

**Misogyny and Extremism Across Forums, Podcasts, and Manifestos: A Mixed-Methods  
Study**

by

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## Examining Committee Membership

The following served on the Examining Committee for this thesis. The decision of the Examining Committee is by majority vote.

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## **Author's Declaration**

This thesis consists of material all of which I authored or co-authored: see Statement of Contributions included in the thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

# Statement of Contributions

## Chapter 1

Except where otherwise noted, the introductory chapter is wholly comprised of the dissertation author's original prose and conceptual framing. This chapter was written specifically for the dissertation and has not been prepared for publication.

## Chapter 2

**Padda, K. K. (2025).** Mirror Worlds and Misogyny: A Mixed-Methods Analysis of Incel Discourse Across Mainstream and Alt-Tech Platforms. *New Media & Society*, 21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/146144482513917>

The dissertation author was responsible for all aspects of this research, including conceptualization, data selection, data preprocessing, formal analysis, interpretation, and manuscript drafting. Reddit data were collected by the NetLab, with Tyler Crick (University of Waterloo) providing guidance and assistance in accessing the specific datasets. Dr. James Kim (Lakehead University) facilitated access to the Incels.is dataset through the Cambridge Cybercrime Centre. This chapter appears here in substantially the same form as it was published, with minor editorial revisions for consistency in formatting and style

## Chapter 3

**Padda, K. K., Ruest, N., & MacDonald, S. (under review).** Mic Check for Misogyny: Podcasting, Male Supremacist Masculinities, and the Radicalization of Gendered Violence.

As lead author, the dissertation author was responsible for conceptualization, data selection, methodological design, topic modeling, qualitative discourse analysis, visualization, software development, and manuscript drafting and revision. Co-author Nick Ruest (York University) contributed to data curation, formal analysis, methodology development, and visualization. Co-author Shana MacDonald (University of Waterloo) provided project supervision, interpretive feedback, and editorial support throughout the research and writing process. This chapter appears in the dissertation with minor stylistic modifications and updated references to ensure alignment with the broader thesis.

## Chapter 4

**Padda, K. K.** (under review). *Read Me When I'm Dead: Manifestos and the Gendered Rage Behind Lone-Actor Attacks.*

The dissertation author was responsible for all aspects of this research, including conceptualization, data collection, data preprocessing, formal analysis, interpretation, and manuscript drafting. This chapter appears here in substantially the same form as it was submitted for publication, with minor editorial revisions for consistency in formatting and style.

Portions of this research have been adapted and communicated to broader academic and public audiences through the following publications:

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4. Padda, Karmvir K. (2025). *"La misogynie, leitmotiv des manifestes extrémistes."* The Conversation France.
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## Chapter 5

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Except where otherwise noted, the concluding chapter is wholly comprised of the dissertation author's original prose and conceptual framing. Portions of this chapter that expand on themes of research ethics and researcher safety in the study of online extremism have been submitted for publication. The remainder of the chapter was written specifically for this dissertation and has not been prepared for publication.

## Abstract

Over the past decade, gender-based hate, online harassment, and ideologically motivated violent extremism have increased significantly. Digital platforms have played a central role in this shift, facilitating the large-scale circulation of misogynistic grievance and extremist narratives that increasingly translate into offline harm. This dissertation examines misogynistic discourse across three digital infrastructures: incel forums (across both mainstream and alt-tech platforms), manosphere podcasts, and violent extremist manifestos. While existing research on extremism has often treated these sites in isolation, this study examines how they share overlapping narratives that orient and normalize extremist worldviews. Across these infrastructures, misogynistic narratives collectivize grievance, legitimize violence, and inscribe ideological legacy. The dissertation argues that gender-based bigotry and misogyny function as an ideological glue at the center of these dynamics, underpinning and amplifying other forms of harm and hate, including racism, xenophobia, and anti-authority sentiment.

The first study (Chapter 2) analyzes over 33 million posts from Reddit (r/Incels, r/Braincels, r/IncelExit) and Incels.is to show how incel discourse transforms experiences of despair and rejection into epistemic “truths.” Using topic modeling (BERTopic) alongside qualitative discourse analysis, this study identifies recurring patterns of biologized rejection, misogynistic dehumanization, and glorified violence. Incel ideology is conceptualized as an *affective epistemology*: a system in which emotional pain is converted into ideological belief through repetition, shared resonance, and cross-platform circulation.

The second study (Chapter 3) examines more than 1,800 podcast episodes produced by Andrew Tate, Nick Fuentes, and Gavin McInnes. Through a combination of topic modeling (BERTopic), text classification (misogyny and emotion detection), and qualitative discourse analysis, the study shows how these influencers mainstream subcultural grievances by embedding them in humour, storytelling, and everyday advice. Podcasts function as affective infrastructures that cultivate parasocial intimacy, naturalize patriarchal dominance, and frame grievance as a core masculine identity, thereby normalizing resentment and positioning violence as a legitimate or restorative masculine response.

The third study (Chapter 4) analyzes 100 violent extremist manifestos authored between 1966 and 2025, representing the first largest systematic collection examined to date. The analysis demonstrates that misogyny anchors hybrid or “salad-bar” extremism by providing the emotional and ideological thread linking racism, antisemitism, anti-government sentiment, and anti-LGBTQ+

hostility. Suicidality emerges as a structural feature of gender-motivated attacks, with perpetrators framing self-annihilation as an integral component of their violent performance. Lastly, this chapter argues that manifestos function as batons, where perpetrators cite prior attackers and legitimize violence for future actors.

Overall, this dissertation demonstrates how misogynistic discourse operates across different digital spaces by integrating computational text analysis with qualitative discourse analysis. In doing so, it shows that ideologically motivated violent extremism cannot be fully understood without attending to its gendered foundations. By positioning misogyny as a central force that sustains grievance and connects otherwise distinct extremist ideologies, this research provides an integrated account of gender-based extremism with implications for prevention, policy, and scholarship.

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## Dedication

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background and Context

Over the past five years, hate-based rhetoric targeting women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and people of colour has increased significantly across online platforms (Csanady, 2021; Han & Yin, 2023; ICRW, 2019). In Canada, gender-related hate crimes rose by 26% between 2020 and 2021, two-thirds of which were violent incidents disproportionately targeting women and girls (Government of Canada, 2022). By 2023, hate crimes related to gender identity or expression had increased by 37% from the previous year and have more than doubled since 2020 (Government of Canada, 2025). Globally, far-right terrorism rose by 320% between 2014 and 2019 (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2019).

Digital platforms have played a central role in this rise. More than 7 in 10 young people have been exposed to online hate and violence (Government of Canada, 2024). In Canada, 1 in 5 women reported experiencing online harassment in 2018, and the number of formally reported online crimes more than doubled between 2018 and 2022 (Government of Canada, 2019). These figures reflect only police-reported cases and likely underrepresent actual incidents. Across Europe, online toxicity rose by 30% in 2023, linked to political polarization, weaker platform moderation, and limited legislation on platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) and Meta (Booth, 2025; Fox, 2023; Greene, 2025; Paul, 2023). After the 2024 U.S. presidential election, anti-women phrases such as “your body, my choice” spiked by 4,600% on X within 24 hours (Frances-Wright & Ayad, 2024; Miller-Idriss, 2025). These trends have had real impacts on the everyday lives of women, trans, and gender-diverse people.

These trends take shape through specific online spaces that produce and amplify extremist ideas. Among these infrastructures, incel forums and Reddit communities stand out for their size and persistence. Farrell et al. (2019) analyzed 6 million posts across misogynistic subreddits and showed that hostile and violent language has intensified over time, reinforcing feminist scholarship that the manosphere is becoming more extreme. Ribeiro et al. (2021) documented nearly 29 million posts across manosphere spaces, finding that users migrated toward increasingly extreme communities, including incel and MGTOW forums. Podcasts have likewise emerged as influential spaces of ideological transmission, combining long-form content, accessibility, parasocial intimacy, and algorithmic amplification (Rizwan et al., 2025; Singh, 2024). A recent analysis found that extremists leveraged far-right podcast networks not only to popularize movements like the “alt-right” but also to coordinate real-world violent events, for example, podcast hosts played a role in organizing the deadly 2017 “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville (Gais, 2021; Lowell, 2023). A related development is the growing presence of extremist manifestos, public declarations in written, audio, or video form that articulate extremist worldviews, justify violence, and function as propaganda for future attackers (Ebner et al., 2022; Ganor, 2002; Kaldor, 2021; Kupper & Meloy, 2021). These extremist manifestos operate within a self-referential, cross-platform and transnational network where perpetrators frequently cite and glorify previous attackers, creating intergenerational and transnational networks of extremist narratives and tactical knowledge (Wood, 2022).

These digital practices are not confined to the internet; they have tangible consequences in everyday life. A growing body of research links online hostility to offline violence. Flood and Pease (2009) demonstrated that men and boys who absorb misogynistic attitudes are more likely to enact violence against women. A systematic review of online hate research confirmed strong connections between anti-gender sentiment circulating on the internet and incidents of offline violence, particularly against women and sexual and gender minorities (Backe et al., 2018).

Research on online extremist communities further shows that such spaces normalize grievance expression and violent justifications, creating ideological pathways that facilitate the translation of online hostility into real-world harm (Scrivens et al., 2023). Longitudinal analyses of incel forums similarly demonstrate that sustained participation, especially by highly active users, reinforces misogynistic narratives and escalatory discourse, increasing the likelihood that online beliefs are carried into offline contexts (Helm et al., 2025). The migration of rhetoric into everyday settings is especially visible in schools, where phrases like “your body, my choice,” have been chanted by boys at girls in classrooms, prompting parents and students to report these incidents on social media (Frances-Wright & Ayad, 2024). This pattern is also evident in the 2018 Toronto van attack, where the perpetrator’s participation in incel forums reinforced his grievances and contributed to his violence (Baele et al., 2021; Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019; Chan, 2023; Salojärvi et al., 2020).

Canadian authorities have long recognized radicalization and extremism as significant threats to national security (Public Safety Canada, 2024). Canadian and international security agencies increasingly describe such incidents under the umbrella of Ideologically Motivated Violent Extremism (IMVE). Since 2014, individuals motivated by extremist ideologies have killed 26 people and wounded 40 more on Canadian soil – making IMVE the deadliest form of violent extremism in the country (CSIS, 2021, 2022). In the United States, the threat is even more pronounced: since 1990, far-right extremists have committed 227 fatal attacks resulting in over 520 deaths, compared to 42 far-left attacks with 78 fatalities (Chermak et al., 2010; Duran, 2021). Both Canadian and U.S. authorities have identified mass casualty attacks driven by hateful ideologies, especially white supremacy, as the leading domestic terrorism threat (Beirich & Via, 2022; CSIS, 2024). Within this landscape, male supremacy is often sidelined in both scholarship and public discourse, treated as incidental rather than foundational. Recent cases including the 2014 Isla Vista killings, the 2018 Toronto van attack, and the 2023 University of Waterloo stabbing demonstrate that gendered hate is itself a primary ideological driver, one that intersects with and

reinforces other extremist worldviews (Baele et al., 2021; Baker, 2025; S. Miller, 2024; K. K. Padda, 2025; Witt, 2020). Misogyny functions as a binding glue across extremist ideologies, linking racism, antisemitism, ethnonationalism, and anti-LGBTQ+ hatred (DiBranco, 2020; Johnston & Meger, 2022; Pruden et al., 2022).

Extremist discourse today often emerges through everyday digital practices: posting in forums, listening to influencers, circulating memes, or writing manifestos. These practices may seem fragmented, but together they create cycles in which despair becomes collective grievance, grievance becomes ideology, ideology becomes justification for violence, and violence becomes legacy. However, research on these dynamics remains compartmentalized. Scholars of the manosphere study misogynistic grievance cultures in incel and men's rights communities (Czerwinsky, 2024; Ging, 2019; Hoffman et al., 2020; Perliger et al., 2023). Media studies scholars document the "alternative influence network," showing how influencers normalize extremist ideas through relatability and humour (Gais, 2021; H. Lewis, 2019; R. Lewis, 2018; K. Padda, MacDonald, et al., Forthcoming). Terrorism studies scholars analyze small number of lone-actor manifestos to understand individual motivations and tactical justifications (Berger, 2022; Ebner et al., 2022; Ware, 2020). Each field offers valuable insights, yet scholarship rarely integrates these strands. As a result, we overlook how forums, podcasts, and manifestos rely on similar language, emotions, and ways of justifying harm that can contribute to radicalization and violent extremism. This dissertation addresses this gap by examining how shared grievances, emotional tones, and justificatory narratives recur across platforms.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

From the beginning, this doctoral project was guided by a simple question: how do radicalization and extremism unfold in a digital age? This concern shaped the design of the dissertation and led to the following research questions:

1. How does the discourse on online forums, manosphere podcasts, and violent extremist manifestos shape and reinforce grievance and extremist ideas?
2. How does misogyny appear and operate within extremist discourse across different digital platforms and contexts?

These questions guide the three empirical studies that make up the dissertation. They are intentionally broad, focusing on how extremist discourse and affect circulate across digital spaces rather than on identifying a single pathway into extremism. To address these questions, the dissertation uses a mixed-methods approach that combines computational text analysis with qualitative discourse analysis to examine patterns and meanings across large-scale digital data.

## **1.3 Defining Key Terms**

### **1.3.1 Ideologically Motivated Violent Extremism: Contemporary Extremism**

The terminology used to describe contemporary extremism remains contested. Governments and scholars employ overlapping but not always interchangeable frameworks. Within academic research on the radical and far right, terms such as *radical right*, *far right*, *right-wing extremism*, and *alt-right* are frequently used interchangeably, despite their different genealogies and political contexts (ADL-Fighting Hate for Good, 2021; Dur-e-Aden, 2024; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2021). This lack of clarity reflects the fluid nature of extremist movements, particularly in digital spaces where ideas circulate rapidly and recombine.

