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"BOYS WHO HATE GIRLS, WHO HATE BOYS, WHO HATE GIRLS"

A Quantitative Exploration of the Relationship Between Misogyny, Socio-Political Outlook, and Support for Violence in Europe

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Introduction

While the volume of scholarship addressing both violent and non–violent extremism has grown substantially over the last 20 years, much of the contemporary research base focuses on two – highly distinctive – risks: jihadism and right-wing extremism. Despite the low number of attacks and fatalities linked to both, and the unlikelihood of terrorists effecting major change in Western societies (Mueller, 2005), the volume and febrility of news coverage around these risks ensures that we perceive them as "ubiquitous and permanent" threats that must be understood and then acted upon (Jore, 2020). As research funding (and thus, research effort) tends to track political priorities, and these generally reflect media interests (Schmid, Forest, & Lowe, 2021), the focus of academic "extremism studies" has become a foregone conclusion. Simply put, research focussing on alternate sources of risk is largely neglected, and has remained a cottage industry.

Recent developments have, however, highlighted the need to guard against such a narrow research agenda. The pandemic and post-2016 political instability have seen the number – and diversity – of extremist risks multiply, with new conspiracy theories such as QAnon (Enders et al., 2021), and COVID anti–vax paranoia (Hotez, 2020), joining anti–5G groups (Pantucci, 2021), resurgent eco and environmental organisations (Richardson, 2020), animal rights activists (McAlister & Monaghan, 2020), the far–left (Allington, McAndrew, & Hirsh, 2019), and non-Islamic religious groups (Littler, 2020) to create a complex and confusing milieu. Violence against politicians, institutions, and infrastructure has become, if not common, then less unexpected, while the corrosive power of non–violent extremist discourse has been widely recognised in the aftermath of the US Capitol attacks of January 2021.

It is against this backdrop that the rise of so-called *Involuntary Celibacy* (or Incel) extremism should be understood. While gender-based and misogynistic extremism had received comparably

little attention in the scholarship on extremism, recent years have seen a boom in scholarly attention, with Google scholar reporting over 1,000 papers in the last five years. While this is still a minute proportion of the overall academic output on extremism, it is a welcome change given both the relatively recent emergence of a recognisable Incel ideology and the fact that there have now been several high-profile acts of violent extremism attributed to this ideology.

Despite this, it remains the case that comparably little is known about the socio-political drivers of misogyny and Incel extremism, and there is little reliable empirical evidence to support the identification of pathways into violence for individuals associated with extreme misogyny. This chapter is an attempt to speak to these gaps and contribute to the ongoing debate about the causes of misogynistic extremism and its relationship with violence. It proceeds by first contextualising the spread and scale of extreme misogyny in online communities, before considering the evidence on the spread of misogynistic views in the broader population, the strength of the relationship between misogyny and support for political violence, and the demographics of those who hold these extreme positions. It will then present the findings of a series of analyses undertaken exploring the link between socio-political traits and misogynistic attitudes, and between misogynistic attitudes and support for political violence using quantitative data from the most recent wave of the European Values Study (EVS). The final section will present a discussion of these results in the context of existing scholarship and policy responses.

Understanding Contemporary Misogyny

Technological advancements, particularly the advent of the internet and social media, have provided new means of communication that have rapidly impacted upon the social and political landscape. This has facilitated many positive developments, but it has also increased the opportunities for abuse, victimisation, and hatred, including online misogyny (Yar, 2012). While the internet was originally expected to create a space where free speech and equality could prosper (Barlow, 2019), it has become clear that gender inequality offline has permeated online contexts (Bartlett et al., 2014). Women and girls regularly face forms of online abuse, particularly on platforms where content is largely user-generated (End Violence Against Women, 2013; Franks, 2011), with message boards, social media platforms, and blogs all being found to contain significant volumes of misogynistic content (Jane, 2017).

