



Small dick problems: Masculine entitlement as rhetorical strategy

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ABSTRACT

This essay aims to sharpen the term *entitlement* for critical scholars by positing entitlement as a rhetorical strategy of hierarchy maintenance. The Reddit community *r/SmallDickProblems*, intended to provide support for men with small penises, furnishes an appropriate case study for threatened masculinity employing entitlement claims to maintain status. Abetted by the affordances of scale and anonymity associated with networked platforms, the men at *r/SmallDickProblems* assert affective and epistemic entitlements to recoup what they perceive to be a natural gendered hierarchy. Content advisory: This essay examines discourses concerning misogyny, transphobia, and suicide.

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There is no shortage of entertainment media mocking small penises. In a representative example from the popular 1990s sitcom *Friends*, when Ross buys himself a flashy sports car, Chandler asks him, “Wouldn’t it be cheaper to just stuff a sock down there?” The website *TV Tropes*, which identifies and indexes plot devices across a wide array of popular culture productions, has a page dedicated to what they call the Teeny Weenie trope. Often played for laughs, the Teeny Weenie trope deems men with small penises “acceptable hard luck targets” who are often “compensating for something.” Taken together with its sibling tropes “Compensating for Something” and “Bigger is Better in Bed,” *TV Tropes* lists over one hundred examples across literature, animated and live action films, television shows, video games, web comics, and other entertainment media.¹ The subtext of this familiar trope is that small penises give rise to an emasculating humiliation that requires recouping masculinity in some other, often phallic, form, like Ross’s sports car. Although, on occasion, expectations are subverted, the basic formula of the small penis joke demonstrates a decades-spanning consistency.

The small penis trope is not confined to the fictional worlds of entertainment media. Negative appraisals of men with small penises abound in news media and political culture. Perhaps predictably, Adolf Hitler is rumored to have had a small and deformed penis.² An example of the Compensating for Something trope in recent political memory is Vice President Kamala Harris’s reference to Donald Trump’s penis during a 2019 Democratic primary debate. She quipped, “He reminds me of that guy from the

Wizard of Oz, you know, when you pull back the curtain, he's a really small dude?"³ Combined with chuckles from moderator George Stephanopoulos and audience applause, Harris's knowing look confirmed that her penis jab landed successfully, even in the relatively formal space of an official political event. Confirming Christa Olson's assertion that we live "in a world shaped by investments in magnitude," the small penis trope enjoys a cross-genre stability.⁴

Penis size references paint a dismal picture of small penises and the men attached to them. According to these dominant cultural logics, men with small penises are inherently comical targets of ridicule, sexually reviled and romantically undesirable, with a diminished purchase on masculinity and therefore less deserving of the entitlements masculinity typically affords, hence the perceived need to "compensate" to regain these entitlements. Penis magnitude also encodes masculinity through racialization. Inflected through white masculinity, large penises connote virility, athleticism, ability, and the self-assured swagger bestowed by "big dick energy."⁵ Inflected through Black masculinity, large penises crystallize what Tamari Kitossa calls the "Black Phallic Fantastic" of aggressive, animalian hypersexuality.⁶ For mainstream U.S. publics, frequent small dick mockeries may seem like inconsequential fun, if in poor taste; but if a small penis is the gross violation of hegemonic masculinity that it is depicted to be,⁷ *what does that mean for the many men who have small penises?*

Some men with small penises have found each other in a Reddit community called r/SmallDickProblems (hereafter referred to as SDP). The negative cultural depictions of small penises—of which these men are excruciatingly aware and careful to document—provide an important context for understanding their experiences as they gather online to share stories, support, and sympathy.⁸ While there are many perspectives offered on SDP, one clear narrative emerges as dominant: men with small penises experience a unique and incomparable form of oppression, the suffering from which permeates their whole lives. They are tired of their anatomy always being played for laughs in popular and political culture. They perceive unfair treatment from entertainment media, social media, and interpersonal interactions with women. Many men on SDP attribute their feelings of despair and loneliness, and even their career challenges, to their small penises. Many resign themselves to never finding or satisfying a romantic or sexual partner. They are offended by the vacuous clichés ("it's not the size of the boat; it's the motion of the ocean") thrown their way. Many assert that their pain and suffering are routinely trivialized, even by supposed allies.

At face value, the complaints of the men at SDP seem to resonate with the complaints of incels, a name for the loosely affiliated group of mostly men who, thwarted by their search for intimacy and sex, turn to misogyny or violence.⁹ Kelly and Aunspach's description of incel culture as a logical extension of compulsory heterosexuality, "a culture that cannot comprehend intimacy without sex, identity delinked from sexuality, or white masculinity absent an aggressive and fulfilled sex drive," is applicable to SDP users as well.¹⁰ The catastrophic and fatalistic language that pervades incel communities is also present on SDP.¹¹ Despite these similarities, the relationship between the men at SDP and incels is complex; many men at SDP assert that they are *not* incels and resent being labeled as such while simultaneously voicing sympathy for incel suffering and importing concepts from incel/manosphere culture. The subgroup

designation of incels who are incels because of their small penises is *dickcels*, though few SDP participants use this term.

Given their critique of *dickshaming* as a form of body shaming and the ways in which they are harmed by hegemonic patriarchal expectations, it would seem as if the men of SDP could find solidarity with progressive groups like body positive feminists, fat activists, or disability activists. Unfortunately, these coalitions never materialize because the assumptions, values, and idioms of SDP are retrogressive rather than progressive. The dominant narrative at SDP energetically defends supremacy, even as the men of SDP are unequivocally harmed by patriarchy's rigid expectations for masculinity. Yet the interpersonal and publicly mediated experiences of humiliation, degradation, and gaslighting that these men report regarding their small penises remain valid. Any reflexive qualitative researcher working in this community would be remiss not to acknowledge the real pain expressed here, or the palpable relief, for many users, of finding a community of supporters who understand their experiences. Both the dickshaming that they experience *and* the misogyny that they perpetuate warrant critique and condemnation.

One way that threatened masculinity protects supremacy is through a rhetorical strategy of entitlement. Enabled by the scale and anonymity afforded by networked platforms like Reddit, the men at r/SmallDickProblems make two kinds of entitlement claims: an affective entitlement asserting that their suffering is more valid than other groups and an epistemic entitlement asserting that their knowledge is more valid than other groups. Taken together, these entitlement claims operate as a strategic rhetoric that attempts to recoup what they perceive to be a naturally ordered gendered hierarchy of male supremacy. This essay proceeds by grounding the signifier *entitlement* in its colonial histories, elaborating the rhetorical field method of *lurking* and why it is appropriate for feminist research in the manosphere, and then defining and providing examples for the concepts of *affective entitlement* and *epistemic entitlement*.

Entitlement as rhetorical strategy

Despite varied uses across vernacular and scholarly settings, the noun *entitlement* and the adjective *entitled* always reference a politics of deservingness.¹² This section uses entitlement scholarship to make two points. First, when *entitlement* is used to describe an internal attitude symptomatic of privilege, an important rhetorical dimension of entitlement is overlooked. Second, attending to the rhetorical work being done by entitlement claims affords critical scholars several benefits, including emphases on the material stakes of entitlement claims; the evaluations of human worth nascent in all entitlement claims; and the gendered and racial patterns that emerge regarding the reception of entitlement claims.