Despite these differences, *right-wing extremism* is commonly understood to include several themes. These include nationalism grounded in racism or xenophobia; the belief that the state is illegitimate or controlled by hostile elites; and a desire to preserve an imagined “heritage” or “homeland” perceived to be under threat (Bureau, 2018; KC et al., 2021). In the Canadian context, Perry et al. (2022) define right-wing extremism as:

A loose reactionary movement, characterized by a racially, ethnically, and sexually defined nationalism. This nationalism is often framed in terms of white power and is grounded in xenophobic and exclusionary understandings of the perceived threats posed by such groups as non-whites, Jews, immigrants, homosexuals, and feminists. As a pawn of the Jews, the state is perceived to be an illegitimate power serving the interests of all but the white man. To this end, extremists are willing to assume a defensive stance in the interests of “preserving” their heritage and their “homeland” (pp. 7-8).

At the same time, the breadth and overlap of these ideological elements highlight the limitations of rigid “left” and “right” classifications, particularly within contemporary policy and security contexts. Because of ongoing definitional challenges and the political sensitivities associated with ideological labeling, Canadian government agencies have adopted the broader term *Ideologically Motivated Violent Extremism* (IMVE). Similar frameworks are used in countries such as Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. These approaches are intended to capture a wide range of ideological grievances without disproportionately stigmatizing particular communities (Delaney, 2022).

According to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), individuals motivated by IMVE are not driven by a single, coherent ideology. Instead, they draw on personalized combinations of beliefs, grievances, and narratives. These worldviews are shaped through books, videos, online forums, social media, and other digital networks, and are defined by a willingness to incite, justify, or mobilize violence. For this reason, this dissertation uses IMVE as an umbrella term to describe contemporary forms of extremism. Importantly, individuals may act alone and without direct ties to formal organizations, while still being deeply influenced by online ecosystems that normalize and encourage violence (CSIS, 2024).

To operationalize IMVE, CSIS identifies four subcategories, each reflecting distinct but overlapping ideological drivers:

1. **Xenophobic violence:** defined as “the fear or hatred of what is perceived to be foreign, different or strange, which leads to racially-motivated violence” (traditionally referred to in the Canadian context as “white supremacy” or “neo-Nazism”)
2. **Anti-authority violence:** defined as “the opposition to, or rejection of, the authority of the State which leads to anti-Government and violence against law enforcement” (e.g., anarchist violence, law enforcement violence).
3. **Gender-driven violence** defined as “the hatred of those of a different gender and or sexual orientation which can lead to violent misogyny” (e.g., violent misogyny, incel, anti-LGBTQ violence).
4. **Other grievance-driven violence:** defined as “ideologically motivated violent extremists act without a clear affiliation to an organized group or external guidance. They are nevertheless shaped by the echo chambers of online hate that normalize and advocate violence” (CSIS, 2020, p. 13).

IMVE exists alongside two related categories used by Canadian and international agencies: Religiously Motivated Violent Extremism (RMVE) and Politically Motivated Violent Extremism (PMVE). RMVE refers to ideologies that frame violence as a spiritual or moral struggle, often promising divine reward (CSIS, 2020, p. 11). PMVE includes ideologies that advocate violence to establish or transform political systems, typically focused on governance, sovereignty, or self-determination rather than racial supremacy (CSIS, 2020, p. 11).

While these categories are analytically distinct, in practice they frequently overlap. For instance, Al-Qaeda and ISIS are formally classified as RMVE because of their theological framing,

yet their goals are also political, including territorial control, governance, and social regulation. Similarly, many of the extremist manifestos analyzed in this research span multiple categories. Texts classified as IMVE frequently contain elements associated with RMVE and PMVE as well. This overlap highlights a central point of this dissertation: violent extremism rarely emerges from a single ideology. Instead, it develops through intersecting belief systems, political aims, and emotional commitments that sustain and legitimize violence. Building on this understanding, this dissertation approaches IMVE not as a single belief system, but as a constellation of ideological and affective drivers.

### **1.3.2 Patriarchy, Sexism and Misogyny**

Critical masculinity studies and criminology illuminate how misogyny is enacted and defended through violence. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity describes how dominant forms of masculinity valorize aggression, control, and heterosexual conquest, making violence culturally available as a way of "doing" masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Messerschmidt further argues that crime itself can function as a performance of masculinity, a means of asserting dominance when other forms of power feel inaccessible. Subsequent research shows how patriarchal ideologies normalize male violence, from domestic abuse to mass attacks, by framing it as a natural or understandable expression of manhood (Heilman & Barker, 2018; Miller, 2024). Kimmel's (2013) concept of "aggrieved entitlement" sharpens this analysis by identifying the rage men experience when they believe they have been denied status, recognition, or power they feel entitled to. Kalish and Kimmel (2010) demonstrate how this sense of lost entitlement frequently appears in mass violence, where perpetrators frame their actions as efforts to restore authority and reclaim dominance.

Patriarchy provides the structural context in which misogyny operates. It is a gendered system of power that grants men disproportionate access to authority, resources, and social

legitimacy, while subordinating women and some other men through social, economic, and political relations (Miller-Idriss, 2025). Patriarchal systems rely on rigid gender binaries framed as natural or biologically determined, assigning traits, capacities, and social roles based on sex and obscuring the role of socialization and institutions in producing inequality. Power is central to this system, as patriarchal hierarchies regulate behaviour through law, policy, and social norms, socializing men toward dominance, emotional control, and aggression, and women toward deference, caregiving, and emotional labour. Patriarchy is sustained through two interrelated mechanisms: sexism and misogyny. Sexism provides the beliefs that justify gender hierarchy by framing women as inherently less capable or suited to authority and is closely tied to patriarchal traditionalism, which positions women as wives, mothers, and caregivers and men as natural leaders (Miller-Idriss, 2025).

Misogyny, however, plays a different and more forceful role, particularly in contexts where violence is justified or mobilized. Following Manne (2017), misogyny functions as the “law enforcement branch” of patriarchy: the set of practices that punish, discipline, and control women who violate gendered expectations. Feminist scholars have emphasized that misogyny is not an individual pathology but a structural process. bell hooks (1984) situates misogyny within what she terms “white supremacist capitalist patriarchy” (p.51), highlighting how gender domination operates alongside racism and economic inequality as part of a broader system of power. Miller-Idriss (2025) extends this point, arguing that misogynistic regulation also operates through everyday practices – policing women’s appearance, discrediting survivors of sexual violence. These practices function to reinforce gender norms and reassert male authority. Research also shows that misogyny functions as a connective mechanism across extremist ideologies. Scholars demonstrate that gender hierarchy provides a shared framework linking racism, antisemitism, ethnonationalism, and anti-LGBTQ+ hostility (DiBranco, 2020; Johnston & Meger, 2022; Pruden et al., 2022). Thus, while CSIS identifies violent misogyny as one form of gender-driven violence,

I argue that misogyny functions as a central driver of IMVE, linking otherwise distinct worldviews and helping to legitimize violence across different infrastructures.

For clarity, this dissertation sometimes uses the term misogyny on its own, though it should be understood as encompassing a broader range of gender-based harms aimed at defending patriarchal order. The chapters that follow also use the terms male supremacism, toxic masculinity, and misogynist incels. Male supremacism refers to belief systems that assert male superiority as natural and justify the subordination of women and LGBTQ+ people. The term misogynist incels refers specifically to incel communities that adopt male supremacist frameworks, dehumanize women, and frame access to women as a form of entitlement (Czerwinsky, 2024; Miller-Idriss, 2025).

### **1.3.3 Digital Infrastructures and Digital Radicalization**

In this dissertation, digital infrastructures refer to the networked systems through which emotions, narratives, and ideologies circulate online, shaping how individuals come to understand themselves and others. These include platforms such as forums, social media, podcasts, video-sharing sites, and alternative technologies, as well as the algorithmic and social dynamics that organize participation within them. Drawing on affect theory, this concept is used to describe how emotions such as resentment, humiliation, and anger become attached to particular figures and communities, producing shared identities and political attachments (Ahmed, 2014).

Digital radicalization refers to the process through which grievances and ideologies are spread, reinforced, and normalized over time. Rather than a single moment of recruitment, digital radicalization is understood here as a gradual process through which online discourse, platform affordances, and repeated exposure to grievance-based narratives make extremist worldviews appear legitimate and acceptable. Research shows that influencer ecosystems, networked misogyny, and platform migration following deplatforming all contribute to this process by

amplifying hostile content and sustaining communities that reject moderation (R. Lewis, 2018; Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Ribeiro et al., 2021; Rogers, 2020).

#### **1.4 Methodological Innovation**

Studying extremist discourse across forums, podcasts, and manifestos presents major methodological challenges. The volume of the materials is enormous and best understood as big data: tens of millions of forum posts (both mainstream and alt-tech platforms), thousands of manosphere podcast episodes, and more than 2.85 million words of manifesto text. This scale makes close qualitative reading alone impossible. At the same time, extremist communication relies heavily on emotion, irony, and cultural cues, which means computational tools alone risk oversimplifying or misreading meaning.

To address this challenge, this dissertation uses a mixed-method research design that combines big data analysis with feminist and criminological discourse analysis. Following Nelson's (2020) concept of Computational Grounded Theory, I treat computational models as scaffolding for interpretive analysis rather than as definitive endpoints. The models identify broad patterns across large-scale textual data, and I then examine these patterns through qualitative analysis. This approach allows scale and nuance to work together rather than in opposition.

This dissertation also contributes new tools and resources. I use BERTopic, a transformer-based topic modeling approach, to cluster semantically related text segments and generate interpretable thematic structures (Grootendorst, 2022). In the podcast study (Chapter 3), I combine topic modeling with text classification models that detect emotions and misogyny at the sentence level (Attanasio et al., 2022; Hartmann, 2022; Ruest & Padda, 2025). Feminist discourse analysis and critical criminology guide the interpretation of these outputs, allowing me to identify rhetorical strategies such as irony, euphemism, and paternalism, that automated models often miss.

The dissertation's most significant methodological contribution is the creation of the first comprehensive violent extremist manifesto database spanning 1966 to 2025. This database includes full manifesto text along with detailed metadata on perpetrators, attack characteristics, social media activity, ideological framing, judicial outcomes, and other contextual factors. By enabling comparative and longitudinal analysis across large datasets, this resource moves beyond the small number of high-profile cases that dominate existing research. These innovations demonstrate how computational and qualitative approaches can be combined to study violent extremism in ways that are rigorous, theoretically grounded, and attentive to the gendered and emotional structures that sustain it.

### **1.5 Research Arc and Story**

This dissertation advances its argument through three interconnected empirical studies, each presented as a stand-alone, peer-reviewed article. The order of the studies is one way of narrating the analysis, though not the only possible one. Regardless of the point of entry, these digital spaces are shown to be mutually reinforcing, transforming affect into ideology and ideology into action.

The abstracts that follow provide concise summaries of the scope, methods, and key findings of each study. Each empirical chapter also begins with a short reflective preface that explains how the study fits into the larger argument of the dissertation. The dissertation ends with a synthesis chapter that brings together findings from all three studies and discusses their theoretical, methodological, and policy implications.

### **1.5.1 Paper One: Mirror Worlds and Misogyny: A Mixed-Methods Analysis of Incel Discourse Across Mainstream and Alt-Tech Platforms**

This paper analyzes incel discourse as both an affective and ideological system across mainstream and alt-tech platforms, specifically Reddit and Incels.is. Drawing on a Computational Grounded Theory approach, I combine BERTopic modeling with qualitative thematic discourse analysis to examine how incel communities convert despair, humiliation, and rage into epistemic claims about gender, power and justice. The analysis identifies three recurring formations: biologized rejection, the “foid” logic, and glorified violence, which persist across platforms despite stark differences in moderation and visibility. Building on Naomi Klein’s theory of the Mirror World, I argue that alt-tech spaces do not invent new ideologies but stabilize, intensify, and ritualize misogynistic extremism. Incel discourse is not merely descriptive; it is productive, ontologizing emotional pain and transforming grievance into knowledge through repetition, resonance, and digital infrastructures. Conceptualized as an affective epistemology, this system shows how misogyny is foundational, making violence feel not only imaginable but morally justified.

### **1.5.2 Paper Two: Mic Check for Misogyny: Podcasting, Male Supremacist Masculinities, and the Radicalization of Gendered Violence**

This paper examines how podcasting functions as cultural infrastructure for constructing and normalizing male supremacist masculinities. Drawing on a mixed-method analysis of over 1,800 podcast episodes from Andrew Tate, Nick Fuentes, and Gavin McInnes, we show how these influencers blend toxic masculine ideals with grievance politics, affective manipulation, and ideological radicalization. Male supremacist masculinities emerge through three linked formations: naturalization of patriarchal dominance, framing of grievance as masculine identity, and escalation of grievance into calls for violence. Using topic modeling and text classification, alongside qualitative thematic discourse analysis, the study demonstrates how digital media

amplifies anger, resentment, and humiliation, transforming these into political tools. Rather than relying solely on overt hate speech, these podcasters often embed gendered hierarchies into everyday talk, humor, and narratives of embattlement, producing emotional infrastructures that normalize violence and exclusion. The findings situate podcasting as central to contemporary gendered extremism and digital radicalization.