Bartlett et al.'s (2014) research examining misogynistic Twitter posts in the UK found that in just a three-week period, the word "rape" was used 100,000 times and that in 12% of cases it was employed in a threatening way. Terminology, which is also often used to judge, humiliate, and police women's behaviour (Dines, 2010) (such as the terms "slut" and "whore") was found to have been used 131,000 times, with 18% of posts being characterised as misogynistic. However, it is not unreasonable to assume that this is a gross underestimate given the limitations of the research and the exclusion of images (Bartlett et al., 2014). Indeed, Jane's (2017, p. 3) work goes further, suggesting that rape threats have become a:

> … lingua franca – the "go-to" response for men who disagree with what a woman says, who dislike the way a woman looks, who are unhappy with the response to the unsolicited "dick pics" they keep sending … Misogyny, in short, has gone viral.

This response, it is argued, reflects the historical treatment of women offline, and explains why women form the overwhelming majority of those attacked online as well as underscores why they are attacked more severely and in more violently sexualised ways (Jane, 2017, p. 10; Marganski, 2018, p. 19).

Moreover, the architecture of the internet has facilitated and amplified misogyny through the development of "echo chambers" (Powell et al., 2018) and "filter bubbles" (Rowland, 2011). The former argues that the development of spaces in which people share the same views results in those views being legitimised and reinforced, while the latter sees the filtering out of alternative or conflicting viewpoints through algorithmisation. As a result, on platforms where harmful ideologies are shared, users can rapidly become immersed in extreme narratives as they engage with an increasing number of people sharing the same views. This creates a disconnect from information that could counteract harmful views and behaviours, in this context providing spaces that allow for the development and intensification of misogynistic views (End Violence Against Women, 2013; Franks, 2011). While this is evident across a wide number of online groups, it is perhaps most notable in so-called "Incel" forums, which have proven potential for radicalisation into extremism (Hoffman et al., 2020).

A Brief History of Incels

Research identifies the origin of the term Incel as *Alana's Involuntary Celibacy Project*, an online community formed in the early 1990s to explore and discuss difficulties around establishing and maintaining sexual relationships (Kelly & Aunspach, 2020). However, while providing the terminology used to frame contemporary misogynistic extremism, this early incarnation of the Incel community bore none of the hallmarks of contemporary misogynistic extremism. Indeed, its metastasisation appears to have taken place in the following decades as online communities migrated to social platforms including 4chan and Reddit. In these more lightly regulated spaces, contributions became increasingly dominated by participants perceiving themselves as victims of an unfair society dominated by women and a small group of attractive or wealthy men (Cottee, 2020). It is against this backdrop that Incel discourse began to adopt a more overtly anti-feminist character.

Radicalisation in the Incel Community

While the extremity of the language employed in the Incel community has doubtless increased, it is worth remembering that the phenomenon remains almost exclusively non-violent, it is therefore not appropriate to speak of Incels as being a violent extremist organisation. While it is true that there have been acts of violence perpetrated by Incel figures (e.g. Alek Minassian) that explicitly referenced Incel communities online, and there has been evidence that some (e.g. Jake Davidson) expressed misogynistic views online and were active within virtual Incel communities prior to their attacks (Weaver & Morris, 2021), the vast majority of online participants appear non-violent. Moreover, there is no evidence of a specific group emerging that actively organises Incel violence, and it is difficult to speak of the dispersed group of individuals as a formal organisation (Cottee, 2020). Nevertheless, the literature on radicalisation can provide useful insight into the process by which individuals come to internalise the Incel worldview.

Discussions on radicalisation generally discuss an organisation that is specifically seeking to recruit new members through spreading extremist propaganda (Doosje et al., 2016). Moreover, theories of radicalisation tend to predict a group membership phase in the process where an individual participates in ideological learning within a structured environment (Moghaddam, 2005). In the case of Incels, there are no active groups dedicated to the promotion of a political agenda. If such groups do exist, they are yet to make a noticeable impact. It is more appropriate to think of Incels as participating in a loosely affiliated online community that can nonetheless have a radicalising effect on its members. This idea is explored in the work of Brzuszkiewicz

who draws upon the concept of a *radical milieu* to frame how Incels interact on online forums, noting that they provide spaces for support and legitimisation of male grievances against women without necessarily causing radicalisation or instigating violence.