The Anglo-Norman etymological origins of *entitlement* reveal its tangible stakes and its inextricability from imperial domination and capitalist enclosure. Since the fifteenth century, to *en-title* has meant to “furnish (a person) with a ‘title’ to an estate [...] to give (a person or thing) a rightful claim to a possession, privilege, designation, mode of treatment.”¹³ To be entitled, then, describes a legal status that legitimates the possession and ownership of resources, be they land, real estate, capital, human or animal bodies, or other assets. Not coincidentally, *entitlement* rose to prominence during the enclosure

of the commons in England, beginning in the late sixteenth century and rising to a peak during the late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries. Almost five million acres were transferred from the commons to private ownership during this time, adding up to nearly one acre in every seven.¹⁴ Formerly open fields were enclosed with fences or hedges, depriving the peasants of access to the land that had been their primary means of subsistence.¹⁵ If enclosure was an early experiment in dispossession and extraction—practices that would eventually become crucial tools in the service of the British imperial project¹⁶—then entitlement was the legal mechanism that ensured that, once the commons were enclosed, they would stay privately held and within the family of the landed gentry. For the first few hundred years of its usage, the extent of one's entitlement is precisely the extent of one's intergenerationally inherited privilege.

After centuries of relative linguistic stability, an offshoot usage of *entitlement* shed its legal denotation and became a weapon wielded by conservatives to withhold resources from marginalized groups in the U.S. and other Western countries. In circulation and percolation (to use Robin Jensen's concept of nonlinearly recurring topoi¹⁷) since the mid-1970s, phrases like *entitlement spending* or *entitlement programs* were used to identify that which needed to be "controlled and contained," linking concepts like women's reproductive bodies with excessive government spending.¹⁸ Senator Joe Manchin's recent usage riffs on this theme with the phrase "entitlement society," which one journalist called his "battle cry."¹⁹ Essentially a euphemism for "spoilt and self-important,"²⁰ another recent example that holds true to this familiar pattern is the phrase *entitled millennials*. When deployed by conservative politicians or pundits, these phrases question who deserves various kinds of support provided by the government or places of employment such as healthcare, childcare, or reasonable working conditions. With or without its legal denotation, entitlement remains concerned with the rightful and deserving possession of tangible resources.²¹

Entitlement claims often collude with dominant social hierarchies. Entitlement claims, due or undue, are fundamentally evaluative. Every entitlement claim is simultaneously a statement about the worth or value of the speaker or speaker's group. To claim that we deserve *x* is always also to claim that it is because we are *y* (and sometimes because they are *z*). In my recent monograph, I name the material-discursive practices that promote or demote living beings *zoerhetorics*. This work documents the ways that Western *zoerhetorics* maintain a hierarchy broadly based on the medieval Great Chain of Being. These entitlement demands are always *zoerhetorical*; that is, they always stake a claim about where an entity belongs on a hierarchy. To attend to the rhetorical dimensions of entitlement requires attending carefully to assertions about a group's worth or status; what I have called *zoerhetorical attunement*.²²

Racial and gendered patterns predict entitlement's distributions of deservingness. Broadly speaking, when white settler men claim entitlements, dominant cultural logics assess these entitlements as rightful, legal, and/or the normal order of things. When marginalized people claim entitlement *to the same set of resources*, dominant cultural logics assess these entitlement claims as, well, *entitled* (as in spoiled). Often this weaponization of entitled-as-spoiled is accompanied by any number of racialized and gendered coded signifiers, including conniving, criminal, greedy, hypersexual, hysterical, incompetent, pathological, and so on. Entitlement is at once a legal tool assuring intergenerational wealth and a weaponized signifier of white settler colonial sexist domination.

In the past ten years in critical rhetorical and communication scholarship, there has been an important *resignification* of entitlement, evident in phrases such as *male entitlement*²³ and *white entitlement*.²⁴ These phrases expose and counter entitlement's collusions with supremacy. Jacqueline Rose writes:

Violence is a form of entitlement [...] As if hovering in the ether, it relies for its persistence on the refusal to acknowledge that it is even there [...] But the shiftiness is not an afterthought. It is hardwired into the whole process, the chief means whereby entitlement boasts its invincibility and hides its true nature from itself.²⁵

By offering entitlement as a rhetorical strategy, I aim to pin down this shiftiness and to hone what has already proven to be a useful, if previously vague, term for critical rhetoric and communication scholars. My approach differs from typical scholarly uses of the term, in which *entitlement* is often understood as an internal psychological attitude. Consider the oft-cited concept of *aggrieved entitlement*, introduced in 2010 by Kalish and Kimmel. Coined to describe male mass shooters, aggrieved entitlement refers to the perception that one's violent actions are a just and legitimate response to the ways in which they have been wronged, "a fusion of that humiliating loss of manhood and the moral obligation and entitlement to get it back."²⁶ While their gendering of aggrieved entitlement offered explanatory value for understanding white male victimhood, casting it as an internal psychological state precludes us from charting the broader material-discursive effects of entitlement claims. By contrast, we wring more traction from entitlement if we understand it as a material-discursive strategy. We must understand entitlement not as passive or incidental, but rather as active and impactful in the world. Entitlement is more than something people feel: it is something people *do*. As key mechanisms for the reproduction of hierarchies and transfer of intergenerational resources, understanding entitlement claims as material-discursive strategies makes them available for rhetorical analysis and critique.

Among the myriad ways in which entitlement claims are used, I am most interested here in the ways in which *disproportionate* entitlement claims are used by relatively privileged groups to maintain privilege. As Kate Manne defines in her book on the subject, disproportionate entitlement is an internal attitude reflecting "some people's undue sense of what they deserve or are owed by others."²⁷ To pull this definition into rhetorical terrain, I suggest that disproportionate entitlement claims are discursive acts that communicate an undue sense of what they deserve or are owed by others. The term *undue* is key here; as Manne clarifies, "entitlements can be genuine, valid, justified."²⁸ Asserting a shared human entitlement to, for example, clean drinking water is a fair position. However, disproportionate entitlement—when a particular group claims that they deserve a particular set of resources over and above another group without consideration of a broader context of power distribution—is harmful. Disproportionate entitlement protects and repairs dominant social hierarchies; proportionate entitlement levels hierarchies.

Given these considerations, disproportionate masculine entitlement can be defined as a rhetorical strategy employed to restore what some men perceive to be the proper, important, and self-evidently natural gendered hierarchy. While not all the entitlement claims at SDP are unwarranted, the commitment to gendered and heterosexist hierarchies embedded in their entitlement claims is worthy of critique. My pursuit in this

essay is not the tedious parsing of due from undue entitlement claims but, rather, to show how due and undue entitlement claims braid together to achieve a broader effect in the service of threatened masculinity. Disproportionate masculine entitlement bears material-discursive effects; it is a hierarchy-protective rhetorical strategy endemic to contemporary masculine victimhood.