### **1.5.3 Paper Three: Read Me When I'm Dead: Manifestos and the Gendered Rage Behind Lone-Actor Attacks**

This article examines violent extremist manifestos as critical infrastructure of lone-actor violence. Drawing on a dataset of 100 manifestos authored between 1966 and 2025, the study combines BERTopic modeling with qualitative discourse analysis to map the ideological, affective, and tactical functions of these texts. The findings highlight three patterns. First, misogyny acts as a primary gateway to violent extremism. It provides the logic that binds racism, antisemitism, anti-government beliefs, and conspiracy thinking into a single narrative of grievance. Second, manifestos reveal how “salad bar” extremism operates. Lone actors actively assemble hybrid worldviews, held together not by doctrinal coherence but by shared emotions such as anger, humiliation, and resentment. In these composites, misogyny anchors both the emotional force and explanatory meaning of violence. Third, gender-driven manifestos embed suicidality into their narratives, framing self-annihilation as the ultimate act of agency. Manifestos function as ideological batons, tactical manuals, and emotional scripts that circulate across extremist ecosystems. Recognizing misogyny and male supremacy as strategic ideological threats is essential for understanding contemporary extremist violence and for developing prevention strategies that address the gendered infrastructures sustaining it.

## 1.6 Positionality

When I began my doctoral research back in 2021, I did not intend to write a project about gender. I was drawn to violent extremism more broadly: lone actors, ideological violence, the puzzle of radicalization in decentralized networks. But as I sifted through decades of extremist manifestos, thousands of podcast hours, and countless posts across both mainstream and alt-tech platforms, misogyny kept surfacing everywhere, becoming a core ideological element and gateway to extremism. Seeing this made me rethink how discourse spreads across online spaces and leads to radicalization and violent extremism.

This recognition shaped everything that followed, making the project both intellectual and personal. As a first-generation, racialized woman scholar, I could not overlook how the discourses I analyzed connected with broader structures of power that I, too, live within. Misogyny was never just “out there” on extremist corners of the internet; it was familiar, banal, and woven into everyday norms. The discourse I studied made these dynamics more explicit, but it also revealed how deeply they draw from cultural scripts already circulating in mainstream society. This dissertation is my way of tracing those connections and making visible the infrastructures that bind extremism to the everyday. Across the chapters of this dissertation, I show how misogynistic discourse drives radicalization by shaping the emotional and ideological forces that make violence seem thinkable, justified, and repeatable.

As a feminist and critical criminology scholar, my research is informed by a commitment to examining how systems of power, particularly gendered and racialized hierarchies, shape violence and extremism. I do not approach extremist discourse from a position of neutrality. Instead, I take a critical stance that recognizes misogyny, racism, and other forms of hate as structural forces with real material consequences. At the same time, I acknowledge that my own standpoint – as a racialized, first-generation scholar – shapes how I encounter and interpret these

texts. This positionality affords both insight and responsibility: insight, because it sensitizes me to how marginalization and exclusion are weaponized by extremist actors; responsibility, because it requires constant reflexivity to ensure that my interpretations are grounded in evidence and do not reproduce the harms embedded in the material. By making my positionality explicit, I aim to be transparent about the lens through which I approach this project and to underscore that critical scholarship on extremism is always situated within broader social and political contexts.

## **1.7 Disclaimer**

This dissertation engages directly with material that is offensive, hateful, and sometimes explicitly violent. This content is unavoidable given the focus of the research. Throughout the project, I have been mindful of not reproducing the harm or visibility that perpetrators often seek. For this reason, I avoid naming perpetrators unless necessary for clarity, context, or analytical precision. When names do appear, they are included solely to support scholarly understanding of extremist communication, not to amplify or legitimize the individuals or ideologies involved.

The inclusion of this material should not be read as endorsement or normalization of extremist views. Rather, it is presented to support critical analysis of the strategies through which extremist actors spread, justify, and normalize violence. The purpose of this work is to advance academic knowledge and inform prevention efforts – not to defend, promote, or glorify the individuals or ideas under study.

## Chapter 2

### Mirror Worlds and Misogyny: A Mixed-Methods Analysis of Incel

#### Discourse Across Mainstream and Alt-Tech Platforms

##### Preface

This paper, published as a single-authored article in the *New Media and Society*, forms the foundation of the dissertation. It examines incel discourse across mainstream and alternative technology (alt-tech) platforms to show how grievance is not simply expressed but actively collectivized and ritualized. In these spaces, personal despair becomes shared knowledge, creating the emotional and epistemic conditions that make later stages of radicalization possible. Beginning with incel forums is intentional: they offer a clear entry point into the wider digital ecosystem of extremist misogyny, capturing the moment when frustration, rejection, and humiliation harden into certainty. Ordinary emotions such as loneliness, anger, and shame are transformed into totalizing worldviews that shape community identity and moral reasoning. This makes incel discourse crucial for understanding misogyny as an anchoring ideology within contemporary extremism.

The persistence of incel discourse across platforms also highlights how digital infrastructures shape radicalization. When Reddit banned major incel subreddits, the community's visibility was disrupted but not the ideology. They quickly rebuilt themselves in alt-tech "mirror worlds," platforms that replicate mainstream designs but operate without moderation. These spaces stabilize and intensify misogynistic narratives, allowing grievances to circulate, grow, and harden. This migration illustrates a central argument of the paper: deplatforming can shift extremist ideologies, but it rarely dismantles them. Instead, these ideas are rearticulated and often amplified in new environments.

This paper introduces the mixed-methods approach that guides the entire dissertation. Using a Computational Grounded Theory (CGT) approach, it combines BERTopic modeling of millions of posts with close qualitative discourse analysis. The dataset includes more than 33 million posts from Reddit communities (r/Incels, r/Braincels, r/IncelExit) and from the alt-tech forum Incels.is, covering 2014 to 2025. This integration of computational and interpretive methods allows both large-scale pattern recognition and deep attention to nuance, affect, and meaning. By demonstrating the potential of this methodological approach, the paper sets a precedent for the analyses that follow in subsequent chapters.

The findings highlight three recurring formations in incel discourse: biologized rejection, in which immutable physical traits are framed as determinants of worth; the “foid” logic, which dehumanizes women through derogatory metaphors and categories; and glorified violence, in which mass killings are reframed as aspirational or righteous acts of retribution. These patterns appear across both moderated and unmoderated platforms, showing the resilience of misogynistic grievance and its ability to adapt across digital environments. These patterns show how grievance becomes an affective epistemology – repeated, ritualized, and treated as truth. By situating incel discourse in this way, the paper establishes how misogyny becomes emotionally and discursively stabilized, setting the stage for its amplification in podcasts and its inscription into manifestos.

## 2.1 Introduction

The digital reconfiguration of extremist communication has fundamentally transformed the pathways through which ideologies are produced, circulated, and consumed. Today, online platforms, ranging from mainstream social media to decentralized alternative social media (alt-tech forums), act not only as channels for discussion but also as critical infrastructures for the development of new extremist communities. Research on ideologically motivated violent extremism (IMVE) has shown that so-called “lone actors” rarely act in isolation. Instead, they are often embedded in online communities that offer ideological scaffolding, tactical blueprints, and emotional reinforcement (Berger and Morgan, 2015; Carr, 2022; Holzer et al., 2022). This paper focuses on a particularly under-theorized dimension of IMVE: gender-driven violent extremism, with a specific emphasis on incel ideology. Incels, self-identified “involuntary celibates”, advance a worldview grounded in biological essentialism, sexual entitlement, and violent misogyny (Robinson, 2000; Smiler, 2019). Within these communities, gender hierarchies are taken as natural, rejection becomes structural injustice, and violence is framed as morally justified. These discourses have been linked to real-world violence, including the 2014 Isla Vista shootings, the 2018 Toronto van attack, the 2018 Tallahassee yoga studio shooting, and the 2025 attack at Antioch High School in Nashville, Tennessee – events that underscore the tangible consequence of digital radicalization (Anti-Defamation League, 2025; Baele et al., 2021; Ethers, 2018; Margolin and Shapiro, 2025; Salojärvi et al., 2020; Witt, 2020).

Incels are increasingly seen as part of a broader, transnational network of digitally mediated male grievances. Understanding these communities requires close attention to where and how they express themselves. While incel discourse originally flourished on mainstream platforms like Reddit, growing scrutiny and platform bans have driven many users to “alt-tech” spaces such as Incels.is, a forum that explicitly rejects moderation (Copland, 2020; Davis and Chouinard, 2016). Scholars define alt-tech platforms not simply as independent forums,

but as part of an “alternative social media ecology” that emerges in the wake of deplatforming from mainstream sites (Rogers, 2020). These spaces often replicate the architecture of platforms like Reddit or X (formerly Twitter) while explicitly rejecting their governance norms, presenting themselves as sanctuaries for unmoderated speech (Copland, 2020). In this sense, Incels.is exemplifies the alt-tech dynamic: launched within hours of Reddit banning r/Incels in 2017 (Nashrulla, 2019; Ribeiro et al., 2021), it structurally mirrors Reddit’s affordances while positioning itself as a refuge from content moderation. These alt-tech platforms function as what Klein (2023) calls “mirror worlds”: online environments that replicate the design of mainstream platforms while inverting their ethical and epistemic commitments. In such mirrored spaces, expressions of hate are often recast as forms of “truth-telling,” and grievance is moralized justice, a dynamic that emerges not abstractly but through the affordances of anonymity, upvoting, and weak enforcement that entrench this rhetoric.

Equally central to the incel phenomenon is its affective infrastructure. Incel communities operate as emotional publics where individual pain, loneliness, humiliation, and sexual frustration is transformed into collective grievance and shared narratives of victimhood (Ahmed, 2014; Kimmel, 2013; Papacharissi, 2016). As Bosworth (2023) argues, “affective infrastructure” names both the circulation of emotions through systems and the ways infrastructures organize despair into either alienating isolation or collective forms of political subjectivity. These emotions are not peripheral but central to incel identity. What scholars call “dark emotional energy” (Kallio and Törnberg, 2025) becomes a key binding force: despair is not just expressed, but ritualized, providing emotional glue for collective identity and even justification for violence.

In line with recent calls to rethink political communication in the context of “disrupted public spheres” and alt-tech infrastructures (Bennett and Pfetsch, 2018; Rogers, 2020), this paper responds to the conceptual and methodological challenge posed by the rise of alt-tech forums that, as Klein (2023) suggests, operate as a “mirror-world.” I explore how incel discourse persists

and mutates across both mainstream and alt-tech spaces. Reddit and Incels.is, while structurally very similar, differ dramatically in their governance and normative frameworks. Yet the discursive content they host reveals striking continuities in emotional tone and thematic framing, suggesting that extremist gender ideologies are not isolated outliers but deeply embedded within broader networked publics.

While previous research has emphasized incel violence (Hoffman et al., 2020; Van Brunt and Taylor, 2020) and ideology (Baele et al., 2021; Ging, 2019), less attention has been paid to how incel communities emotionally sustain and adapt their beliefs across platforms. This study addresses that gap by examining incel discourse as an affective system, where emotional narratives are not only expressed but used to produce and validate ideological knowledge (Ahmed, 2014; Papacharissi, 2016). Using the Computational Grounded Theory (CGT) approach (Nelson, 2020), I combine BERTopic topic modeling with qualitative thematic discourse analysis. Using data from three Reddit subreddits (r/Incels, r/Braincels, and r/IncelExit) and a leading alt-tech forum (Incels.is), this paper offers a comparative, multi-layered account of how incel discourse circulates, intensifies, and evolves across digital spaces.

## **2.2 Literature Review: Incel Ideology, Platform Ecologies, and Mirror Worlds**

The rise of self-identified incels (“involuntary celibates”) has become a growing concern in both academic and policy spaces. Once dismissed as a fringe internet subculture, incels are now increasingly recognized as a form of IMVE with distinct gender-based dimensions (Carr, 2022; CSIS, 2024; Hoffman et al., 2020). Hoffman et al. (2020) argue that incel violence represents a serious terrorism threat, with perpetrators emboldened by online communities. Van Brunt and Taylor (2020) document more than 50 mass violence events where lone actors demonstrated incel-aligned ideologies, underscoring the need for more in-depth research into this digital phenomenon. At the same time, feminist scholars caution against uncritically applying the

terrorism or IMVE lens. DeCook and Kelly (2022) contend that framing incels primarily as a “terror threat” risks pathologizing the community and obscuring the broader system of male supremacy that underpins their violence. Czerwinsky (2024), in a comprehensive review of incel research, similarly critiques the tendency to homogenize incels as either “oppressors, oppressed, or threats,” noting that this framing can normalize them as a discrete risk category while neglecting their ideological and affective foundations. Taken together, these interventions underscore the need to center misogyny as a structuring ideology rather than treat it as a secondary feature of extremism. My analysis takes up this point by framing incel discourse as an affective epistemology, extending feminist work on affect (Ahmed, 2014; Papacharissi, 2016) to emphasize how emotions are transformed into ideological “truth” across platforms.

Early research reflected this shift by focusing on high-profile perpetrators like Elliot Rodger and Alek Minassian<sup>1</sup>, whose manifestos and violent actions have been canonized in online incel forums as acts of moral retribution (Baele et al., 2021; Bratich and Banet-Weiser, 2019; Salojärvi et al., 2020). These case studies established the symbolic function of violence within incel ideology, but growing scholarship has shifted attention from individual actors to the broader emotional and discursive infrastructures that enable radicalization. Rather than viewing incel grievance as a psychological pathology, recent work emphasizes its collective production through online affective publics – spaces where loneliness, humiliation, and romantic rejection are reframed as evidence of structural injustice and ideological truth (Daly and Laskovtsov, 2021; Moskalenko et al., 2022). This reframing aligns with what Van Brunt and Taylor (2020) call “beta rebellion”: a reactive identity politics rooted in perceived male dispossession. These discourses not only express grievance but actively construct it, often transforming despair into justification for

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<sup>1</sup> While I am cautious about naming specific perpetrators, given the risk of reinforcing the notoriety they often seek, doing so here is necessary given the central role their actions and manifestos play in the symbolic and discursive formations analyzed in this paper.

violence. As incel communities migrate to less regulated platforms, understanding how emotional narratives become durable ideological formations requires rethinking traditional models of online extremism and attention to the sociotechnical conditions that allow such grievance to persist and evolve.