While it is difficult to capture accurately how many people are part of the Incel community, we can gather pieces of information that offer some insight. For instance, before the Incel community was banned from the Reddit forum spaces in 2017, it is estimated that around 40,000 participants were linked with Incel discussion boards (Solon, 2017). As mainstream online spaces have become more effective at tackling misogynistic discussion groups, the Incel community has largely moved underground, communicating on encrypted spaces such as Telegram, or in darker corners of the deep web (Rogers, 2020). This has made it harder to get a sense of how many people currently populate the Incel community. However, certain existing Incel forums have conducted research on their members and shared the information so that we might get a sense of the group demography.

Moderators at an Incel site named Incel.co released information about its contributors in 2020. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the vast majority of contributors were men aged 18–30 years. Within this age category, more members were towards the younger end of the spectrum with 36% of respondents aged between 20 and 22 years (Anti-Defamation League, 2020, para 9). Around 55% self-identified as Caucasian, with a wide-ranging blend of other racial or ethnic identities split across the remaining 45% (Anti-Defamation League, 2020, para, 11). Most respondents came from Europe or North America though there was a truly global blend of different nationalities within the sample. The survey also asked respondents questions about their sense of personal mental health. An overwhelming majority reported feelings of unhappiness, with 88% stating that they regularly felt unhappiness or depression (Anti-Defamation League, 2020, para 21). This is a significant issue for the Incel community with the majority of those involved seeing the community as a support network for depressed and potentially suicidal individuals (Daly et al., 2021).

Similarly, research on the Incel community highlights a strong sense of loneliness and social disconnection that is shared by its members. Cottee (2020) provides a useful insight into this particular crossover of toxic misery in his suggestion that "Incels attribute their misery to two twin-evils: sexual frustration and loneliness" (p. 97). Sugiura (2021) who has provided one of the most in-depth and comprehensive pieces of research into Incel culture describes a group of young men who are not only marked by a sense of sexual failure but have also struggled to build any meaningful attachments in life. Similarly, Menzie's (2020) research captures a sense in which Incels feel deprived of "socio-sexual capital" which pertains not just to a lack of sexual opportunity, but also to other forms of important social capital. This connects with broader literature on extremism that emphasises the importance of a perceived lack of social capital to the adoption of radical ideas (see Putnam, 2000; Schafer et al., 2014; Kaakinen et al., 2018). This is an important point because while the vast majority of Incels participate in these communities to seek support for their loneliness, once they become active in these forums they are exposed to a selection of potentially extreme ideas. The next section of this overview will draw upon existing research to enable us to highlight the broad outlines of the concepts and narratives associated with the Incel community.

Incel Ideology

A common theme among Incel discussions is based on the rejection of feminism. In this sense, the Incel community mirrors other societal groups who reject feminist ideas and yearn for what they see as a more natural patriarchal social order (Kelly et al., 2020). Similar to many

other extremist groups, Incels commonly idealise a semi-mythical past in which their group was dominant or possessed a greater share of societal power (Saucier et al., 2009). Research on Incel ideas commonly highlights a tendency to depict women as inferior to men and nefarious in their intentions (Fowler, 2021). While Incels feel a sense of particular grievance toward perceptions of feminine power, they also argue that all men are emasculated by the effects of a female-dominated "sexual marketplace" (O' Malley et al., 2020). There are certain areas of crossover between Incel views and those of extreme right-wing movements. For instance, both groups reject feminism; both see the world in terms of a genetic hierarchy; both perceive themselves as victims of a prevailing culture of political correctness; both tend to inhabit unfiltered online spaces in which radical views are discussed and alternative views are removed through the banning of dissenting voices (Glace et al., 2021).