While there may be many species of entitlement claims, this essay focuses on the entitlement claims of relatively privileged groups who perceive their status to be threatened in some way, the entitlement claims bred of privilege. For groups like white cis men, entitlement claims are one arrow in a quiver full of hierarchy-maintenance strategies. Manne's definition of misogyny as the "law enforcement branch of patriarchal order" predicts that women are at increased risk of misogynistic experiences (i.e., harassment, trolling, physical abuse, sexual violence) when they violate or are perceived to be violating "patriarchal norms and expectations."²⁹ In subsequent work, Manne likens misogyny to a dog's shock collar, worn to keep them behind an invisible fence. While misogyny does cause pain, "even when it isn't actively hurting anyone, it tends to discourage girls and women from venturing out of bounds."³⁰ Venturing out of bounds occurs when women *fail* to provide for men what Manne describes as feminine-coded goods and services:

attention, affection, admiration, sympathy, sex, and children (i.e., social, domestic, reproductive, and emotional labor); also mixed goods, such as safe haven, nurture, security, soothing and comfort.³¹

Alternatively, women also venture out of the bounds of patriarchal norms and are at risk of increased misogynistic experiences when they take masculine-coded perks and privileges:

Power, prestige, public recognition, rank, reputation, honor, "face," respect, money and other forms of wealth, hierarchical status, upward mobility, and the status conferred by having a high-ranking woman's loyalty, love, devotion, etc.³²

These lists are worth reproducing here given how closely they map onto the rhetoric of the manosphere in general and SDP in particular. In alignment with patriarchal gendered expectations, the men at SDP resent women for not offering them items on the first list of feminine-coded goods and services and resent themselves and "society" for their lack of access to the items on the second list, the masculine-coded perks and privileges. Manne contends that women are at heightened risk of encountering misogyny when they step out of patriarchal expectations. I supplement this with the corollary argument that men are the most prone to hierarchy-maintenance behaviors, including assertions of disproportionate entitlement (not to mention racism, misogyny, etc.), precisely when their hierarchical position is threatened. The men who participate in the *r/SmallDickProblems* community demonstrate such status threat.

As a strategy of hierarchy maintenance, disproportionate entitlement is inextricable from victimhood. The years roughly corresponding to Donald Trump's rise and presidential term align with renewed claims of white and masculine victimhood in the U.S.³³ White victimhood, the position that white people are unfairly harmed by the social, political, and economic progress of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color, frequently arrives hand-in-hand with masculine victimhood, the position that

men are unfairly harmed by the social, political, and economic progress of LGBTQIA+ people and women. Typical expressions of white victimhood and masculine victimhood deliberately misinterpret or ignore vast bodies of testimony and scholarship confirming interlocking systems of oppression, claiming instead that white people and men are the true victims, overlooked and unfairly targeted by anti-racist, feminist, and queer social movements.³⁴

In the context of a public forum, men expressing frustration regarding their small penises are forced into a complex subject position in which they risk double emasculation. First, they must disclose that their bodies fail to conform to the command performance of hegemonic masculinity. Second, they make claims of victimhood within a dominant culture that codes such claims as feminine and juvenile. For the many men who disclose that they are of Asian descent on SDP, they already inhabit bodies “historically marked by feminization and emasculation.”³⁵ Claims of small penis victimhood court a complex dance with masculinity, in which the grounds for masculine entitlement itself is called into question by the very act of making the assertion. While victimhood claims may violate hegemonic norms of masculinity by expressing weakness, victimhood remains a powerful and persuasive trope in U.S. culture.³⁶

Lurking in the manosphere: Covert non-participant observation as rhetorical field method

The SmallDickProblems subreddit is one of the over 140,000 active subreddits, or communities, on the online platform Reddit, the self-dubbed “front page of the Internet” and one of the largest repositories of public address in the world. Essentially a social voting and discussion site, Reddit’s registered members post, up-vote, down-vote, and comment on content. With more than 430 million monthly active users, Reddit is the sixth largest website in the world. Reddit aspires to be a “self-correcting marketplace of ideas”³⁷ yet also has a checkered history of providing safe harbor for white nationalists, racists, misogynists, and other hate groups.³⁸ Because most Reddit accounts are anonymous or pseudonymous, it is impossible to accurately determine user demographics in a particular subreddit. However, based on self-volunteered details of SDP participants and Reddit’s general skew toward young men,³⁹ it is reasonable to assume that most of SDP’s active participants are Asian or white cisgender men in their teens or early twenties with limited partnered sexual experiences. Like most subreddits, SDP self-moderates by creating and enforcing its own rules.

Since its creation in 2012, SDP’s membership has steadily grown to over 46,000 Redditors, though most subscribers to the subreddit lurk silently, like me. I use *lurking* to describe my long-term covert non-participant observation, an acceptable form of gathering *public* digital qualitative data,⁴⁰ especially in potentially hostile places.⁴¹ SDP is a public forum. Unless they have been deleted by the user or the moderators, the posts and comments I reproduce here are available to anyone with a Reddit account who joins the community. Given the significant harassment, including death threats, doxing, and stalking, that many feminist women journalists and researchers have experienced in male-dominated online spaces, I did not announce my presence as a feminist researcher on the forum.⁴²

Lurking, like all methodological decisions, implies an ethical orientation. While I do not harbor the nefarious intentions connoted by *lurking*, thinking of myself as a lurker, even a creep, served as a continual reminder that *I am not a member of the imagined public* that comes into being when SDP users address each other. *Lurking as digital field method*, then, serves two ethical imperatives: first, to be *affectable* (that is, open and available to being moved), and second, to represent the group fairly (that is, to resist the easy, flat characterizations of them). These ethical imperatives checked my initial impulses when I was first drawn to this subreddit. My first take saw these men in an admittedly one-dimensional way: as privileged whiners, as simpering princes nursing wounded egos with hysterical and deluded claims about victimhood. When I first started lurking in this community, Alek Minassian had just driven a van onto a crowded street in Toronto in 2018 as part of what he called the “Incel Rebellion” and the term *incel* leapt from digital enclaves into popular culture.⁴³ However odious and disturbing the content of their community, I tried to orient toward the men at SDP with the capacity for surprise. My long-term engagement with the site—nearly three years of near-daily reading and documenting with screenshots from 2018–2020—held many surprises.

Reading SDP consistently produced in me a spectrum of despairs, ranging from desperate despair to rageful despair. I stayed with this awful mood hundreds of times after reading the posts and comments of the men at SDP. Following the important innovative work of feminist affective methodologists, these affective experiences redirected my data collection, curiosities, and conclusions.⁴⁴ In so doing, I experienced an *investigative pivot*, a frame that “encourages readers to conceive of rhetoric research as a series of dizzying, re-/dis-/orienting dispositions that require reflection and responsivity.”⁴⁵ One outcome of this pivot is that it became important for me to open the essay by documenting some of the legitimate harms of *dickshaming*, a form of body shaming tolerated even in some progressive communities. Importantly, staying with discomfort requires access to emotional resources that have never been evenly distributed; my whiteness and the relative stability offered by tenure are privileges that undoubtedly increased my capacity to “hold”—that is, to regularly encounter, feel into, document, and analyze—the racist, misogynist, homophobic, ableist, and transphobic content at SDP.

The men who gather under the aegis of the small dick problems subreddit provide significant probative value for exploring masculine entitlement. The claims of victimhood circulating among members of SDP are distinctly *masculine*, insofar as their experience of suffering stems from the perceived compromise of their status as men *qua* men. In conformity with a phallogocentric world view, they claim that having a small penis constitutes a distinct, overlooked, and singularly egregious form of suffering entitled to visibility and recognition. Compellingly, there are some legitimate harms experienced by participants on SDP, even as they use misogynistic, heterosexist, racist, transphobic, and ableist language to articulate their injuries. The self-reported presence of Asian, Black, and mixed-race men on SDP dispels the presumption that these men are making claims of white victimhood, even as whiteness permeates the space as an assumed unmarked norm.