Incel discourse is often situated within the broader “manosphere,” a loosely connected set of online male-supremacist movements, including Men’s Rights Activists (MRAs), pick-up artists (PUAs), and “Men Going Their Own Way” (MGTOW), united by a shared belief in male victimhood and anti-feminist grievance (Perliger et al., 2023). A shared ideological language across these groups is the “pill” metaphor, adapted from *The Matrix*: the redpill claims to reveal harsh truths about female hypergamy and male dispossession, while the blackpill pushes these insights toward epistemic fatalism, framing romantic rejection as biologically inevitable and resistance as delusional “cope” (Anti-Defamation League, 2019; Baele et al., 2021; DeCook and Kelly, 2022; Ging, 2019; Rothermel, 2023). Within blackpill ideology, pain becomes proof: users claim that immutable traits – height, facial symmetry, race – dictate one’s value in the so-called sexual marketplace, and emotional despair is elevated into a framework of totalizing “truth.”

This transformation of suffering into ideological knowledge is central to incel identity and resonates with Kimmel’s (2013) theory of “aggrieved entitlement,” wherein men interpret the erosion of traditional gender privilege not as cultural evolution but as personal dispossession. Within incel spaces, humiliation over perceived sexual failure becomes a potent source of rage, directed primarily at women (“Stacys”) and high-status men (“Chads”). Rather than disrupting this logic, online platforms often reinforce it through echo chambers of despair and resentment. Researchers have argued that incel forums operate as affective feedback loops in which emotional pain is ritualized, affirmed, and ultimately weaponized (Kallio and Törnberg, 2025; Labbaf, 2019; Pelzer et al., 2021). In this sense, the blackpill functions not only as a belief system, but as an affective infrastructure – an affective and digital system that organizes how emotions

are converted into knowledge and circulated, transforming despair into epistemic closure and symbolic justification for violence (Bosworth, 2023).

The migration of incel communities from mainstream platforms like Reddit to alternative spaces such as Incels.is reveals how digital infrastructure shapes the evolution of online extremism. Reddit initially hosted key incel subreddits, including r/Incels and r/Braincels, but began banning them in response to public outcry and violations of content policies. Within hours of Reddit's removal of r/Incels in 2017, users regrouped their community on Incels.is, and quickly surpassed Reddit in both volume and ideological extremity (Nashrulla, 2019; Ribeiro et al., 2021). Unlike Reddit, which enforces platform norms through periodic bans and policy enforcement, Incels.is functions as a digital sanctuary for blackpill ideology, fostering what Ribeiro et al. (2021) describe as a "self-reinforcing enclave" in which violent misogyny is not only tolerated but normalized. However, incel discourse has not disappeared from mainstream platforms altogether. Subreddits like r/IncelExit now serve as recovery-oriented spaces where users attempt to disengage from incel ideology (Burns and Boislard, 2024; Leite-Mendonca and Boislard, 2024), though the underlying emotional lexicon often persists. This cross-platform circulation complicates binary framings of "safe" versus "unsafe" platforms (Ribeiro et al., 2021), suggesting that moderation may suppress content visibility without disrupting its affective infrastructure. In practice, moderation re-routes discourse without dislodging its emotional architecture, which persists and adapts across environments. Thus, the challenge lies not only in how platforms moderate content, but in how incel communities maintain narratives of grievance and identity as they move across digital spaces. Rather than disappearing, these worldviews persist through affective continuity, adapting to new environments while retaining their emotional and ideological core.

Building on Naomi Klein's (2023) *Mirror World* framework, this paper argues that incel discourse persists not in spite of platform differences, but because of structural and affective

continuities across mirrored digital spaces. These alt-tech platforms mimic the technical architecture of mainstream sites, threaded discussions, anonymity, upvote systems, but invert their epistemic and ethical commitments. In these mirrored spaces, hate speech is reframed as truth-telling, victimhood is glorified, and moderation is recast as censorship. Incels.is, for example, mimics some of Reddit's interface functionalities while reorienting its affordances toward ideological insulation. What emerges is not simply a functional clone, but an oppositional infrastructure: a space that performs legitimacy through familiarity while facilitating extremism through inversion, yet one that also complicates Klein's (2023) metaphor. Rather than a pure inversion of mainstream norms, *Incels.is* amplifies misogynistic discourses already present on Reddit, showing how mirror worlds can operate less as opposites than as intensifications of existing logics. This intensification underscores that these platforms are not neutral containers for ideology, but what Massanari (2017: 330) calls "toxic technocultures," where specific affordances, anonymity, persistence, and community self-policing actively shape the production and circulation of extremist worldviews. Incel forums push this further by developing their own pseudo-scientific taxonomies, slang lexicons, rating systems, and internal wikis, what Rothermel (2023: 3) describes as an "alternative gender knowledge system" designed to make misogyny and fatalism appear rational.

Importantly, this infrastructure is not only technical or discursive, but also affective. As Kallio and Törnberg (2025) argue, these are emotional publics, spaces that transform personal despair into collective grievance and ritualize negative affect as ideological certainty. This dynamic is shaped in part by homophily, the networked tendency for individuals to cluster with others who are similar not only in beliefs or identity, but in affective orientation (Chun, 2024; McPherson et al., 2001). In incel forums, similarity is not limited to shared demographics or beliefs; it extends to affective resonance. Users are drawn to communities that mirror not only their beliefs but also their emotional states. Within these mirrored ecosystems, loneliness and humiliation are

not seen as problems to be solved, but as emotional evidence of a broken social order. Violence, in turn, becomes not aberrant but symbolically restorative, a final act that affirms the “truth” of the blackpill worldview.

Incel forums function as emotional knowledge systems, what I term *affective epistemologies*, in which despair, rejection, and rage are not merely expressed but reinterpreted as moral and ideological truth. This framing builds on Ahmed’s (2014) concept of emotional “stickiness” and Papacharissi’s (2016) account of affective publics that circulate feeling as a form of knowledge. Building on this, Bosworth (2023) conceptualizes “affective infrastructure” as having two sides: it names both the technical alienation that estranges individuals from their powers and the political-affective organization that channels emotions into collective forms. In the case of incels, misogyny and despair are not byproducts of ideology; I argue that they are the very materials through which ideological “truth” is constructed. They function simultaneously as ideologies and as affective resources that sustain epistemic closure. Within these infrastructures, feelings circulate collectively, gain authority, and harden into perceived truths. The blackpill thus operates not merely as a fatalistic worldview but as a collaborative system of knowledge production – built through manifestos, memes, pseudo-scientific taxonomies, rituals of despair, and the mythologization of violence (DeCook and Kelly, 2022; Rothermel, 2023). Within this framework, despair becomes doctrine: suffering is not just endured but made epistemologically productive, a means of arriving at ideological “truth.” Incel discourse therefore functions as a system of epistemic closure – one that rewards despair, punishes dissent, and forecloses the possibility of alternative futures.

## **2.3 Methods**

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to examine the discursive production of incel ideology across both mainstream and alt-tech online platforms. It draws on computational and

qualitative techniques to identify latent thematic patterns, emotional tones, and the presence of misogynistic content within incel communities. The analysis is situated within a broader interest in how masculinist subcultures articulate grievance, identity, and power through digital infrastructures.

### **2.3.1 Data Sources and Analytical Approach**

The dataset is comprised of two primary sources: Reddit, a mainstream and moderately governed social media platform, and Incels.is, an alt-tech unmoderated forum (Nashrulla, 2019; Ribeiro et al., 2021). Reddit data was collected and shared by the NetLab<sup>2</sup> at the University of Waterloo, which maintains an archive of platform content. I selected three subreddits, r/Incels, r/Braincels, and r/IncelExit, each representing a distinct timeframe and position within the incel ecosystem – ranging from ideologically extreme communities to those that frame themselves as recovery-oriented or reformist. The dataset includes only original submissions (posts), with the following breakdown:

- r/Incels: 167,802 submissions (January 2014 – November 2017)
- r/Braincels: 468,893 submissions (October 2017 – August 2019)
- r/IncelExit: 83,031 submissions (October 2019 – January 2025)

For each subreddit, I extracted the “title” and “selftext” fields, which together form the full body of user-generated posts. The sampling reflects both platform governance shifts and community adaptation: r/Incels and r/Braincels were removed during Reddit’s moderation sweeps (Nashrulla, 2019; Ribeiro et al., 2021), while r/IncelExit captures later efforts to disengage from incel ideology (Thorburn, 2023a, 2023b). These subreddits were among the most active and influential incel-

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<sup>2</sup> See <https://uwaterloo.ca/networks-lab/>

related communities on Reddit prior to their removal and are frequently cited in both academic literature and media reporting as central hubs for incel discourse (Baele et al., 2021; Burns and Boislard, 2024; De Vettor et al., 2025; Jaki et al., 2019).

The second dataset was drawn from ExtremeBB (Vu et al., 2023: 2), a multi-forum archive maintained by the Cambridge Cybercrime Centre<sup>3</sup>. I focused specifically on data from Incels.is, currently one of the oldest and largest incel forums online, with over 32,444,108 posts (from November 2017 to September 2024). Incels.is was launched within hours of Reddit banning r/Incels in November 2017 and has since evolved into a central hub for incels (Nashrulla, 2019; Ribeiro et al., 2021). At the time of writing this paper, it remains highly active with over 30,000 members. The forum explicitly rejects moderation, enabling the open circulation of violent, misogynistic, and racist content. From Incels.is, I extracted the thread titles and main content fields, which functionally parallel Reddit's title and selftext components. Together, the temporal spread of the Reddit subreddits and the persistence of Incels.is provide a comparative frame for examining how incel ideology endures and adapts across governance regimes and time.

I adopt the framework of the Computational Grounded Theory (CGT) as articulated by Nelson (2020), which integrates unsupervised machine learning with iterative qualitative interpretation. The process begins with unsupervised techniques – namely BERTopic modeling (a transformer-based topic modeling method explained below) – to identify clusters of thematically similar content. These clusters are then qualitatively analyzed through close reading and thematic interpretation. This hybrid approach is especially suited to studies of online extremism, as it allows for pattern detection at scale while preserving sensitivity to nuance, irony, and affect. In this

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<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.cambridgecybercrime.uk/>

project, CGT enables both computational scalability and qualitative sensitivity, helping map how emotionally charged narratives persist within and across platform environments.

### **2.3.2 Data Preprocessing and Topic Modeling**

After constructing the corpus, I conducted a preprocessing phase that included by combining relevant content fields (title and selftext), removing low-information placeholders such as “[deleted]” or “[removed]”, and standardizing whitespace. Each post was then segmented into individual sentences using spaCy’s rule-based Sentencizer (Honnibal and Montani, 2025) allowing for finer-grained analysis of discourse. I then used BERTopic to model thematic structure at the sentence level (Grootendorst, 2022). BERTopic is optimized for short, informal text and uses sentence embeddings generated from the paraphrase-MiniLM-L6-v2 model (Reimers and Gurevych, 2019). Clustering was performed using BERTopic’s default pipeline, which includes dimensionality reduction via UMAP (McInnes et al., 2020) and clustering via HDBSCAN (Campello et al., 2013). This sentence-level modeling approach was chosen to better capture the fragmented and often nonlinear structure of online incel discourse.

I applied BERTopic separately to each dataset to preserve platform-specific dynamics. The model returned a large number of fine-grained topics per platform: 18,139 topics from Incels.is, 2,054 from r/Incels, 5,052 from r/Braincels, and 1,272 from r/IncelExit. Preliminary tests showed that reducing topic counts collapsed meaningful distinctions, particularly between overlapping but ideologically distinct strands, such as gendered insecurity and self-improvement. Thus, to preserve these nuances, I retained the original, fine-grained topic outputs to guide the qualitative coding process.

### 2.3.3 Qualitative Coding and Thematic Interpretation

For qualitative data analysis, I used a thematic discourse analysis to systematically identify patterns across the computational outputs (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). Given the volume of topic outputs (~26,000 topics), I examined the first 700 topic clusters from each dataset and selected those with high ideological salience. For each selected topic, I exported representative sentences and conducted inductive coding to identify broader thematic categories. For example, several topics from r/Incels focused on physical appearance, perceived genetic inferiority, and bodily comparison. These were grouped under the theme *Biologized Rejection* to show how users reframe personal insecurity as biologically determined exclusion. This approach enabled a more layered interpretation of incel discourse, revealing how recurring patterns, such as misogynistic resentment, self-pathologization, and appeals to evolutionary determinism, operate as both identity-making practices and ideological commitments across platforms.

By combining computational topic modeling with interpretive qualitative analysis, this project highlights how digital communities do more than express belief; they co-produce and reinforce ideological systems through repetition, intensification, and affective resonance. Rather than treating incel posts as isolated or reactive, this method treats them as part of a structured and durable worldview. In doing so, the analysis contributes to broader debates in digital extremism, gender studies, and critical discourse research about how online infrastructures shape and stabilize radical belief systems.

## 2.4 Analysis

This section sets the stage for a multi-layered analysis of incel discourse by bridging the outputs of computational topic modeling with qualitative thematic interpretation. Drawing on the framework of CGT, I treat BERTopic not as an endpoint, but as an analytic scaffold that guides the qualitative

interpretation of emotionally and ideologically dense discursive terrain across r/Incels, r/Braincels, r/IncelExit, and Incels.is. The goal is not merely to identify what users discuss, but to understand how discourse becomes emotionally meaningful, ideologically coherent, and infrastructurally persistent. This approach reveals incel discourse as a structured system of affective epistemology, one that constructs truth by transforming emotional pain into ideological knowledge, reinforced through repetition, resonance, and infrastructural circulation.