For loosely affiliated online communities such as those inhabited by Incels, it is difficult to establish a coherent ideological core that ties together its various members. Similarly, it is difficult to determine the extent to which those associated with these groups take these ideas seriously. However, there is sufficient research that has focussed upon Incel forums for us to sketch the common ideological narratives that are used by "group members" to make sense of their world and their place within it. Brzuszkiewicz (2020) identifies three core areas of discussion that serve to tie together the ideological narratives of the Incel milieu: self-perception and identity; gender relations and misogyny; and the futility of being kind to women (p. 5). This sense of self-perception can be broadly described as a state in which Incels perceive themselves as victims of an unfair social hierarchy. In this reading of the situation, they determine that their personal traits make them unsuitable for participation in sexual relationships with women. With regard to discussions of gender relationships, Incels frequently invoke anti-feminist narratives to explain their victimhood in the face of changing social trends. This leads to an idolisation of the pre-feminist era and the advocacy of measures such as arranged marriages to ensure that sexual activity is more equally distributed. Finally, Incels perceive women as inherently drawn towards promiscuity with certain types of men in a way that automatically excludes themselves from relationships regardless of how they treat women. This leads to the conclusion that treating women with respect and kindness is effectively a waste of time, as it will not lead to an outcome of sexual gratification (Chang, 2020).

Another important area of Incel discourse is their invocation of ideas such as the blue pill, the red pill, and the black pill. Incel message boards share this terminology with other online communities such as the alt-right and conspiracy theorists suggesting a potential overlap between these groupings (Kelly, 2017). To explore this particular ideological formulation in greater depth, it is useful to draw upon the work of Ging (2019). Ging notes that the concept of the 'red pill' has carried across the different parts of the 'manosphere.' Her work notes the origins of the pill narrative in the 1999 movie *The Matrix*. In this movie, human beings are being effectively farmed by an alien civilisation and are maintained in a dream-like state. Certain humans who are still conscious manage to infiltrate the dreams of the exploited in order to wake them and enable them to perceive reality as it truly is. Those in the dream are then offered the choice to take a blue pill that will allow them to continue to sleep or to take a red pill that will wake them from their slumber but they will be forced to engage with a nightmarish reality.

This idea has been translated by men's rights groups and other travellers of the manosphere to explain their perception of a reality in which men are subjugated by women. Broadly speaking, those men who are 'blue pilled' are deemed to be unaware of the dominant position that women hold in society. They are blissfully ignorant of the effects of feminist ideas upon the status and agency of men. Those who perceive themselves as being aware of this power struggle and the subjugation of men refer to themselves as being 'red pilled' or having 'taken the red pill'

(Ging, 2019). These men claim that conceptions of male dominance are a lie stemming from a feminist conspiracy to oppress men without their knowledge (Bates, 2021).

Those who adopt the red pill outlook in this context will often seek to find ways to navigate this perceived reality through strategies such as "looks maxing." This means that to be successful in a sexual marketplace dominated by females, men must adapt to meet the unfair standards that have been set by women (Tranchese & Sugiura, 2021). However, Incel forums have tended to focus upon the idea of becoming "black pilled" which is to suggest that certain men are genetically unable to participate in relationships with women due to personal characteristics that cannot be modified (Preston et al., 2021).

The black pill approach argues that there is no point in seeking to attract female attention and leads to either a defeatist positioning strategy or a fundamental societal change. Those who adopt the defeatist position will advocate coping mechanisms or possibly suicide as a response to their perceived inferior status (Baele et al., 2019). Others who advocate for societal change may put forward ideas based on potentially violent activity to tackle what they see as female domination in the sexual sphere. This is largely a response underpinned by the hatred of "normies" or non-Incels who are often labelled "Chads", "Stacys", or "Beckys". For those who have taken the black pill, "Chads" are considered to be attractive men who selfishly dominate the sexual marketplace, further reducing the chances of sexual success for Incels. "Stacys" are the most attractive women who seek out relationships with Chads, whilst "Beckys" are those women who can attract sexual partners despite the fact they are less conventionally attractive (Bates, 2021). Ultimately, this argument states that women dominate the sexual market because almost all women (regardless of attractiveness) can engage in sexual activity whilst less attractive men are not afforded the same opportunity, leading Incels to make claims of sexual oppression.

It is the black pill approach that has most often been considered as a driver of extreme belief systems within the Incel movement. While much of this terminology is new and the means by which they are spread are dependent on modern technological information sharing platforms, much of the core of Incel rhetoric ultimately derives from a rejection of feminist ideals and, in this sense, shares a common core with older varieties of misogynistic thinking. As such, it is useful for us to consider how these communities discuss feminist principles and the perceived effects of feminism on society and men.

