Boyd, D.E. Chunn, H. Lessard, eds. *Reaction and Resistance: Feminism, Law, and Social Change*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Messner, M.A., 1998. The Limits of 'The Male Sex Role': An Analysis of the Men's Liberation and Men's Rights Movements' Discourse. *Gender & Society*, 12(3), pp.255-276.
- Nair, S., 2017. Don't criminalise marital rape, may disturb institution of marriage: Government. *Indian Express* [online], 30 August 2017.
- Palriwala R. and Kaur, R., eds., 2013. *Marrying in South Asia: Shifting Concepts, Changing Practices in a Globalizing World*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.
- Save Indian Family Foundation, 2017. *Contact Us* [online]. Available at: <http://www.saveindianfamily.org/contact/> [Accessed 5 Nov 2017].
- Segal, L., 2007. *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men*. Basingstoke, UK and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- The Male Factor, 2017. *Homepage*. [online]. Available at: <https://themalefactor.com> [Accessed 5 November 2017]
- Trammell, K.D. and Keshelashvili, A., 2005. Examining the new influencers: A self-presentation study of A-list blogs. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 82(4), pp.968–982.
- Yekani, E.H., 2011. *The Privilege of Crisis: Narratives of Masculinities in Colonial and Postcolonial Literature, Photography and Film*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.

Young, I.M., 2011. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, NJ:
Princeton University Press.