The SDP community has a complex relationship with the broader networked manosphere that organizes and nourishes claims of masculine victimhood. White and masculine victimhood discourses thrive online and would not have achieved the same levels of scale and saturation without the affordances of networked platforms.⁴⁶ Given the shame

associated with small penises, it would be impossible for a group of this size to come together without the scale and anonymity offered by a platform like Reddit. Those unfamiliar with the loosely connected networks that comprise the manosphere would be surprised by the diversity and size of groups collected under its anti-feminist banner: pick-up artists, incels, MGTOW (Men Going Their Own Way), Men's Rights Activists, and so on. Many of the posts and comments on SDP conform to the assumptions of popular misogyny and are delivered in its distinctive manosphere vocabulary, even while many SDP members disavow connections to the manosphere's more violent or extreme branches. What Sarah Banet-Weiser and Kate Miltner have called "networked misogyny" documents the ways in which the harassment of women in online spaces has proliferated.⁴⁷ Similarly, Marwick and Caplan insist on using the term *networked* to describe online misogyny and harassment to dispel the assumption that these are isolated behaviors.⁴⁸

Many of the manosphere's classic phrases, ideas, or rhetorical strategies appear on SDP. Each of the following communicative features of the manosphere has been addressed by critical media scholars or journalists elsewhere, so I will only list them here. They include referring to women as *females*; referring to attractiveness, status, gender, and race by the terms *Chad*, *Stacy*, *Becky*, *Tyrone*, *alpha male*, *beta male*, etc.; the false equivalence of misandry with misogyny; the misapplication of evolutionary theory to enforce patriarchal norms; accusations of *concern trolling* or *white knighting*; use of the terms *bluepill*, *redpill*, and *blackpill* to describe broad ideological approaches to gender; and use of the terms *looksmaxxing* and *sexual marketplace value* to refer to status as a romantic partner.⁴⁹ Misogyny, racism, ableism, and heterosexism thrive in the manosphere, and the manosphere's idiom has proliferated in online spaces well beyond the manosphere's confines. The pervasive reach of misogynist and anti-feminist language and ideas in the manosphere is evident at SDP.

Affective entitlement

Entitlement claims traffic in a broader and more amorphous set of resources than property, yet still index a politics of deservingness. The men at SDP assert entitlement to affective responses from women interpersonally (desire, lust, care, romance) and from society more broadly (recognition, acknowledgement).⁵⁰ Often due and undue entitlement claims weave tightly together; for example, the due entitlement to recognition often shades into the undue entitlement that they deserve *more* recognition than other groups traditionally recognized as oppressed. As they operate at SDP, due and undue affective entitlement claims braid together to support a gendered, heterosexist hierarchy.

The men at SDP demand entitlement to the recognition of their suffering as valid. If we accept the reasonable premise that human suffering warrants human witnessing, this is a fair and proportionate entitlement claim. Expressions of pain and suffering are among the most frequent kinds of posts at SDP. They are common enough for SDP to have earned a self-aware reputation as being a negative and depressing place. One user titles his post: "As a man, it's almost impossible to not think about sex, but because of my small dick, I cannot have it." In another user's assessment, "we are cosmically fucked in the ass." This comment's assumptions about penetration and power bespeak a commitment to heteropatriarchy. The following quotation is from a post entitled

“What keeps you from giving up?” and shows the general tenor of despair in the community:

Title says it all. This life is beyond painful, it’s a living hell. I can hear my upstairs neighbors banging right now. I’m just sitting alone watching tv and being depressed. This has ruined my entire existence. There’s just no way to be a happy, healthy man when you’re a sexual failure. It’s un-fucking-bearable.⁵¹

Like this man, many users of SDP are convinced that, despite their capacity to engage in the biomechanics of intercourse, their small penises mean that they are necessarily “sexual failures.”⁵² Suicide ideation appears frequently enough to garner its own rule on the sidebar: “No comments or threads about self-harm, KYS [Kill Yourself] or similar topics are tolerated.” Despite this rule, posts and comments with self-harm and suicidal content exist, although many are deleted by moderators. Shared one user, “thinking of roping soon.” Other users are careful to only intimate suicide to avoid triggering the sidebar rules and potential deletion of their posts:

Ever since 16 I’ve hid away due to this, no friends, no part time job, never had a relationship and extremely low self-esteem. I just think what’s the point? You’d meet a nice girl, waste time dating and then she’ll just laugh or not enjoy it. [...] What do I expect though, I’m 6 foot 3 with a 4-inch dick. Feel like I should just ‘give up’ and sleep forever.

The men at SDP do not take the recognition of their suffering for granted; rather, they are constantly rehearsing a defense as to why they are entitled to claim suffering at all. What Jonathan Allan observed about the strikingly emotive language of the men’s rights movement holds true for SDP: “it has co-opted the language of affect, emotion, feeling, and the personal being political to meet its own ends. The men’s rights movement, we might say, has appropriated the language of feminist consciousness-raising.”⁵³

In their defense, the men at SDP experience their share of bullying, harassment, and trolling by other Redditors. Their subreddit experiences a large amount of what is called *brigading* in Reddit’s parlance: when a group of outsiders invades a subreddit and floods it with downvotes. Brigading is a way in which Reddit’s algorithms can be weaponized against certain groups.⁵⁴ Sometimes the subreddit is so inundated by brigaders and other trolls that it temporarily changes its status from public to private to give the moderators time to clean it up. As one moderator explained:

We’re public again. We need to go private due to severe brigading, doxing, trolling, and having users get harassed (to the point of these guys condoning suicide). Sorry about any inconvenience guys. It just needed to be done for everyone’s health including the mod team’s.

Woven together with due affective entitlement claims, however, are also a series of undue entitlement claims. A dominant narrative at SDP maintains that having a small penis is a *singular form of oppression*. For the SDP participants invested in proving that their experiences are uniquely oppressive, they often compare themselves with marginalized groups: “[I] personally don’t know any group which is more discriminated [against] than men with small penises,” wrote one user. In other words, not only do many SDP participants claim entitlement to recognition of their suffering, but some participants also claim that their suffering is *the worst suffering*.

At the height of the Black Lives Matter uprisings in 2020, one (presumably white) user posted on SDP that he would “rather be black than have a micropenis.” This statement questioned the public recognition of anti-Black racism by suggesting that the harms of small penis discrimination are tantamount to the harms of anti-Black racism. Philomena Essed coined the term *entitlement racism* to describe a “new boldness” around a person feeling that “they are allowed to say whatever they want, whenever they want, about whomever they want, in the name of freedom of expression.”⁵⁵ Entitlement racism, as Ortiz further theorized, is an *overt* racism that relishes in its license to offend, and functions alongside the *covert* racist discourses such as colorblindness.⁵⁶ For both Essed and Ortiz, entitlement racism proliferates in the digital, anonymized online spaces characteristic of Reddit.

Building on entitlement racism, the men at SDP also assert an entitlement sexism. Opined one user, “Men with small penises are the true victims of sexism.” He goes on:

With a small dick, you are basically an asexual worker bee who get only considered for long term relationships primarily for financial and emotional support [...] If you want some action then you’re literally forced to lay off your masculinity and make yourself [in]to a lesbian, 95% of all sex expert advice for men with small penises are “work on your oral skills.”