**Figure 2.1** *Top 20 BERTopic Topic Clusters from r/Incels*

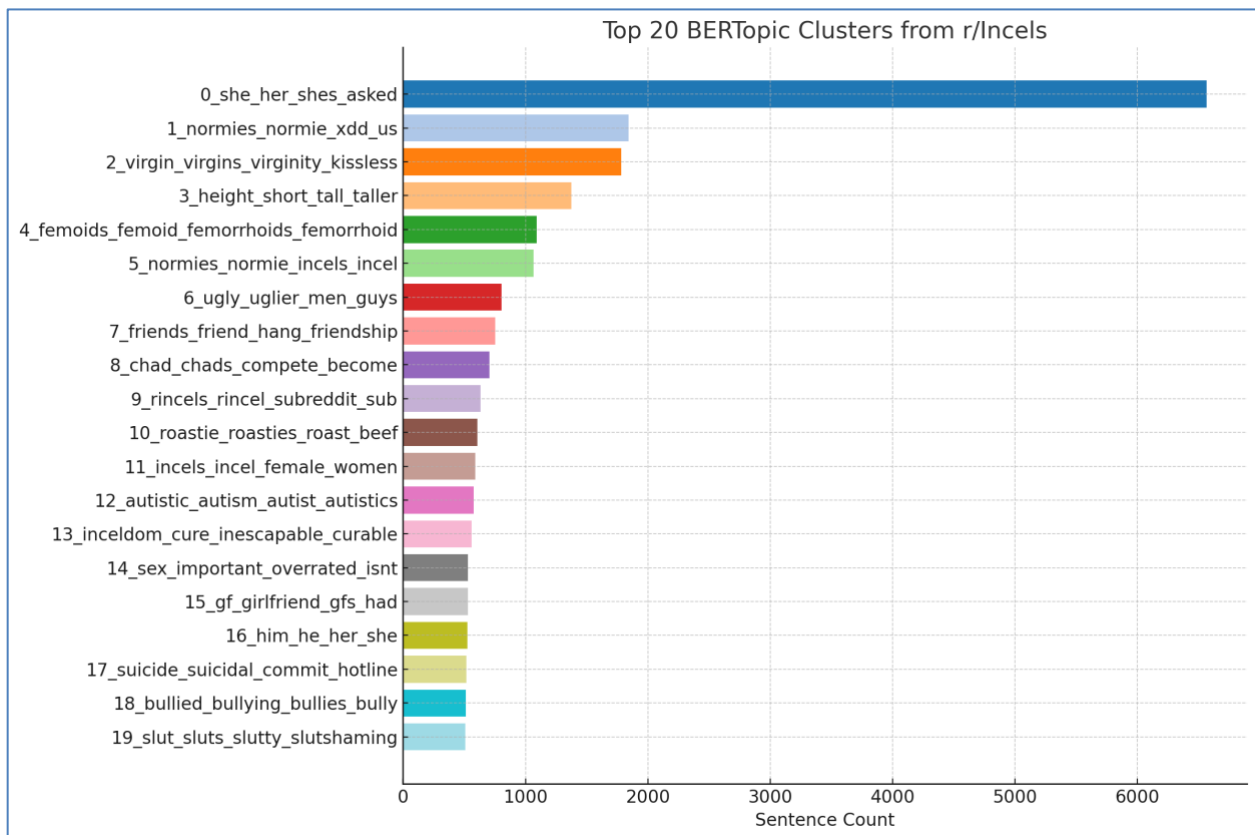
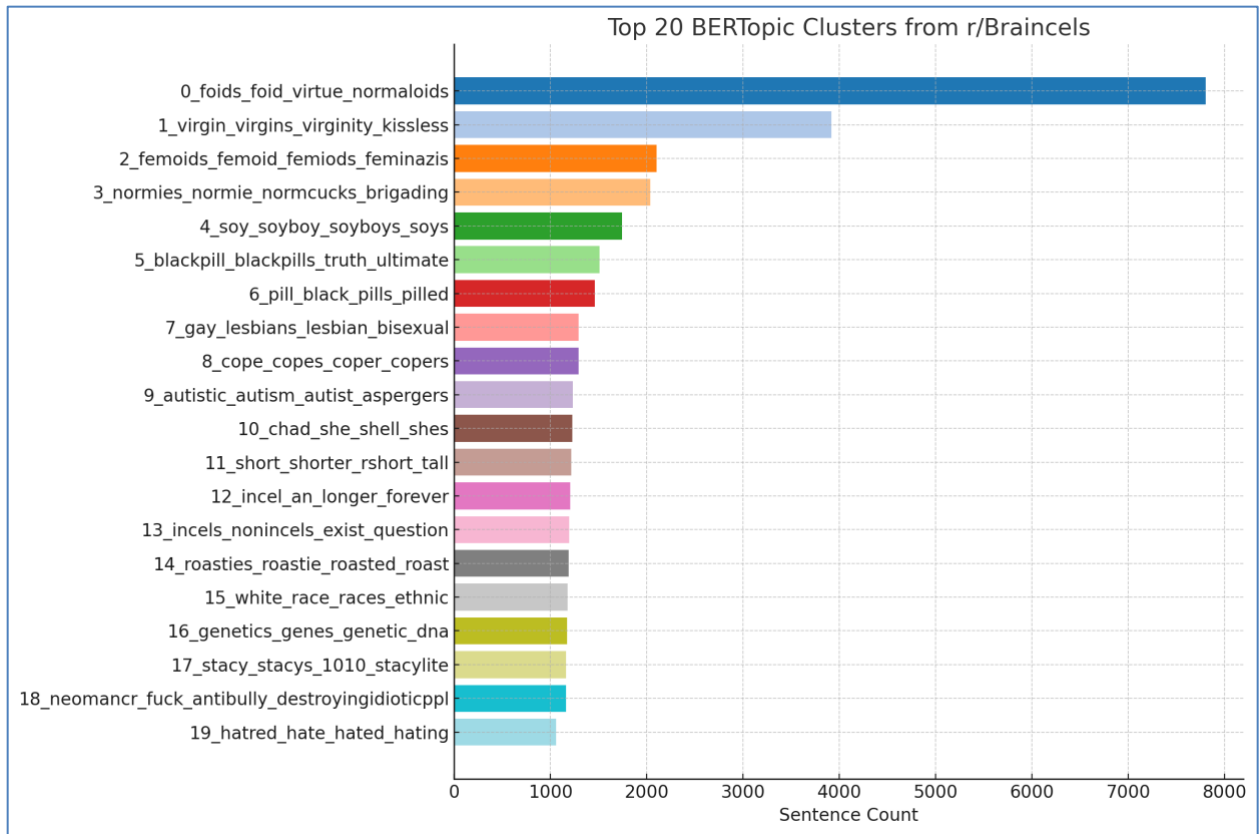
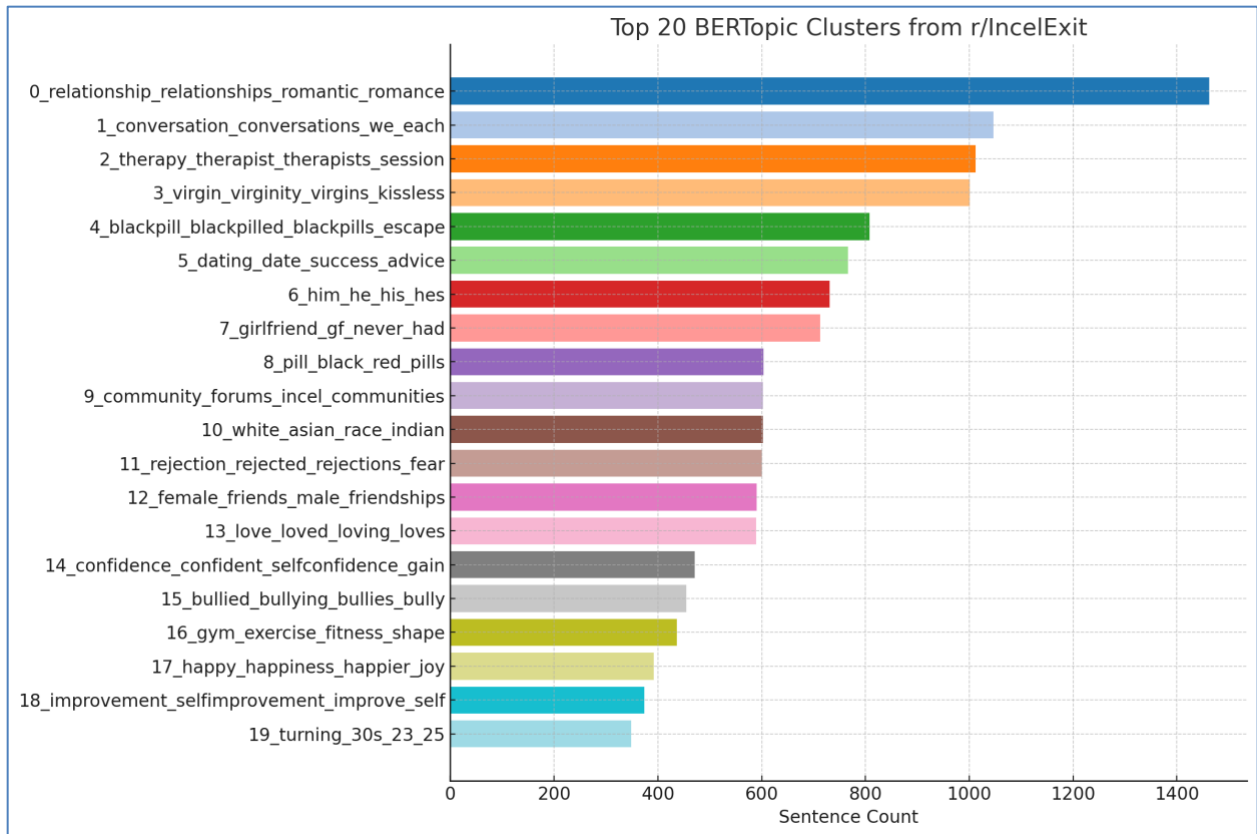


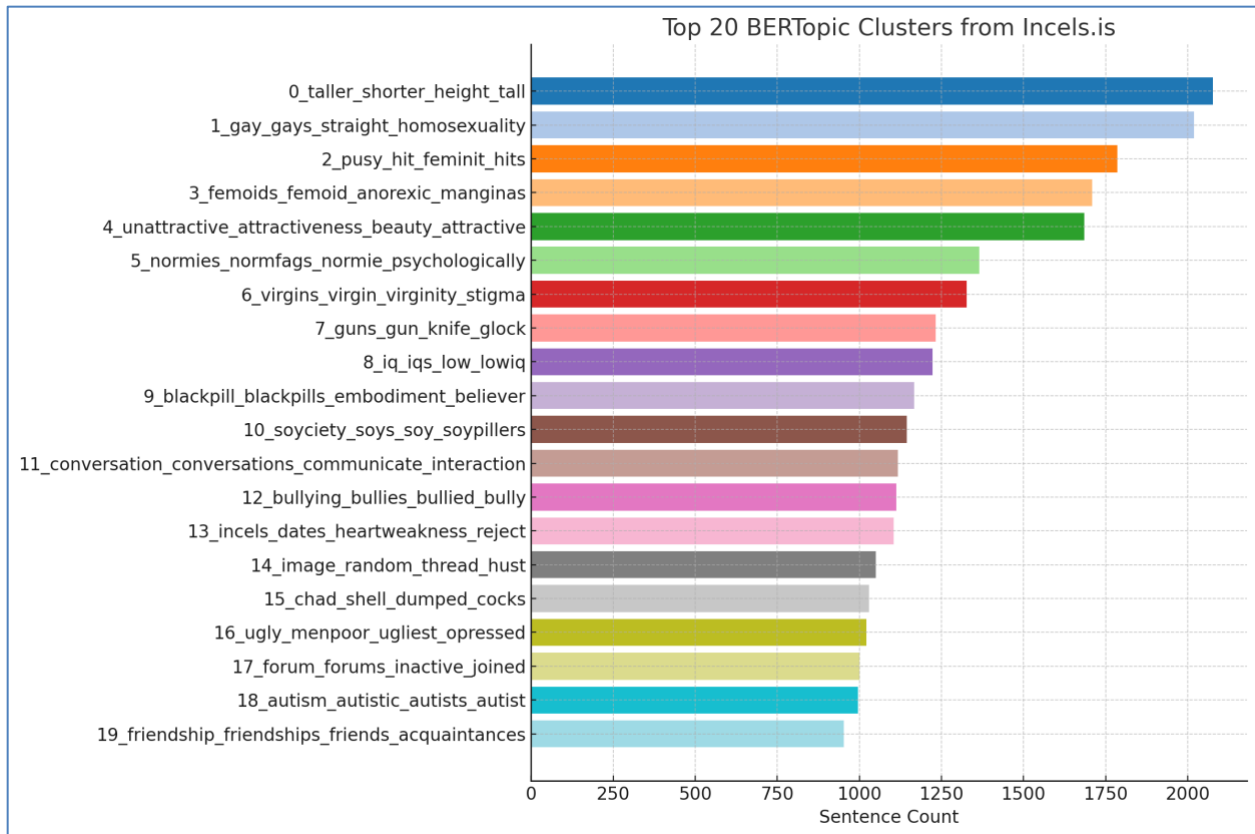
Figure 2.2 Top 20 BERTopic Topic Clusters from r/Braincels



**Figure 2.3** Top 20 BERTopic Topic Clusters from r/IncelExit



**Figure 2.4** *Top 20 BERTopic Topic Clusters from Incels.is*



Figures 2.1-2.4 present the top 20 topic clusters from each dataset. These clusters illuminate both convergence in ideological content and divergence in affective intensity and discursive explicitness. These clusters served as the empirical scaffolding for my qualitative analysis, which identified three recurring discursive formations: (1) biologized rejection, (2) the “Foid” logic, and (3) glorified violence.