While the views that have been discussed here represent the most extreme strata of misogynistic thinking in the Incel community, there is still a relatively limited body of research that seeks to understand the broader relationship between misogyny and extremism. Focusing upon the Incel community enables us to tease out the ideas espoused by a hard-core minority group so that we might use this information to support a deductive approach to data analysis. It is in this area that this chapter makes a novel contribution through drawing upon data collated in a mass survey exercise to investigate the connection between these schools of thought. Do those who reject the principles of female equality also tend to embrace ideas about changing society through potentially violent means? Also, what are the wider social markers that we might associate with those who hold sexist or misogynistic views? For this purpose, we will move to consider data gathered by the EVS to provide insight into these questions. The following section will outline the particular methodological approach that was taken to conduct this investigation.

Method

To test the two core research questions, the analysis employed quantitative data from the fifth wave of the EVS. Prior to analysis, an approximation of a latent construct – misogynistic attitudes – was formed for use as dependent and independent variable using eight items from

the EVS exploring women's roles in society. The details of this process are outlined below. A measure of support for political violence was also formed by dichotomising a 10-point scale of support for political violence around its central point.

Analysis exploring the first research area – the relationship between social and political attitudes and the holding of misogynistic attitudes – utilised linear regression with the misogynistic attitudes factor as dependent variable, alongside independent variables measuring key social, attitudinal, and political traits identified from the existing literature. Analysis exploring the second research area – the relationship between misogynistic attitudes and support for violence – utilised logistic regression with the binary measure of support for violence as dependent variable, and the factor approximating misogynistic attitudes as independent variable alongside control covariates for age, gender, education level, and social status.

Factor Analysis

Quartimax rotated principal axis factoring was used to construct a factor approximating misogynistic attitudes. Forced extraction was utilised to ensure all components loaded onto a single factor which had an Eigenvalue of 4.314. Outputs were stored as a simple regression coefficient. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test of sampling adequacy returned a result of .881, while the Bartlett test of sphericity was highly significant, suggesting that it was appropriate to use this approach with the data (χ^2 (36) = 168941.317, $p <$ .001). Details of the component loadings are reproduced in Table 3.1.

The component loadings indicate that this factor adequately proxies the latent construct, misogynistic attitudes, with respondents receiving a higher score likely to hold more extreme positions than those receiving lower scores.

Results

In order to explore the first question – identifying which social and political traits predict misogynistic attitudes – a series of linear regression models were run using the factor approximating misogynistic attitude as dependent variable alongside dichotomous control measures for age, gender, marital status, and post-secondary education. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 3.2.

In a bare model including only controls, all measures were all found to be highly significant predictors of misogynistic attitudes, with older, less educated, married, and male respondents

Table 3.1 Misogynistic attitude factor component loadings

Component	Loading
The child suffers with a working mother	.620
Women really want home and children	.664
Family life suffers when woman has a full-time job	.788
A man's job is to earn money; a woman's is to look after home and family	.730
Men make better political leaders than women	.614
University education is more important for a boy than for a girl	.712
Men make better business executives than women	.653
The child suffers with a working mother	-.271

Source: Author's own analysis/tabulation.

Table 3.2 Base Linear Regression Model

	B	SE B	β
(Constant)	–.175	.015	
Age	.005	.000	.087****
Male	.205	.009	.109****
Married	.073	.009	.039****
Post–Secondary Education	–.354	.009	–.189****

*$p < .1$, **$p < .05$, ***$p < .01$, ****$p < .001$
Source: Author's Own Analysis/Tabulation.

Table 3.3 Social and political predictors of misogyny

	B	SE B	β
Happiness	–.184	.007	–.129***
Social Trust	–.427	.009	–.217***
Control	–.050	.002	–.112***
Life Satisfaction	–.084	.002	–.184***
Right–Wing Political Positioning	.056	.002	.138***
Authoritarianism	.312	.004	.348***
Membership of a Religious Organisation	–.276	.011	–.115***
Membership of a Cultural Activity Group	–.374	.013	–.130***
Membership of a Trade Union	–.453	.012	–.165***
Membership of a Political Party	–.139	.019	–.033***
Membership of an Animal Rights Group	–.432	.017	–.115***
Membership of a Professional Association	–.424	.016	–.122***
Membership of a Sports or Recreation Group	–.460	.011	–.193***
Membership of Charitable or Humanitarian Groups	–.465	.014	–.148***
Membership of a Self-help or Mutual Aid Group	–.185	.023	–.036***

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$
Source: Author's own analysis/tabulation.

significantly more likely to report high scores for misogynistic attitudes than younger, female, unmarried, and educated respondents.