In line with typical assertions of masculine victimhood, this user declares that men with small penises, rather than women, are most harmed by patriarchy.⁵⁷ The user also conflates cunnilingus with lesbian sex, underscoring penis-in-vagina penetration as the only properly masculine form of heterosexual intercourse. The men at SDP also compare their experiences to those of trans people:

We probably have it worse when it comes to psychological damage, but I don’t think we have it worse in society because we can still “pass” as men with average and big dicks, the humiliation only starts when you get outed. It’s kinda like trans people who had reassignment surgery and are able to pass, expect there’s a way way more people who give a fuck about trans people than there [are] people who give a fuck about us.

In making the argument that men with small penises suffer the most when they fail to “pass,” this participant at once appropriates the language of queer social movements while employing a transphobic term for gender affirming surgery. Over the three years that I regularly read SDP, I saw two posts in which trans men identify themselves as such. One sought recommendations for condoms for micropenises. Predictably, after he shared his length and girth measurements, a handful of commenters responded, “That’s not a penis, that’s a clit!” The policing around whose genitalia counts as a *real* penis shows that many SDP participants are invested in compulsory dyadism as well as cisgender masculinity as the natural and correct manifestation of masculinity.

On a pinned thread (that is, a thread chosen by moderators to remain in a visible position on the top of the message board; a thread identified as required reading), there is a comment comparing men with small penises to women with “loose vaginas”:

You gotta be joking. When was the last time you heard someone say “hey lady nice truck compensating for a flappy labia?” How many songs have been written ridiculing big flappy labia? (re: Short Dick Man) How many movies or TV shows have scenes where a woman with big labia is being ridiculed?

In their explicit comparisons to queer people, trans people, Black people, and women, some men at SDP go beyond claiming the due affective entitlement of recognition for their suffering and enter the territory of claiming the undue affective entitlement of recognition for their suffering *beyond that of other marginalized groups*. What Paul Elliott Johnson observed of Trump followers echoes the victimhood claims of the men at SDP:

Trump's expansion of precarity, which encompasses those who merely feel powerless, encourages many well-off supporters to imagine themselves occupying parallel positions of victimhood to subaltern subjects. In imagining themselves as disrespected or even violated by the political establishment, many supporters disavow their objective, privileged position in the social order by interpreting feelings of discomfort and unease as authoritative evidence of their constitutive exclusion from politics.⁵⁸

For the men at SDP, feelings of discomfort authorize victimhood status as they enact direct comparisons between men with small penises and marginalized groups.

In another pinned thread called "what we don't want to hear," one user writes that he is tired of hearing that "Girls would much rather have a guy with a small dick that's good in the sack, enthusiastic, and giving than have a guy with a big dick that thinks he can get by just with his dick." While this might seem like thoughtful advice, for many men at SDP, it is offensive. Opines one man:

So in order for a guy [with a small dick] to be better than a guy with a big dick is only if he's lazy and selfish while a smaller than average guy has to compensate in every way possible without using his dick. It's insulting and emasculating.

According to the logic here, engagement in any of the partnered consensual intimacy practices not directly oriented toward penetrative penis-in-vagina intercourse is a violation of masculinity. There is no interest expressed in the wide range of sexual behaviors common even in the narrow context of cis-het relationships, including oral sex, mutual masturbation, or anal play. A similar comment underscores the centrality of the penis to masculine enlacement:

Look, I and many others here know that we can find love regardless of our sizes. However we don't just want to have someone who's ok with our size, we want to be with someone who prefers our penis size without needing an emotional connection. We want women to like, prefer, and admire our sizes in hookups and casual sex, not just in relationships. We want to be lusted after like men with big dicks often are without needing an emotional connection. It's lust that we want to find, not just love.

An additional way in which SDP members support what they identify as their unique claim to oppression is the argument that penises are one of the few human body parts that cannot be safely and reliably augmented.⁵⁹ In fact, SDP bans all discussion of penis enlargement. Another common analogue at SDP compares having a small penis to being "obese." However, once again, SDP members (some of whom also claim to be obese) maintain that their oppression is unique by pointing out that if you are fat, you can lose weight, surgically or otherwise. If you have a small penis, you are essentially stuck with it forever. In this way, men with small penises feel excluded from the neoliberal logic that treats the self as a work-station for vital biocitizenship.⁶⁰ In addition to trafficking in fatphobic discourses, the men at SDP lack the opportunity for culturally mandated self-improvement, further marginalizing their experiences. As Bratich and

Banet-Weiser observe, networked platforms combine and accelerate these failed performances of neoliberal subjectivity.⁶¹

One effect of this disproportionate affective entitlement is to preclude any coalition-building with similarly minded groups. Rather than understanding oppression in the aggregative ways offered to us by Black feminist theories of intersectionality and interlocking systems of oppression,⁶² the men at SDP instead construct their suffering as a zero-sum game; the more the oppression of others is recognized and validated (be they Black people, white women, or LGBTQ+ folks), the less recognition and validation there is to go around for men with small penises.⁶³ It is telling that the men of SDP do not wish to be in community with body-positive feminists, trans or non-binary people, disabled people, lesbians, or any other group whose countercultures have generated concepts, aesthetics, or sexual practices that may offer some reprieve to the men at SDP. In part, it may be because some men at SDP feel entitled to outrank these groups. This strategic *anti-solidarity* maintains straight, cis, and gendered hierarchies, thereby enforcing cultural logics of hegemonic gendered norms.

Epistemic entitlement

In addition to an affective entitlement that diminishes the suffering of other groups, the men at SDP also exercise an epistemic entitlement that diminishes the value of other perspectives. According to an adage attributed to the psychologist Abraham Maslow, among others, *when all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail*. Also known as the law of the instrument, the saying makes a fundamentally epistemological claim: the tools in our hands shape our perceptions in ways that both reveal and obfuscate. To describe the SDP community's epistemic entitlement, I offer a slight adjustment to the adage, while retaining its phallic gesture: *When all you have is a nail, everything looks like a hammer*. The hammer/nail metaphor is useful because it shows how central, often surprisingly so, the small penis is to the lived experience of the men at SDP. These men are reminded of their perceived genital inadequacies at every turn, even in contexts seemingly unrelated to sex or sexuality. The men at SDP defend heartily their epistemic entitlement, even in the face of valid contrary perspectives.

As defined by Kate Manne, unwarranted epistemic entitlement is when some people “occupy the conversational position of the *knower* by default: to be the one who dispenses information, offers corrections, and authoritatively issues explanations.”⁶⁴ While Manne incorporates Rebecca Solnit's work on *mansplaining* in these conversations, the epistemic entitlement operating at SDP differs from mansplaining because it does not always assume an audience of women. There are two major modes of epistemic entitlement operating at SDP. The first seeks credibility by alignment with a rational-scientific discourse centered on the precise quantification of penis size. The second seeks to discredit the voices of women who post in the forum. An endemic response to threatened masculinity is the weaving together of due and undue entitlement claims to protect a gendered hierarchy. Given the long history of patriarchy minimizing non-patriarchal forms of knowing, it should come as no surprise that epistemic entitlement is a rhetorical strategy employed by the men at SDP.

In describing the surprisingly diverse world of Reddit communities centered around penises, it is useful to explain what SDP is *not*. SDP is obviously different from

r/BigDickProblems, though they often compare themselves to that subreddit with jealousy. SDP is adamantly not r/SPH, which stands for Small Penis Humiliation, the consensual verbal erotic critique of small penises that sometimes falls under the umbrella of BDSM as a fetish genre. Small penis humiliation is decried and banned at SDP. The men of SDP also do not find their perspectives represented fairly at the newer r/UnitedDickProblems subreddit, despite its peace-making overtures. SDP is not r/tinydicks, a subreddit dominated by gay men eroticizing images of small penises. In fact, SDP bans all Not Safe For Work images. SDP is adamant that their community avoids eroticizing, celebrating, or fetishizing small penises. The erotic celebration of small penises, after all, would repudiate their central assertion that having a small penis is unequivocally awful. Similarly, many men at SDP insist that they are *not* experiencing body dysmorphia. Like other forms of body dysmorphia, people can experience small penis anxiety independently from their actual penis size.