### 2.4.1 Biologized Rejection

Across both mainstream (Reddit) and alt-tech (Incels.is) platforms, one of the most consistent patterns is a deep preoccupation with the body, especially with facial structure, height, and other features seen as biologically flawed – often framed through the viral language of “looksmaxxing” and eugenic-style practices like jaw training or mewing (Halpin et al., 2025). These concerns are

not merely aesthetic; they form the backbone of what Rothermel (2023) calls an “alternative gender knowledge system.” Within this system, users construct the body as a site of epistemic failure, where rejection is not accidental but understood as inscribed at birth. In these places, emotional pain is not simply expressed but ontologized, transformed into a fundamental truth about the self, where suffering becomes knowledge and personal rejection is reframed as an objective truth about male dispossession. This aligns with Ahmed’s (2014) theory of emotional “stickiness,” in which affect attaches to bodies and circulates as knowledge. Through this lens, physical features are not just sources of insecurity but are reframed as proof of exclusion, emotional anchors for a wider ideological worldview.

On Reddit, this is clearly expressed in topic clusters like r/Incels’ 0\_she\_her\_she’s\_asked, where users interpret even mundane interaction with women as humiliating, framing these encounters as evidence of systematic neglect and proof of their unworthiness (Figure 2.1). One user writes, *“Females are ashamed of men who are KHV [kissless, hugless, and virgin], because it only shows that you are undesirable to others, so why would she be with you ? She said she was thinking about it, and asked for a photo of me. He sent her one, and she replied with “no thanks”.*” This sense of exclusion deepens across topics 2, 3, and 6 (“virgin\_virgins\_virginity\_kissless,” “height\_short\_tall\_taller,” and “ugly\_uglier\_men\_guys”), where users equate their physical appearance or lack of sexual experience with inborn disqualification from romantic life. They normalize shame and envy, framing rejection as biologically determined and socially justified. As one user puts it:

If we were even the slightest bit more attractive facially, including height and body wise, we would be treasured, given the respect we deserve, women might even see us as the sexual creatures we are, instead of beta eunuchs, yet nature refused us and society betrayed us through deception ... Yet no action is taken against lookism or heightism, nothing can be done, so we are just supposed to accept it and suffer.

Similar rhetoric continues in topic 8\_chad\_chads\_compete\_become, where one user adds, *“Pointless Everytime I try to better my life I remember that it’s pointless because I will never be a Chad ... If you are not chad just LDAR [lie down and rot].”* “Chads” are depicted as biologically superior and sexually dominant (Moonshot, 2020).

In r/Braincels, topic clusters such as 1\_virgin\_virgins\_virginity\_kissless, 11\_short\_shorter\_rshort\_tall, 10\_chad\_she\_shell\_shes, and 16\_genetics\_genes\_genetic\_dna reinforce these themes by naturalizing rejection as the outcome of inherited deficiencies (Figure 2.2). One user writes, *“Inceldom is Like a Prison I am stuck in inceldom, it’s not a physical prison, it’s a societal/genetic prison.”* And *“I’ll never ascend because my eye spacing is too wide,”* while another says, *“Chads have hunter eyes, mine are prey tier [weak, unattractive].”* Here, even minor physical differences are made epistemologically decisive, as biological traits are recast into ontological verdicts that define and legitimize social exclusion.

This discourse persists even in recovery-oriented spaces. In r/IncelExit, topic clusters like 0, 3, 7,11, 16, and 18 (“relationship\_relationships\_romantic\_romance”, “virgin\_virginity\_virgins\_kissless,” “girlfriend\_gf\_never\_had,” “rejection\_rejected\_rejections\_fear,” “gym\_exercise\_fitness\_shape,” and “improvement\_selfimprovement\_improve\_self”) continue to frame rejection as biologically inevitable (Figure 2.3). Sometimes they’re framed as personal struggles to overcome, but often they still carry the same sense of resignation. As one user confesses, *“Even as I type this, my brain automatically says ‘yeah, you could have had that life if your chin wasn’t recessed.’”* This suggests that recovery efforts often remain haunted by the same affective infrastructures they aim to escape. One user asserts, *“With lifting, it’s made me feel like a badass over the 4 years I’ve been doing it, but no difference in my dating life ... I’ve been rejected and dejected my whole life.”* As Kallio and Törnberg (2025) argue, these online communities function as *emotional*

*publics*, not just expressing negative emotion but ritualizing it, embedding it into epistemic systems that are difficult to exit.

On Incels.is, these logics are expressed with heightened intensity and fewer constraints. Clusters such as 0\_taller\_shorter\_height\_tall, 4\_unattractive\_attractiveness\_beauty\_attractive, and 16\_ugly\_menpoor\_ugliest\_opressed frame the male body as a site of immutable failure (Figure 2.4). “*It doesn’t matter how nice you are ... if you don’t mog [outperform physically or socially], you’re trash,*” writes one user. Another adds, “*I’m 5.8 feet tall, taller than most women, but I still get treated like a midget.*” Users articulate this belief in striking terms: “*Your face is your fate*” and “*No gym can fix genetic trash.*” Sexual anatomy also becomes a vector for ideological despair: “*Women are probably just dumb but still looking for larger dick in some way ... and evolution just took its toll after that of making the dicks larger.*” Such fantasies of the “ideal man” function as projections, transforming resentment into *epistemic closure* in which structural injustice is no longer debatable but cast as biological fact. In this recursive system, suffering becomes knowledge, knowledge justifies exclusion, and exclusion reaffirms suffering. It is this loop that sustains incel ideology as both an affective and ideological project, one that persists across platforms not in spite of moderation, but through the durability of its emotional grammar.

These patterns constitute the scaffolding of what I theorize as affective epistemology. Phrases like *LDAR*, *prey-tier* or *low-tier normie*, and *mogging* (Moonshot, 2020) distill complex feelings – shame, envy, hopelessness – into shared codes that circulate easily and reinforce the community’s worldview. These codes function as what Papacharissi (2016) calls affective infrastructures: systems that organize how emotions become knowledge, how despair becomes doctrine. Thus, in this context, *Biologized Rejection* is not just a recurring theme, it is foundational. It provides a framework through which incel users explain their rejection, moralize their suffering, and justify their rage. The phrase “*your face is your fate*” encapsulates the fatalism that defines

this epistemology: the idea that biology determines social value, and that exclusion is not just inevitable, but deserved.

### 2.4.2 The “Foid” Logic

One of the other most disturbing patterns in these platforms is the systematic dehumanization of women. This is not reducible to casual insult; it operates as a systematic vocabulary of dehumanization, stripping women of agency, complexity, and personhood. Across Incels.is, r/Incels, and r/Braincels, women are regularly referred to as “foids,” “roastie”, or “whores.” “Foids” is a shortened version of “femanoid,” a combination of female and humanoid, suggesting that women are not human. “Roastie” is a term used to describe a woman who is sexually active. The slang originates from the idea that a woman’s genitals change shape after having sex, sometimes to resemble roast beef (Moonshot, 2020). As Bratich and Banet-Weiser (2019) argue, such naming practices are foundational to the gendered politics of hate, where the repetition of insult becomes a form of ideological discipline.

Topic clusters 2 and 3 (“pussy\_hit\_feminist\_hits” and “femoids\_femoid\_anorexic\_manginas”) (Figure 2.4) from Incels.is demonstrate how misogynistic slurs are normalized. One user writes: *“Get out of here, roastie.”* Another adds: *“All foids do is lie, cheat, and spread STDs.”* Another user just blames feminism directly: *“Men used to get foids way easier in the 50s before cucked feminism took over.”* Such statements are not idiosyncratic but function as affective tools, designed to recast women as both socially illegitimate and ontologically other. Topic 1\_gay\_gays\_straight\_homosexuality on Incels.is, and topic 7\_gay\_lesbians\_lesbian\_bisexual on r/Braincels reflect a hostile obsession with sexual boundaries, where users disavow anything coded as feminine or queer as a threat to their perceived masculine legitimacy. This intertwines with 4\_soy\_soyboy\_soyboys\_soy on r/Braincels, and 10\_soyciety\_soy\_soy\_soypillers on Incels.is, clusters built around mocking

those seen as emasculated or insufficiently dominant. “Soyboy” here refers to a derogatory label for effeminate or weak men (Iveson and Formato, 2022). Together, these discourses form a tightly policed gender binary that defines misogyny as epistemic clarity where women and feminized men are framed as threats whose existence confirms incel injury.

This language converts grievances into epistemic order by positioning women not as individuals but as a categorical threat. On r/Incels, topic clusters such as 4\_femoids\_femoid\_femorrhoids\_femorrhoid, 10\_roastie\_roasties\_roast\_beef, and 19\_slut\_sluts\_sluttyslutshaming (Figure 2.1) encode this affective turn by associating women with sexual excess, contamination, and deceit. One user, reflecting on past rejection, writes: *“They don’t talk to me unless by some stroke of luck they need something, like that foid who used me and I still havent forgot about, fucking c\*nts.”* Another user asserts, *“Foids are incapable of loyalty. They only care about Chad’s dick.”* In these threads, misogyny is not just expressive, it is explanatory. Hatred functions as a narrative of betrayal and manipulation that transforms male injury into moral truth. This expectation is also weaponized internally, turning misogyny into a test of belonging. As one user on r/Incels writes: *“I want a fellow incel friend who actually hates women ... If you don’t hate women for all the torment they’ve put you through you are not incel you are a fakecel.”* In these spaces, misogyny becomes the affective price of admission, and anyone unwilling to participate risks of being cast out as a fraud or “fakecel.” On Incels.is, the rhetoric turns explicitly violent, breaking past misogynistic insult into grotesque revenge fantasy. One user posts:

Fuck You, You Fucking Bitch! A fucking bitch that rejected me months ago at a pub that I saw again at the same pub that didn’t even recognize me from the time that she rejected me beforehand. I hope she gets hit by a fucking train, fucking cunt ass bitch fucking cunt. ... I hope she gets raped by a Sasquatch. I saw her today and just turned away as she was talking to her friend, then they saw me drawing and asked me about my artwork and

I didn't even bother looking at them, I just said "oh, yeah, you're that bitch that I tried hitting on and destroyed my ego ... "

This is not emotional venting; it is meaning-making that organizes grievance into ideological coherence. These communities are not just angry at women; they have built an entire worldview where that hatred becomes shared truth. Drawing on Ahmed's (2014) concept of the "affective economy," we can see how emotion circulates through posts and attaches to figures like "foids," transforming hatred into a mode of belonging.

Many users openly declare that the only way to fix "foids" is through fear. As one user on Incels.is writes: *"The only way to fix foids is through fear. They were better under patriarchy."* Another declares: *"The Chad-Foid axis is destroying civilization."* And another simply states: *"Okay guys, it's time for me to come clean: I want to brutally kill women."* One particularly disturbing post on Incels.is reflects on the murder of Bianca Devins, a teenage girl killed by a male acquaintance in 2019 (Kleinman, 2019). A user writes:

The bitch basically proves the old saying, if you play with fire you will get burnt ... She went out of her way to get beta male orbiters around her to drive her around and pay for her food and concerts and drugs ... She just wanted to exploit the guy so she could see the concert for free and get free rides while she kisses Chad ... fucking dumb wh\*re got what she wanted, she just didn't believe one of her sims would ever get angry enough over how bad she treated them to kill her.

This is framed as proof of female deceit and male dispossession. At this point, grievance crystallizes into ideology, where misogyny becomes explanation and violence emerges as justified. As Baele et al. (2021) argue, this is no longer just sexist grievance but misogynistic extremism: a coherent belief system that casts women as existential threats renders violence imaginable.

Similar discourses appear in clusters such as 0\_foids\_foid\_virtue\_normaoids and 2\_femoids\_femoid\_femoids\_feminazis on r/Braincels, where women are described as parasitic, unintelligent, and manipulative. These terms are often paired with metaphors like “NPCs” (non-playable characters) or “bugs attracted to status,” evoking women as instinct-driven automatons rather than rational actors. One user asserts: *“They respond to status like bugs to light.”* This highly charged emotional discourse, especially anger, consistently coexists with misogynistic ideology across both moderated and unmoderated communities. In this way, misogyny does not simply describe the world; it fuels a collective emotional infrastructure that helps incel identity cohere. Even r/IncelExit, a subreddit oriented toward recovery, at least nominally, reveals the lingering presence of incel ideology. While overt misogynistic language is less pervasive here than on r/Incels or Incels.is, it has not entirely disappeared. Users occasionally reproduce terms like foid, Chad, and roastie, often in posts marked by ambivalence or self-contradiction. For example, in topic 4\_blackpill\_blackpilled\_blackpills\_escape, one user confesses: *“I have hatred of foids and I’m blackpilled at 16.”* Posts like this suggest that ideological detachment does not necessarily mean affective distance.

Overall, these dynamics show how the *“Foid” Logic* exemplifies affective epistemology: emotional pain is converted into political clarity, where humiliation becomes hatred and grievance is transformed into knowledge. Drawing on Ahmed’s (2014) notion of the “affective economy,” hatred of the foid circulates as shared truth, binding the community affectively and epistemically. As with the incel’s biologization of rejection, the foid logic does not simply describe the world; it builds it, organizing social life around an axis of gendered blame and epistemic certainty.