In order to explore the research question, 15 social and political trait variables were iteratively added to the model, with the results reported in Table 3.3.

The results of this analysis suggest that involvement in all types of organisations considered exert a negative impact on misogynistic attitudes, with belonging to a religious organisation, membership of self-help and mutual aid groups, charitable and humanitarian groups, sports and recreation groups, professional associations, animal rights groups, political parties, trade unions, and cultural organisations all appearing to reduce the exhibition of misogyny. Both happiness and social trust also correlated with lower levels of misogynistic attitudes, as did life satisfaction and feelings of control. Conversely, holding right-wing political positions and expressing a preference for strong authoritarian leadership were indicators of a tendency towards the holding of misogynistic attitudes.

Table 3.4 Misogynistic attitudes and support for political violence

	B	*SE B*	*OR*
Age	–.008	.001	.992***
Male	.138	.048	1.147**
Married	–.246	.048	.782***
Post–Secondary Education	–.069	.049	.934
Misogynistic Attitudes	.262	.025	1.299***
(Constant)	–2.684	.080	.068***

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Source: Author's own analysis/tabulation.

Analysis exploring the relationship between misogyny and support for violence utilised binary logistic regression with the dichotomised measure of support for political violence as dependent variable, the factor approximating misogynistic attitudes as independent variable, and age, gender, marital status, and post-secondary education as control covariates. Nagelkerke pseudo-R2 and Hosmer-Lemeshow tests were used to assess model performance, with an increase in the former following the addition of the Misogyny factor suggestive of an improvement in predictive power (ΔR^2 = .006), while the non-significant result for the latter ($\chi^2(8)$ = 14,977, p = .060), suggests that observed data did not significantly differ from the predictions of the model. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 3.4.

All items except education (OR = .934, p = .158) were found significant, with increasing age and marriage associated with reduced support for political violence, and male respondents more likely to support political violence. Misogynistic attitudes were found to be a significant predictor of support for political violence, with those reporting higher scores for misogynistic attitudes more likely to express support for political violence than those reporting lower levels of misogyny.

Discussion

There have been several attacks linked to Incel ideology including the killing of six college students in California by Elliot Rodger in 2014 (Scaptura and Boyle, 2020) and the murder of five people by Jake Davison in Plymouth in 2021 (Casciani & De Simone, 2021). It is also estimated that around 50 lives have been lost as a result of Incel violence (Hoffman et al., 2020). Despite this, there remains comparably little academic evidence linking expressions of misogyny and political violence. In validating the existence of a relationship between the two, this paper has provided essential empirical confirmation of existing qualitative and anecdotal evidence. While further work is necessary to offer a more nuanced understanding of the pathways through which individuals come to engage in violence – notably around the other aspects and levels of causation (Bjørgo & Silke, 2018) – its results should be read as consistent with the existence of a relationship, and evidence of the seriousness with which the threat of misogynistic extremism should be understood.

Moreover, our analysis focussed on support for political violence rather than its commission, and while it is true that most Incels engaged in violence speak in support of attacks against women (O'Malley et al., 2020), a very limited number of those who publicly espouse violence are willing to engage in attacks themselves (Scaptura & Boyle, 2020). It is impossible to tell from our results what differentiates these active attackers from more passive inciters which, taken

alongside the evidence on non-coordination by those who engage in Incel violence (Hoffman et al., 2020), may seem to characterise it as a fundamentally stochastic phenomenon.

While both the relationship identified in our analysis and media reports highlighting increases in the levels of support for Incel violence may be seen to reinforce demands for its categorisation as a form of terrorism (Beckett, 2021; Casciani & De Simone, 2021), policymakers should also remember that misogynistic attitudes, especially when they manifest in the growth of extremist groups, are fundamentally problematic. Regardless of our results, extreme misogyny may well play a role in, or help predict, broader forms of violence against women.