In fact, *proving* that one's penis is smaller than average is an important credibility ritual on SDP. According to the rules in the sidebar, "If you don't statistically have a small penis, then this isn't the right place for you."⁶⁵ Accurate measurements of erect length and girth are emphasized, a commitment to quantification underscored by the image of a ruler that serves as the site's banner. In the Resources page, there is a link to a site providing detailed instructions on how to measure penis length and girth correctly.⁶⁶ Posting one's measurements is an important expectation of SDP participation, codified in the "flair" options in which users can pin their measurements to their usernames when posting and commenting. If someone makes a post or leaves a comment about their penis without providing their erect length and girth measurements, the first question in the comments section is almost always, "what are your measurements?" With measurement comes a chance to compare and standardize, and the findings of international studies determining average penis size among human men are regarded as repositories of authority in the SDP community, even as their methodologies are contested. Some men use websites that calculate their exact length, girth, and volume measurements in relation to global datasets. One website will calculate how many people "would be bigger in a room of 1000 [people with penises]." For example, if you measured your erect penis at 5.5 inches, about 500 people with penises are likely to have a bigger penis than yours in a room of one thousand people.⁶⁷ Precise measurement begets precise comparison.

SDP's commitment to quantification of penis size is underscored by the ongoing debate regarding bone-pressed or not bone-pressed measurement. A bone-pressed penis measurement presses the ruler into what they call the "fat pad" of the pubic bone above the penis. If there is a significant amount of fat in this area, the bone-pressed measurement may be as many as a few centimeters longer than the not bone-pressed measurement. Most measurements reported on SDP are bone-pressed. Proponents of bone-pressed measurement believe that it is more consistent in the face of weight fluctuation, and aligns with the practices of most clinical penis length studies. Proponents of not bone-pressed measurements maintain that it more accurately represents how much penis can enter a vagina, recentering heterosexual penetration as the truest purpose of a penis. Similarly, non-bone-pressed measurements reflect a visual regime for appraising penis length, also centering a woman's experience, though visual rather than sensual: "It's what a woman would see." Some men post about

“turtling” or buried penis syndrome, when the non-erect penis disappears inside body fat. A frequent suggestion offered to fat men with small penises on SDP is to lose weight to assist the penis in appearing larger. Despite their appeals to objectivity, these ongoing measurement deliberations remain encircled within heterosexual logics and fat shaming.

Hand-in-glove with SDP’s rational-scientific pretense to objectivity is their ritualized dismissal of women’s testimony. Among the harms inflicted on marginalized persons listed in Miranda Fricker’s work on epistemic injustice is testimonial injustice, or the credibility deficits pervasively attributed to marginalized people.⁶⁸ Though Fricker is a philosopher, claims about testimony pull her directly into the purview of rhetoric and communication.⁶⁹ As Emily Winderman explains, epistemic injustice coincides with “voices deemed as non-ethos-bearing.”⁷⁰ Epistemic entitlement is both cause and symptom of testimonial injustice.

One “truth” robustly defended at SDP is the idea that virtually all heterosexual women prefer large penises. Many men at SDP also subscribe to the corollary belief that if a woman is dating a man with a small penis, she is just biding her time for a man with a bigger penis to come along. Well-meaning heterosexual women who attempt to counter these kinds of claims are met with testimonial injustice in forms that include downvoting, contempt, threats, dismissal, and banning. What is almost inconceivable is the epistemic entitlement circulating on SDP regarding something incredibly personal and subjective: what a penis might feel like inside a particular woman’s vagina. Deeply attached to their superiority as knowers, many of the men at SDP claim to know something that it is only possible for any one individual to know: their own embodied sensations. A thread from a post titled “Why?” demonstrates this phenomenon. In this exchange, edited for brevity, two men question the credibility of a woman who claims that she is in a satisfying sexual relationship with a man with a small penis:

- Man 1: Be careful, though. I’m not sure I would believe much of what any women say on here. It’s all talking points and platitudes.
- Woman: That’s why a lot of the legit women just lurk here instead of posting and commenting. I still sometimes get accused of being fake or settling and I’ve been posting for months. The virtue signaling ones may pop in because they figure they’ve got nothing to lose. The legit ones would love to offer their viewpoints but they get scared off because they are afraid nobody will believe them. There are other women like me. In much higher numbers than most people are aware of. It’s because when we do speak up we are called liars. So people are led to believe there are far less of us than there actually are.
- Man 1: Well, if you’re being sincere and legitimate, why give a fuck what anyone says about it? I think it’s just that women have to be more careful about how they convey their feelings. For example, if a woman posts on here about how they actually prefer a smaller dick, pretty much no one is going to believe them. At all, because it’s totally unbelievable. But if they just said “hey, I’ve had everything from little to big and I’m good with them all,” it’s a bit more believable.
- Woman: But what about the [women] who are either good with any size or the ones that know they prefer smaller? Women are all different shapes and sizes with all different preferences. If a woman with a bigger preference goes on [Big Dick Problems], nobody second guesses her. If a woman has a preference for smaller and comes on here to weigh in the exact same way, it’s an entirely different reception. It seems more unbelievable about women preferring guys

that are smaller because we don't have the same opportunities to speak up about our preferences. Both on reddit and in society in general.

Man 2: What usually happens is that the girls that come here and say they like small guys have their [Reddit post and comment] histories full of them commenting on big dick guys or going to [Big Dick Problems].

Woman: Based on the fact that I commented daily for over a month before anyone halfway believed me. And my partner and I post in other subs that can be seen as proof. And sometimes people still think I'm not for real? How many are gonna want to spend a month or longer having to prove themselves?

Man 2: Or maybe is just that the amount of girls that actually like small guys is virtually zero.

Despite the valid evidence offered by this woman that not all women prefer large penises—evidence that is offered to be reassuring to them, no less—these men not only disregard this woman's first-hand testimony but question the veracity and intentions of all women. Her status as a knower vis-à-vis the subject matter is disregarded, when it should be privileged, given that she is speaking regarding a subject on which *she and only she* is the unequivocal expert: her own pleasure. This precisely conforms to the definition of an undue epistemic entitlement claim: the assertion that one's knowledge is more valid than another's in a context that is unwarranted. Exchanges like this are routine on SDP. While the narrative that *all* women prefer large penises is sometimes challenged, it is always robustly defended, often by many men in a "pile on" situation.

The epistemic entitlement enacted at SDP serves the additional purpose of securing the victimhood status of the men invested in SDP's dominant discourses. Were they to acknowledge the validity of some women's testimonial preferences for small penises, they would have to reconsider the predominant fatalistic narrative around how awful it is to have a small penis in the context of finding a satisfying romantic or sexual heterosexual connection. Doing so would call into question their status as victims. Being dislodged from victimhood status would, in turn, invite a range of personal responsibilities and ethical obligations that they are somehow allowed to disavow when they are framed as victims. Because it authorizes entitlement rhetoric, victimhood must be gripped tightly.