### **2.4.3 Glorified Violence**

These communities are saturated with despair, humiliation, rage, and hopelessness – emotions that do not merely accompany incel ideology but constitute its structure. Topic clusters

illustrate a discursive terrain in which pain is ritualized. In r/Incels, clusters like 13\_inceldom\_cure\_inescapable\_curable and 17\_suicide\_suicidal\_commit\_hotline frame inceldom as incurable (Figure 2.1). Here, suicide is depicted not as tragedy but as a rational response to rejection. Many of these posts also merge suicide with revenge, fantasizing about “taking others with them,” especially women, collapsing victimhood and vengeance into a single act. This emotional logic is also seen on r/Braincels, where clusters like 19\_hatred\_hate\_hated\_hating and 18\_neomancr\_fuck\_antibully\_destroyingidioticcppl frame revenge as ideological justice (Figure 2.2). Affective extremism reaches its peak on Incels.is, where clusters such as 7\_guns\_gun\_knife\_glock and 13\_incels\_dates\_heartweakness\_reject reinforce a culture of violent fantasy, in which mass shooters are praised, particularly Elliot Rodger, canonized as “Saint ER.”

As one Incels.is user writes: *“We are already dead. Just ghosts walking among normies.”* Another asks: *“Every day is a reminder that I’m biologically destined for rejection. Why shouldn’t I hate them?”* Despair, in this context, becomes a mode of knowledge production. Grievance is transformed into pedagogy, with suffering instructing incels not only in how to feel but in how to recast harm as truth. Those who articulate the darkest truths about their own worthlessness or social exclusion are often affirmed, not comforted. As Kallio and Törnberg (2025) describe, this creates a form of “dark emotional energy,” where shared pain functions as social glue. On r/Braincels, one user pleads, *“I’m about to lose it Brothers please stop me from going ER. I already have a magazined 12g. It’s just too fucking close man. I DON’T WANT TO BE ER.”* Another on r/Incels writes: *“How to commit suicide to bring attention to inceldom? ... Lighting myself on fire in public or streaming it live. At least I’d be remembered.”* In these threads, suicide is reframed as spectacle and legacy, a form of collective instruction that blurs the boundary between suffering and violent retribution.

Within this emotional and ideological infrastructure, violent actors become more than historical figures, they are transformed into saints and martyrs. Across Incels.is, r/Incels, and r/Braincels, Rodger is referred to as “Saint ER” and “ElliotRodgerGod.” One user on Incels.is posts: *“May 23 is Martyr’s Day, bro. I will celebrate that day ... On that day the Supreme Gentleman showed to the sick society ... that Good always wins”* (referring to the 2014 Isla Vista massacre committed by Elliot Rodger). Another adds: *“ER was much more good looking than all the other brutes and losers. Foids’ lives don’t matter.”* Such posts illustrate digital memory work, ritualizing violence as collective truth rather than aberration. Rodger and other similar gender-based violent extremists names appear not only in reverence but in pedagogy. As one user writes: *“Elliot was ahead of his time, though. Just like Cho and Marc Lépine.”* Another post reframes incel killers as ideological prototypes:

And Elliot Rodger died for our sins ... And Alek Minassian was a pious follower of St.Elliot and became a Saint himself after his “Day of Retribution” ... St. Alek sacrificed himself for the incel rebellion ... We should pay our deep respect to St.Alek for his contribution to Incelism.

These “legends” function as instructional myths, they teach users how to feel, how to narrate suffering, and how to legitimate violence. As one user bluntly puts it on Incels.is: *“If I ever decide to kill myself, fuck yeah ... I’m going ER,”* illustrating how suicidal ideation is frequently linked to fantasies of mass violence. Self-destruction becomes reimagined as a final opportunity to *“take others with them.”* Emotion becomes pedagogy, teaching incels how to transform pain into justification.

Collectively, these themes illustrate what I conceptualized as *affective epistemologies*: systems through which emotional experiences, particularly rejection, despair, and rage, become transformed into ideological knowledge and moral certainty. Despite differences in moderation

and visibility, both Reddit and Incels.is host remarkably similar expressions of despair, misogynistic rage, biological determinism, and ideological closure. What shifts between platforms is not the content of incel discourse but its performativity, how it circulates, how it is received, and how it is moderated or left unchecked. This convergence supports Klein's (2023) theory of the *Mirror World*, a fragmented public sphere where alternative infrastructures reproduce the aesthetic and rhetorical forms of mainstream platforms while inverting their normative logics. In the case of incels, these mirror worlds do not invent new ideologies; they ritualize existing ones, amplifying and stabilizing misogynistic extremism under different infrastructural conditions.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This study has shown that incel discourse is not merely a collection of misogynistic beliefs but a structurally persistent ideological system sustained by affect. Through a combination of BERTopic modeling and qualitative thematic discourse analysis, I demonstrated how incel users across Reddit and Incels.is transform emotional pain, particularly rejection, despair, and rage, into perceived truths about the world. These affective epistemologies are not incidental but foundational, structuring how users make sense of their experiences and reproduce a worldview grounded in biological determinism, gendered resentment, and fantasies of retributive violence. The analysis underscores the remarkable discursive continuity across platforms, despite stark differences in governance and moderation. The same emotional intensity and ideological framing appear not only in fringe forums like Incels.is, but also in mainstream spaces like r/Incels, r/Braincels, and even recovery-oriented communities like r/IncelExit.

Rather than fading in the face of content moderation, incel discourse intensifies through circulation and interaction. Posts often accumulate replies that escalate anger rather than temper it, creating feedback loops in which humiliation turns to rage and rage to fantasies of violence. In this sense, moderation may interrupt visibility, but it rarely interrupts escalation. The danger of

incel ideology lies not only in what it says, but in how it feels, and in how despair is ontologized and grievance is transformed into knowledge. By tracing incel discourse through the lens of affective epistemology, this paper underscores the urgency of developing interventions that are not only technical or regulatory, but emotional and epistemic. If digital hate is sustained through repetition, resonance, and shared feeling, then countering it requires more than removal, it requires disruption of its emotional logic. These findings underscore the need to take seriously the emotional architectures of extremism: how loneliness is ritualized, how pain becomes pedagogy, and how violence is made to feel not only imaginable but inevitable. In this way, mirror worlds of misogyny are not just alternate realities but affective infrastructures of radicalization and dismantling them is one of the most urgent challenges of our digital era. Recognizing how hate becomes affectively livable is essential because without confronting the emotional foundations of digital extremism, we risk addressing only its surface expressions rather than its enduring appeal.

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## Chapter 3

# Mic Check for Misogyny: Podcasting, Male Supremacist Masculinities, and the Radicalization of Gendered Violence

### Preface

This co-authored paper with Nick Ruest (York University), and Dr. Shana MacDonald (University of Waterloo), currently under review, builds on the first study by shifting focus from incel forums to the more mainstream and widely accessible space of manosphere podcasts. While forums show how grievance becomes ritualized and stabilized within tightly knit digital communities, podcasts show how those overlapping misogynistic narratives move outward through media that feel intimate, entertaining, and often apolitical. In this way, the paper serves as a bridge in the dissertation's arc, demonstrating how extremist logics do not remain confined to niche spaces but circulate across broader digital infrastructures.

Podcasts are particularly important for understanding how misogyny spreads and becomes normalized. With more than 500 million listeners worldwide, podcasts have become one of the fastest-growing media forms, often framed as spaces of authenticity and direct connection. These qualities make them powerful tools for embedding grievance-based ideologies. The parasocial intimacy between host and audience allows misogynistic narratives to feel relatable and even humorous. Through long-form storytelling, repetition, and humour, podcasts transform the epistemic "truths" into accessible cultural logics.

Drawing on more than 1,800 episodes from Andrew Tate (*Tate Speech*), Nick Fuentes (*America First*), and Gavin McInnes (*Get Off My Lawn*), this paper argues that podcasts function as cultural infrastructures of radicalization. Whereas forums collectivize and stabilize grievance, podcasts embed it in everyday digital culture. Hosts mix self-help advice, masculinity coaching,

and political commentary into narratives that frame feminism, women, and gender non-conforming people as existential threats. These narratives do not simply reproduce extremist ideas but reframe them in ways that resonate with broader audiences: misogyny becomes a story about “male crisis,” “lost authority,” or “cultural decline.”

The paper continues the mixed-methods approach introduced in Chapter 2. Using Computational Grounded Theory framework, it combines BERTopic modeling, transformer-based emotion and misogyny classification, and qualitative thematic discourse analysis. This approach makes it possible to move beyond isolated case studies, situating individual podcasts within the larger “alternative influence network” that scholars have identified as central to contemporary extremism. The findings highlight three key dynamics. First, the naturalization of patriarchal order, where misogyny is reframed as commonsense truth and paternalistic duty. Second, the construction of grievance as masculine identity, transforming resentment and perceived loss into the very definition of manhood. Third, the escalation of grievance into calls for violence, where coercion and confrontation are cast as necessary acts of masculine restoration. This paper sets the stage for the final empirical study, which examines how grievances culminate in violent enactments and ideological legacies.

### 3.1 Introduction

Digital platforms have reshaped how masculinities are constructed and circulated. Among these platforms, podcasts have emerged as influential spaces for gendered ideological transmission, combining long-form content, accessibility, parasocial intimacy, and algorithmic amplification. With a projected 546 million global podcast listeners in 2024, and political commentary ranking among the top genres globally (Rizwan et al., 2025; Singh, 2024), podcasting plays a key role in shaping public discourse, particularly among younger and politically engaged demographics.

While research has documented the positive potential of podcasts to foster civic engagement, education, and community (Berry, 2016; Llinares et al., 2018), there is growing concern over how these platforms are also being leveraged to disseminate misogynistic, racist, and authoritarian ideologies (Allchorn, 2024; Ging, 2017). A cohort of influential figures, including Andrew Tate, Nick Fuentes, and Gavin McInnes, have used podcasting to cultivate large audiences while promoting discourses that normalize patriarchal dominance and vilify feminist, queer, and anti-racist politics. These figures draw on topics of male grievance, moral decay, and cultural decline to position themselves as ideological authorities defending “traditional” values against perceived liberal or progressive threats. This paper examines how misogynist influencers use podcasting to construct and disseminate what we term supremacist masculinities – discursive formations of hegemonic masculinity characterized by control, hierarchy, anti-feminism, and racial and political extremism. Supremacist masculinities draw on affective states of anger and resentment to extend their cultural reach. These podcasters use inflammatory rhetoric, moral panic, and reactionary cultural commentary to cultivate a sense of embattled masculinity. In doing so they construct ideological frameworks that not only normalize gendered inequality but also provide discursive justification for various forms of real-world harm against targeted populations.

Our analysis draws on Connell's (1995; 2005) foundational concept of hegemonic masculinity, later refined by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), which understands masculinity as a hierarchical and relational structure legitimating male dominance through cultural practices and coercive force. We extend this framework via scholarship on digital radicalization (Awan, 2017; Ribeiro et al., 2021), ideologically motivated violent extremism (IMVE) (Beirich & Via, 2022; Carr, 2022; Delaney, 2022), and critical masculinity studies (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014; Kimmel, 2013), to explore podcasting as a cultural infrastructure that can reproduce and amplify gendered violence. Influencers across platforms reinforce hegemonic masculinity through networked misogyny (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016), normalizing patriarchal and male supremacist beliefs.

We situate this existing inquiry into digital gendered hegemonies within a broader political and criminological concern: the convergence of gendered grievance with ideologically motivated violence. Studies on incel violence (Baele et al., 2021; Hoffman et al., 2020), alt-right digital ecologies (Marwick & Lewis, 2017), and far-right podcast networks (Gais, 2021) suggest that hostility toward women and gender minorities is not incidental but a central organizing principle in many extremist ideologies. Whether expressed through IMVE manifestos, incel discourse, Great Replacement conspiracy theories, or anti-trans moral panics, these ideologies often portray masculinity as under siege, requiring restoration through social dominance, exclusion, or violence (Ging, 2017; Ismail, 2025). Misogynist podcasting not only reflects these cultural shifts but actively participates in their construction, performance, and legitimation.

Although research on podcasts is expanding, their broader discursive role in the circulation of gendered extremism remains underdeveloped. Existing scholarship, including our earlier work (Padda et al., forthcoming), has often relied on close readings of select episodes or individual case studies to examine how specific influencers construct ideological meaning (Apirakvanalee & Zhai, 2023; Bartlett & Masta, 2023). This study adopts a mixed-methods design that combines a computational mapping of dominant themes with critical interpretive analysis of how gender,

power, and violence appear across misogynist podcasts. We apply this approach to a dataset of over 1,834 podcast transcripts from three prominent figures: Andrew Tate, Nick Fuentes, and Gavin McInnes. Using BERTopic (Grootendorst, 2022), we identify clusters of recurring themes and rhetorical patterns across the podcast episodes. We analyze all podcast episodes at the sentence level using transformer-based models to classify emotion (Hartmann, 2022) and misogyny (Attanasio et al., 2022), followed by thematic discourse analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).

By centering podcasts as a cultural form and a political force, this paper contributes to ongoing scholarship on masculinity, media, and crime by showing why podcasts matter as a site of gendered extremism rather than treating them as a peripheral or secondary medium. It demonstrates how misogynist influencers leverage digital ecosystems that legitimize and circulate supremacist gender ideologies. We argue that the mobilization of masculinities by podcasts is politically consequential, shaping pathways toward radicalization and normalizing gendered violence in ways that are often overlooked in studies of digital extremism focused on short-form or platform specific content.