In terms of predicting misogyny, our results indicate statistically significant relationships with a number of key social, political, and attitudinal traits. Levels of happiness, control, and satisfaction predicted misogynistic attitudes in our analysis, with rising levels of misogyny characterised by less favourable outcomes on all three measures. Research examining Incel groups has indicated that feelings of depression, isolation, and limited agency are common amongst members of these communities and that online discussions often contain conversations about suicide (Baele et al., 2019; Cottee, 2020). Therefore, it is important to consider how the emotional state of Incel members might influence their perceptions of social issues and tolerance of alternative views. Literature examining the impact of emotional states has demonstrated that emotions have a significant impact on perceptions and decision making, particularly concerning politics (Capelos & Exadaktylos, 2017) and societal groups (Tenenbaum et al., 2018). For example, Tenenbaum et al.'s (2018) experiment examining prejudicial attitudes of 16–21-year-olds found that those participants who were induced with feelings of happiness showed more tolerant attitudes towards asylum seekers compared to those who had been induced with fear as well as the control group. This suggests that happiness, satisfaction, and agency may play a key role in how tolerant we may be of others and/or alternative views. With Incel members displaying feelings of unhappiness, this data, alongside the literature surrounding happiness and tolerance, suggest that the emotional state of Incel members may be a contributing factor to misogynistic attitudes. Happiness was also found to impact upon levels of trust in Dunn and Schweitzer's (2005) experiment, which found that happy participants were significantly more likely to be trusting than sad or angry participants. With Incels displaying particularly low levels of happiness, and the fact that this often manifests as anger toward women (Menzie, 2020), it seems likely that the emotional state of Incel members contributes to their lack of trust in women (Jaki et al., 2020).

The concept of trust also proved to have a significant impact on misogyny with data showing that as generalised social trust decreases, misogyny increases. Whilst Incels are particularly distrusting of women, research on these communities also highlights a lack of trust in the broader male population. Incel ideology is based upon the belief that men are marginalised and subjugated by women in society (Prażmo, 2020). Women are seen to be naturally evil, manipulative, and cruel (O'Malley et al., 2020), and there are grounds to suggest that Incel ideology reinforces positivist ideas stemming from theorists like Lombroso, Ferrero, and Pollak that women's deviancy is a result of biology (Lombroso & Ferrero, 1898; Pollack, 1950). More specifically, Pollack's (1950) explanation of female behaviour is mirrored in Incel discourse. Their sex-based theory centred on the idea that women's crime and deviance was not less common than men's but was hidden by women's biological and social ability to lie, manipulate, and deceive. The biological ability to deceive was argued to centre on the fact that, unlike men, women were able to fake orgasms. As a result of this natural ability to deceive and exploit, women were seen as able to manipulate men into doing their bidding.

Whilst these explanations of women's characteristics and behaviour are widely discredited, when examining Incel ideology it is evident that these beliefs continue to underpin misogynistic

attitudes. For example, Incels believe that females are naturally evil and that women can use their sexuality to manipulate men into doing their bidding (O'Malley et al., 2020). The fact that women are seen to exploit unsuspecting men results in those men becoming untrustworthy due to corruption. This is supported by Incel beliefs that any men who have not taken the black pill are considered 'Chads' or 'Cucks.' Chads are those men who are perceived as sexually dominant and Cucks are unfortunate dupes who are betrayed by women (Menzie, 2020). These men are unaware of the manipulative powers of women and therefore become part of the problem through their adherence to women's rule (Preston et al., 2021). With Incels showing distrust of all women (around half of the population) as well as distrust in those men who are seen to be corrupted, Incels fundamentally lack trust in the vast majority of the population. Therefore, if we compare our findings with these broader themes within the literature on extreme misogyny, it seems unsurprising that there is a connection between low levels of trust and misogynistic attitudes.