In sum, the epistemic entitlement asserted at SDP spans a positivist commit to quantification while asserting an entitlement to know, bafflingly, women's vulvar and vaginal sensations better than women. These epistemic entitlements diminish the validity of women's perspectives, flatten the diverse preferences of heterosexual women into the size queen porn trope, and secures the victimhood status of the men at SDP. Epistemic male entitlement is a rhetorical strategy that bolsters a gendered hierarchy by coding knowledge as a masculine virtue.

Conclusion: The affordances of entitlement as rhetorical strategy

Understanding *entitlement* as a rhetorical strategy unearths the material and evaluative qualities of entitlement claims as a politics of deservingness rooted in colonial domination. In its etymological roots, its contemporary uses, and their reception in mainstream publics, *entitlement* is both litmus test and tool of oppression. This essay provides an analysis of entitlement claims as they occur in a community exemplary of threatened

masculinity: the r/SmallDickProblems subreddit. The men of Small Dick Problems employ entitlement as material-discursive strategy that protects and supports the reigning social hierarchies in alignment with Manne's prediction that the men who experience masculine status threat are the most likely to engage in misogynistic behaviors. I have explored here how the men of SDP have demanded due and undue entitlements in affective and epistemic registers, though these are not the only forms of entitlement claims that they make. Indeed, one can easily make the case that they claim an undue entitlement to sex.⁷¹ Affective entitlement claims assert that the speaker's feelings are valid and deserve to be recognized. *Undue* affective entitlement claims declare that the speaker suffers more than others in a context that does not warrant this assertion. Epistemic entitlement claims state that the speaker's knowledge deserves recognition. *Undue* epistemic entitlement claims assert the validity of the speaker's knowledge over others in a context that is unwarranted. When entitlement claims are undue, they position the claimant as superior to others.

Taken together, these entitlement claims operate as a strategic rhetoric that attempts to recoup what the men at SDP perceive to be the natural order of gendered hierarchy. As it appears at SDP, affective entitlement enacts a strategic *anti-solidarity* that maintains straight, cis, and gendered hierarchies, thereby enforcing cultural logics of hegemonic gendered norms. Epistemic male entitlement is a rhetorical strategy that bolsters a gendered hierarchy by coding knowledge as a masculine virtue. In these sections, I documented the affordances of understanding entitlement not as a vague adjective or as an internal psychological state but as material-discursive strategy employed to maintain supremacy. Entitlement claims thus betray assumptions about status, hierarchy, and deservingness.

Entitlement as rhetorical strategy may be applied to many contexts of interest for critical rhetoric scholars. While this essay focused primarily male entitlement and its ensuing misogyny within a relatively narrow context, male entitlement, white entitlement, and settler entitlement take varied rhetorical forms across many publics. Given sexist histories of property rights within heterosexual marriage, entitlement to women's bodies as objects of sexual pleasure (demonstrated by gendered assault and violence) and as reproducers (demonstrated by continual fights for reproductive justice, including the right to abortion and contraception), male entitlement continues to inform contemporary gender politics. Given histories of enslavement, demonstrated by the trans-Atlantic slave trade and chattel slavery, white entitlement is crucial to contemporary formations of anti-Black racism and white supremacy. Given the dispossession of Indigenous people under the claim of *terra nullius* or so-called empty land, settler entitlement is crucial to contemporary formations of nation.⁷² The relationship between dispossession and entitlement is a rich area for further rhetorical inquiry.⁷³ When relatively privileged groups employ undue entitlement claims as a rhetorical strategy for maintaining resources, they call on these histories.

This essay opened with an overview of the predictability and pervasiveness of small penis tropes, a common topic of discussion on SDP. I wanted to open the essay with something that nurtured compassion toward these men, even as I go on to critique their undue affective and epistemic entitlement claims as they arrive couched in the idiom of networked misogyny. In a bell hooks essay called "Penis Passion," she laments the narrow patriarchal language of penis talk: "changing how we talk about the penis is a powerful intervention that can challenge patriarchal thinking."⁷⁴ Taking

a cue from hooks, I ask for accountability in progressive circles around dickshaming. Small dick jokes are tolerated because it is assumed that they punch up rather than punch down, but this assumption does not always hold. Small dick jokes can harm as a form of body shaming. Freedom from dickshaming is a *due* entitlement. What are *not* valid entitlements—indeed, what must be continually condemned—are the entitlement claims bred of privilege that demand gendered resources (desire, sex, care, affection, credibility) that men, because of their status as men, assert that they deserve from women, because of their status as women.

Notes

1. *TV Tropes* deploys a vernacular use of the term *tropes*, conforming to what Christian Lundberg describes as “a range of associations that cohere around a signifier” in “Enjoying God’s Death: The Passion of the Christ and the Practices of an Evangelical Public,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 95, no. 4 (2009): 387–411, 389. See TVTropes.org.
2. Emma Mayo and Jonathan Craigie, *Hitler’s Last Day: Minute by Minute* (London: Short Books, 2015). A common response to Hitler’s small penis is “that explains a lot,” which is an example of the Compensating for Something trope occurring in real life. See Rachel Dicker, “Hitler Had a Weird Looking Penis, Historians Say,” *US News*, February 22, 2016, <https://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2016-02-22/adolf-hitler-had-a-small-penis-report-finds>. “That explains a lot” was also a common response to Stormy Daniels’ description of President Trump’s penis as smaller than average and resembling the toadstool character from Mario Kart. To clarify, my interest here is not the “truth” about Hitler’s or Trump’s penis, but rather to identify the pervasive cultural logic that asserts that penises (de)form character. See Stormy Daniels and Kevin Carr O’Leary, *Full Disclosure* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2018) and Joanna Rothkopf, “Stormy Daniels’s Detailed Description of Donald Trump’s Penis Explains a Lot,” *Esquire*, September 18, 2018, <https://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a23301515/stormy-daniels-donald-trump-penis-mushroom/>.
3. Christopher Frizzelle, “Kamala Harris Landed One Solid Blow After Another Against Trump,” *The Stranger*, September 13, 2019, <https://www.thestranger.com/slog/2019/09/13/41380904/kamala-harris-landed-one-solid-blow-after-another-against-trump>.
4. Christa Olson, *American Magnitude: Hemispheric Vision and Public Feeling in the United States* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2021), 194.
5. Alex Abad-Santos and Constance Grady, “How Big Dick Energy Explain Modern Masculinity,” *Vox*, June 27, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/culture/2018/6/27/17506898/big-dick-energy-explained>.
6. Tamari Kitossa, “Can the Black Man Be Nude in a Culture That Imagines Him as Naked?” in Tamari Kitossa (ed.), *Appealing Because He Is Appalling: Black Masculinity, Colonialism, and Erotic Racism* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2020), 3–58, 5.
7. To have a small penis, according to the going logic, is so unequivocally terrible that there is an informal legal strategy to avoid libel charges named after it: the small penis clause. Explains one journalist, “It is a trick used by authors who have defamed someone to discourage lawsuits. ‘No male is going to come forward and say, “That character with a very small penis — that’s me!”’ Mr. Friedman explained.” See Felicia Lee, “Columnist Accuses Crichton of ‘Literary Hit-and-Run,’” *New York Times*, December 14, 2006, <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/14/books/14cric.html>.
8. Not all people with penises are men and not all men have penises. Transmen and nonbinary people occasionally participate on SDP to mixed reactions, but SDP is far from a gender-inclusive community. Although I recognize its limits to describe people with penises, I continue to use the term *men* as it is emic to the set of artifacts under consideration. See Liz Duck-Chong, “Let’s Talk about Girdick,” in *Scarleteen: Sex Ed for the Real World*,

- https://www.scarleteen.com/article/bodies_politics_sexual_identity_sexuality_gender/lets_talk_about_girdick.
9. Debbie Ging, "Alphas, Betas, and Incels: Theorizing the Masculinities of the Manosphere," *Men and Masculinities* 22, no. 4 (2019): 638–57. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X17706401>.
 10. Casey Ryan Kelly and Chase Aunspach, "Incels, Compulsory Sexuality, and Fascist Masculinity," *Feminist Formations* 32, no. 3 (2020): 145–72, 148.
 11. Simon Cottee, "Incel (E)motives: Resentment, Shame and Revenge," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (2020): 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1822589>.
 12. James Cairns, *The Myth of the Age of Entitlement: Millennials, Austerity, and Hope* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017).
 13. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. entitle.
 14. Gary Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild: Essays* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint Press, 1990).
 15. Brett Christophers, *The New Enclosure: The Appropriation of Public Land in Neoliberal Britain* (London: Verso, 2018), 30.
 16. Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).
 17. Robin Jensen, *Infertility: Tracing the History of a Transformative Term* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2016).
 18. Lora Arduser and Amy Koerber, "Splitting Women, Producing Biocitizens, and Vilifying Obamacare in the 2012 Presidential Campaign," *Women's Studies in Communication* 37, no. 2 (2014): 117–37, 128. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2014.914115>.
 19. Karen Tumulty "Opinion: Manchin Warns that Biden's Agenda would Create an 'Entitlement Society.' But His State Leads the Way," *Washington Post*, October 26, 2021. Accessed December 22, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/10/26/manchin-warns-that-bidens-agenda-would-create-an-entitlement-society-his-state-leads-way/>.
 20. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. entitlement.
 21. Readers of this journal may be familiar with another fold of *entitlement*: Kenneth Burke's concept of referring to words as abbreviated titles of things. Notably, Burke also connects entitlement to hierarchy. See Burke, "What Are the Signs of What?: A Theory of 'Entitlement,'" *Anthropological Linguistics* (1962): 1–23.
 22. Allison Rowland, *Zoetropes and the Politics of Humanhood* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2020).
 23. Recent rhetoric or communication scholars using the term *male entitlement* include: Amanda M. Friz and Marissa L. Fernholz, "The Male Gaze in the Medical Classroom: Proximity, Objectivity, and Objectification in 'The Pornographic Anatomy Book,'" *Women's Studies in Communication* 43, no. 3 (2020): 292–316; Kristen Hoerl, "The Impossible Woman and Sexist Realism on NBC's *Parks and Recreation*," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 107, no. 4 (2021): 373–97; Meg Tully, "'Clear Eyes, Full Hearts, Don't Rape': Subverting Postfeminist Logics on *Inside Amy Schumer*," *Women's Studies in Communication* 40, no. 4 (2017): 339–58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2017.1368763>.
 24. Critical rhetoric or communication scholars using the term *white entitlement* include: Wendy S. Hesford, "Reading the Signs: Performative White Allyship," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 107, no. 2 (2021): 239–44; Loius M. Maraj, "What's in a Game? Wake Working (Fantasy) Football's Anti-Black Temporalities," *Women's Studies in Communication* 43, no. 4 (2020): 400–13; and Ersula J. Ore, "Conspiring Against White Pleasures," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 107, no. 2 (2021): 250–3.
 25. Jacqueline Rose, *On Violence and on Violence Against Women* (London: Faber & Faber, 2021), 3–5.
 26. Rachel Kalish and Michael Kimmel, "Suicide by Mass Murder: Masculinity, Aggrieved Entitlement and Rampage School Shootings," *Health Sociology Review* 19, no. 4 (2010): 451–64, 454. doi.org/10.5172/hesr.2010.19.4.451.
 27. Kate Manne, *Entitled: How Male Privilege Hurts Women* (New York: Crown, 2020), 186.
 28. Manne, *Entitled*, 186.

29. Kate Manne, *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 63.
30. Manne, *Entitled*, 7.
31. Manne, *Down Girl*, 130.
32. Manne, *Down Girl*, 130.
33. Paul Elliott Johnson, "The Art of Masculine Victimhood: Donald Trump's Demagoguery," *Women's Studies in Communication* 40, no. 3, 2017: 229–50; Casey Ryan Kelly, *Apocalypse Man: The Death Drive and the Rhetoric of White Masculine Victimhood* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2020).
34. Stephanie L. Hartzell, "Whiteness Feels Good Here: Interrogating White Nationalist Rhetoric on Stormfront," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 17, no. 2 (2020): 1–20.
35. Tan Hoang Nguyen, *A View from the Bottom: Asian American Masculinity and Sexual Representation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 4.
36. Calvin R. Coker, "From Exemptions to Censorship: Religious Liberty and Victimhood in *Obergefell v. Hodges*," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 15, no. 1 (2018): 35–52. doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2018.1424918; Kelly, *Apocalypse Man*; Jennifer Marie Rome, "Blogging Wounded Masculinity: Negotiating Hegemonic Masculinity and the Crisis of the Male (In)fertile Body," *Women's Studies in Communication* 44, no. 1 (2020), doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2020.1752342.
37. "Reddit: A Beginner's Guide," <https://mashable.com/archive/reddit-for-beginners>.
38. Caitlin Ring Carlson and Luc S. Cousineau, "Are You Sure You Want to View This Community? Exploring the Ethics of Reddit's Quarantine Practice," *Journal of Media Ethics* (2020): 1–12. doi.org/10.1080/23736992.2020.1819285; Adrienne Massanari, "#Gamergate and The Fapping: How Reddit's Algorithm, Governance, and Culture Support Toxic Technocultures," *New Media & Society* 19, no. 3 (2017): 329–46. doi.org/10.1177/1461444815608807.
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50. Acknowledging that the relations between affect, feelings, and emotions are unsettled, I follow Chris Ingraham's distinctions: If feelings have an internal, biographical character and emotions have an external, social character, then affect is the "processual pooling up of intensity that potentiates the innumerable ways, flailing and wincing, we might feel and emote our way into the world." Because affect is prior to and foundational for emotions, I refer to affective entitlement claims as an encompassing umbrella term for rhetorics expressing an expectation of deservingness to other people's emotionally (and therefore affectively) charged responses. See Ingraham, *Gestures of Concern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020), 40.
51. As a measure of self-protection, I choose not to reproduce the pseudonyms of specific users or link directly to a specific user's post. Throughout the essay, quotations have been lightly edited for readability and remaining errors are not signaled with *sic*. See Callum Jones, Verity Trott, and Scott Wright, "Sluts and Soyboys: MGTOW and the Production of Misogynistic Online Harassment," *New Media & Society* 22, no. 10 (2019). doi.org/10.1177/1461444819887141.
52. To be fair, there are a small minority of men on SDP who claim that their penis is so small that they *cannot* engage in the biomechanics of penis-in-vagina intercourse as typically imagined.
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71. For space consideration, I have not pursued discussing the entitlement to sex, though it appears regularly in SDP as well as the manosphere and incel cultures more broadly. See Amia Srinivasan, "Does anyone have the right to sex?" *London Review of Books* 40, no. 6 (2018).
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