Importantly, the data suggest that those who are most active in civil society are least likely to exhibit misogynistic traits. Our findings on membership of professional associations, political parties, religious groups, cultural activity groups, recreational and sporting organisations all suggested that these forms of societal participation mitigated against support for misogynistic ideas. This seems to correspond with research on Incels suggesting that group members struggle not only to establish and maintain sexual relationships but also to connect more generally with the world around them (Cottee, 2020; Menzie, 2020). This might also be explained with reference to the concept of social capital (Putnam, 2000), where low levels of social bonding are seen as a progenitor of a range of negative social outcomes (Murray et al., 2020). The literature on radicalisation highlights that a lack – or perceived lack – of social capital can serve as a catalyst in radicalisation processes (Kanniken et al., 2018) and can diminish political trust, a key determinant of support for violence (Littler, 2017). Taken together, it seems likely that just as social disconnection can facilitate extremist positioning on a range of broader political issues, misogyny is subject to similar pressures.

Finally, the results suggested a relationship between certain types of political views, activities, and the likelihood of misogynistic beliefs. For instance, there was a significant relationship between left/right partisan affiliation and misogyny. Those on the right were more likely to identify with sexist or misogynistic ideas. Other factors included membership of a trade union and the suggestion that participation in these traditionally left-wing bodies meant that respondents were less inclined towards misogyny. Finally, we noted that those who identified with misogynistic ideas were more likely to favour authoritarianism. These factors highlight a general trend suggesting a relationship between the authoritarian right and misogyny. This may not be surprising for a number of reasons. It is commonly recognised that reactionary forces on the right of the political spectrum reject feminist ideals and argue in favour of what they perceive as 'traditional' gender relationships (Kelly & Aunspach, 2020). Looking back to our review of Incel-related research, this may draw us towards the areas of linguistic crossover between the alt-right online and the Incel community, particularly with reference to the use of the 'pill' construction to describe their sense of ideological awakening. This blend between discourses related to misogyny and other forms of extremist thinking forms a deeply concerning relationship that needs to be unpacked with additional research.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided insight into an area of contemporary extremism that is largely non-violent, though deeply problematic in its ideas. Existing research in this area tells us that in

unregulated online spaces views are being shared that espouse radically changing society in ways that are harmful to women. This type of misogynistic discourse has been connected with violent outbursts from lone-wolf terrorists, though the vast majority of those who communicate these views have refrained from the use of violence in pursuit of political goals. Like many of the contributions in this edited volume, we can see the broad outlines of a group of individuals who may not personally engage in violent actions, but who might serve to inspire others to participate in forms of extremist activity.

Our research has discussed the findings of empirical research into misogyny and political extremism. In particular, we have explored the social and political factors that predict misogynistic attitudes and considered whether these ideas correlate with support for political violence. The findings suggest that there is a strong connection between misogynistic views and support for political violence. Furthermore, we have identified a selection of social and political characteristics that are related to misogynistic beliefs. We have identified factors such as a lack of social trust, a tendency towards personal unhappiness, a sense of disconnectedness, and a general trend towards right-wing politics that act as markers for those that hold misogynistic views. Throughout the chapter, we have drawn upon insights from research into the Incel community to guide our analysis. While this literature focuses upon the most extreme varieties of misogyny, it has proven very instructive in helping to make sense of the findings from the EVS research and our specific modelling strategy.

It must be recognised that this contribution raises a selection of important questions that are beyond the scope of this chapter. For instance, we are unable to determine a relationship between the holding of anti-feminist beliefs and support for other forms of violence outside the specifically political sphere. Additionally, while we may observe areas of potential ideational crossover between the alt-right and the Incel community, it would be useful to carry out qualitative research in the online spaces that they inhabit to provide greater clarity on this relationship. This would make a particularly instructive research program for those interested in the spread of extremist ideas in online communities. Ultimately, this is a broad area of research that will continue to grow in the coming decades. Incels have so far had a relatively limited profile in terms of carrying out political violence. However, through cross-fertilisation with other extremist groups, this may change quickly. Furthermore, beyond questions related specifically to violent activity, we need to understand online misogyny better so that we might educate young men and prevent them from being drawn into these harmful echo chambers. Participation in these online spaces not only causes damage to the participants but also has the potential to lead to social division and a widening culture of misogynistic hatred.

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