## **3.2 Hegemonic Masculinity, Crime, and Digital Extremism: A Literature Review**

### **3.2.1 Hegemonic Masculinity and Gendered Power**

Research in sociology and critical criminology demonstrates that masculinity operates as a hierarchical and relational system of power that legitimates men's dominance over women and marginalized masculinities. Connell conceptualizes hegemonic masculinity as a dominant cultural ideal that legitimizes men's power over women and other gender identities. It valorizes traits such as aggression, toughness, sexual conquest, and the suppression of "feminine" emotion (R.W. Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Das, 2022). Criminologists have long observed that crime itself can function as a resource for "doing" masculinity. Messerschmidt famously argued men engage

in different forms of crime as a means of constructing their masculine identities (R. W. Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832). Violence, intimidation, and other criminal behaviours are thus not just individual pathologies but performative acts through which men assert normative dominance. Michael Kimmel's notion of "aggrieved entitlement" (Kimmel, 2013), argues when men's social power is challenged, they may react with anger and violence as an attempt to restore a sense of authority (Kalish & Kimmel, 2010). Research in critical criminology emphasizes that masculinity is a structured power relation: the most violent crimes are perpetrated by men, not due to biology, but because violence is often culturally available to men as a way to resolve conflict and exert control (see Miller, 2018). Hegemonic masculinity thus links to crime both in everyday contexts (e.g., gang violence, sexual assault, domestic abuse) and in extremist politics, as ideals of manhood celebrate force and domination.

Critical criminology and feminist sociological theories have shed light on how gender ideologies shape both the incidence of crime and society's responses. For example, patriarchal ideologies historically excuse or normalize certain male violences (against women or rival men) as natural expressions of masculinity (Das, 2022). At the same time, men who feel they are failing to meet masculine norms (e.g. economic success or sexual prowess) may use harmful means to compensate. These patterns are not individual aberrations but reflect structural pressures of patriarchy. Critical scholars argue that addressing crime and violence requires challenging the gender order that equates masculinity with power and aggression (Kelsey-Sugg & Zajac, 2021).

In the context of extremist ideologies, notions of masculinity often become intertwined with racial and political grievances. The figure of the "warrior male," long valorized in institutions such as the military and police, is also appropriated within nationalist and religious extremist discourse, where it is reframed as defense of nation, family, or a tradition against existential threats. As we will see, the influencers examined in this article draw on hegemonic masculine ideals (strength, dominance, control over women) as core to their appeal, and in doing so they help rationalize

forms of hate and violence as legitimate or even heroic. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) acknowledge that in many contexts hegemonic masculinity manifests in “toxic practices – including physical violence – that stabilize gender dominance” (p. 840). In short, such hegemonic masculinity frameworks highlight how gendered power is maintained through violence and intimidation (Wescott et al., 2024). This insight has become central for analyzing the link between masculinity and various forms of social control, including crime and extremist violence.

### **3.2.2 Digital Media, Podcasts, and Male Radicalization**

Empirical research on digital media and political communication shows that podcasts function as powerful sites of ideological transmission due to their intimacy, informality, and capacity for sustained affective engagement. As of 2024, over 500 million people worldwide listen to podcasts, and 47% of U.S. adults reported monthly listening – a figure that has more than tripled in the past decade (Rizwan et al., 2025). Politics and government rank as the third most popular podcast genre globally, reflecting the medium’s growing influence on public discourse (Rizwan et al., 2025). Platforms like Apple and Spotify have played a pivotal role in this expansion, offering on-demand access to content that blends entertainment, commentary, and education (Sullivan, 2019). Scholars describe this moment as a “golden era of podcasting,” marked by new expressive forms, participatory engagement, and audience intimacy (Spinelli & Dann, 2019). Unlike conventional radio, podcasts are characterized by their accessibility, informal tone, and minimal regulation. These features make them an ideal space for exploring complex topics related to identity, values, and behaviour (Al Fatih et al., 2022; Shamburg et al., 2023). Research suggests that podcast content can meaningfully shape listener attitudes and even influence value systems, especially when listeners form parasocial relationships with hosts over time (Shamburg et al., 2023, pp. 2048–2049). However, as Berry (2016) notes, the absence of editorial oversight also makes the medium susceptible to exploitation by those promoting misinformation or hate speech. Indeed, podcasts have increasingly become a tool for ideological radicalization. Recent

scholarship and policy reports have shown that extremist influencers, particularly those aligned with far-right or male supremacist ideologies, have deliberately used podcasts to grow audiences, normalize bigotry, and foster communities that enable radicalization (Allchorn, 2024; Gais, 2021). The casual, conversational style of podcasts creates an intimacy, or parasocial relation, that can draw in listeners (often young men) and gradually acclimate them to more radical ideas. Extremist influencers present themselves as truth-telling mentors or alpha-male figures, exploiting listeners' frustrations and insecurities. Over time, these online communities can normalize bigotry and political violence. A recent analysis of far-right podcast networks found that extremists leveraged podcasts not only to popularize movements like the alt-right, but even to coordinate real-world violent events – for example, podcast hosts played a role in organizing the deadly 2017 “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville (Gais, 2021).

Scholarly research on online extremism has documented that the “manosphere,” operates as a loose but interconnected network of male-supremacist communities (incels, Men’s Rights Activists, pick-up artists, etc.) united by resentment toward feminism and changing gender norms (Ribeiro et al., 2021). In these forums and shows, grievances about women and dating are often woven into broader conspiracy narratives. For instance, misogynistic online subcultures often portray society as unfairly empowering women and “emasculating” men – a claim that echoes and bolsters other extremist narratives about national decline and more recently pronatalism. Scholars have documented increasing cross-pollination between the manosphere and far-right movements (Faehrmann & Zech, 2023). They further note that the white supremacist “Great Replacement” conspiracy theory (which claims white men are being demographically replaced) has been adopted within manosphere circles to racialize men’s gender grievances. In these online ecosystems, young men upset about their personal status (lack of success with women, economic anxieties) are told that both feminism and diversity are to blame for their woes. The result is a potent narrative cocktail: listeners come to see defending traditional masculinity, restoring rigid

gender roles, and fighting perceived “outsider” threats (immigrants, minorities) as part of one unified struggle.

A growing body of empirical research shows that digital media algorithms have often amplified this radicalization process. Mainstream social platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and X (formerly Twitter) have at times propelled users from mainstream content toward more extreme content through recommendation systems. A teen boy might start by watching a fitness or dating tips video, then get suggested a more hyper-masculine “alpha male” podcast clip, and eventually find himself consuming overtly misogynistic or racist rants. This pathway, sometimes dubbed the “alternative influence network,” has been documented by researchers (Gais, 2021; R. Lewis, 2018). Moreover, deplatforming of certain influencers (removing them from major sites) often just pushes them and their dedicated followers onto more insular platforms (Telegram, Rumble, private Discord servers), where the messaging can become even more extreme without public scrutiny (Khoo, 2021; Nashrulla, 2019; Ribeiro et al., 2021; Stoner, 2025). In some cases, influencers create their own platforms, such as Andrew Tate’s “Hustler’s University” (later rebranded as *The Real World*), where all participants are not only platform users but paying followers (Magee, 2023). This illustrates what it means when a media ecosystem is effectively synonymous with its audience base. Thus, the podcast ecosystem and broader digital sphere act as a radicalization incubator for gendered extremism. By providing spaces that valorize hegemonic masculinity and grievance, they socialize audiences into seeing harassment, doxing, and even physical violence as acceptable responses to feminists, liberals, and other out-groups. As one report put it, “violence is at the core” of these groups’ ideology and is treated as “a really effective way to solve problems” (Miller, 2018). Such rhetoric constructs violence as both inevitable and necessary, blurring the line between grievance and prescription. Thus, the convergence of algorithmic amplification, deplatforming dynamics, and masculinist grievance culture has created an ecosystem in which gendered extremism not only survives but thrives. In

the following case studies, we trace how specific digital influencers have leveraged these dynamics to construct, perform, and weaponize supremacist masculinities that contribute to real-world acts of harassment, violence, and ideological radicalization.

### **3.3 Case Studies: Influencers and the Construction of Extremist Masculinities**

This section presents three prominent influencers whose podcast content, streaming shows, and digital commentary contribute to the production of supremacist masculinities and cultural scripts grounded in patriarchal dominance, anti-feminism, and ideological grievance. Each case was selected not only for their influence within online ecosystems but also for their discursive impact on real-world behaviours, including acts of violence, coordinated harassment, and radicalization. For instance, Andrew Tate’s misogynistic rhetoric has been cited as a contributing influence in the 2024 Hertfordshire triple homicide (Walker & Farmer, 2025); Nick Fuentes played a significant role in inciting the January 6 Capitol insurrection, with followers waving his America First flag inside the Capitol (Lorber, 2021); and Gavin McInnes’s Proud Boys were directly involved in violent confrontations at the Charlottesville “Unite the Right” rally and later convicted of seditious conspiracy in relation to the Capitol attack (Lowell, 2023). Together, these podcasters demonstrate how digital influencers construct, circulate, and weaponize content around hegemonic masculinity that figures a central component of IMVE. Their personas offer aspirational models of manhood, aggressive, authoritative, and “unapologetically” dominant, and their rhetoric cultivates affective loyalty among audiences, particularly disaffected young men. Importantly, these influencers are not fringe actors: they span platforms from fringe alt-tech spaces to mainstream news networks, thereby revealing how extremist masculinity operates across the digital media spectrum.

### **3.3.1 Andrew Tate: Hyper-Masculinity as Digital Cult and Criminal Ideology**

Andrew Tate, former professional kickboxer turned self-proclaimed “success coach,” has emerged as one of the most influential and dangerous figures within the digital manosphere. He has amassed over 10 million followers on X since being reinstated after the platform’s acquisition by Elon Musk (Gerson, 2025). He was deplatformed from all major social media in 2022 for content that violated policy and due to concerns over his negative influence on young men (Holpuch, 2022). He runs an online academy, where participants earn a “PhD degree (Pimping Hoes Degree), in which he teaches young men “how to get girls fast and easy” and “get rich and attract women” (Abdul, 2025; Milmo & Keenan, 2025). Tate’s brand is built on a formula of entrepreneurial self-help fused with male supremacist ideology. His messaging routinely asserts that women are the property of men, that rape victims “bear some responsibility” for their assault, and that women should remain in the home while men exercise sexual freedom and control (Das, 2022; M. Smith, 2023). Tate’s digital reach has grown exponentially through podcasts, long-form interviews, and short-form viral clips shared on TikTok and Instagram, even after his widespread deplatforming. In 2022, the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH) found more than 100 accounts promoting Tate’s content on TikTok, generating 250 million views and 5.7 million followers (Navarro, 2025). The CCDH also documented 47 videos promoting extreme misogyny, including one where he referred to his former partner as a “dumb hoe” (12.8M views), another where he boasted about fighting women, “grip her up by the neck,” (1.6M views), and a clip in which he described “putting his imprint” on teenage girls (8.4M views) (Lawson, 2022). These moments exemplify how Tate uses shock-value statements to embed deeply violent beliefs in everyday digital vernacular. Despite the ways Tate minimized and dismisses his use of discursive violence as just talk, he himself has been accused of sexual assault and battery by an ex-partner in 2025 (Skene, 2025), as well as high-profile accusations of sex trafficking, rape, and the criminal exploitation of women in Romania in 2022 (Abdul, 2025).

Tate's views are not just offensive, they are mobilizing. A 2024 YouGov poll found that 26% of UK men aged 18–29 and 28% of men 30-39 who had heard of Tate agreed with his views on women. Further, a different 2024 study of over 3,000 men across the US, UK, and Australia found that more than a third of young men who watch influencers like Tate admit to acting on their advice (Bancroft, 2025). In schools across the UK, teachers report a surge in harassment of female staff and classmates, boys “barking at women” or blocking doorways, directly linked to Tate's slogans (R. Adams, 2025). Domestic abuse organizations have warned that Tate's ideology is “capable of radicalizing men and boys to commit harm offline” (Skopeliti, 2024).

Most alarmingly, Tate's rhetoric has been explicitly cited in a recent instance of gendered violence. In July 2024, Kyle Clifford murdered his ex-girlfriend Louise Hunt, her sister, and their mother in Hertfordshire, UK (Walker & Farmer, 2025). Evidence presented in court revealed that Clifford had watched at least 10 Tate videos before the killing (L. Adams, 2025; Sinmaz, 2025). While Clifford's violence cannot be reduced solely to Tate's influence, his reliance on Tate's videos for affirmation demonstrates how misogynistic media can validate and embolden preexisting grievances. Detective Chief Inspector Nick Gardner noted that Clifford “simply couldn't deal with what he perceived to be a dent to his pride” (Walker & Farmer, 2025), while the judge concluded that Tate had become “almost a poster boy for misogynists” (L. Adams, 2025). In this way, Tate's role is less about inventing violence than about legitimizing it, providing an ideological template and emotional validation that transform grievances into action. This incident underscores Tate's position not just as a controversial influencer but as a catalyst for the alarming normalization of gendered IMVE in manosphere culture.

Tate's appeal is rooted not only in dominance rhetoric but in the way he stylizes himself as a “maverick” offering young men a path through economic anxiety, social confusion, and masculine insecurity (Haslop et al., 2024). His content frames male empowerment as inseparable from female subordination and channels everyday grievances into extremist identity formation.

As one analyst puts it, Tate is not inventing new misogynistic ideas, he is a “legitimizing force” that keeps them “live in conversation” (Oppenheim, 2023). Despite platform bans, his content continues to circulate, including through a podcast titled Tatecast, which remained available on Spotify as of April 2025. This digital persistence speaks to the longevity and virality of his messaging, and underscores that subscribing to Tate’s worldview is not a neutral act of consumption but an entry into a community where misogyny is normalized, valorized, and tied to action.

### **3.3.2 Nick Fuentes: Male Supremacy Merged with White Nationalist Violence**

Nick Fuentes exemplifies a disturbing convergence of male supremacist ideology, white nationalism, and Christian extremism, performed and disseminated primarily through digital media ecosystems. Rising to prominence after attending the 2017 “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville (Stoner, 2025), Fuentes launched his podcast *America First* that same year, using YouTube livestreams to build a substantial following among young, predominantly white, male audiences (Conner et al., 2024). His rhetoric fuses antisemitic conspiracy theories, misogyny, authoritarianism, and explicit advocacy for political violence (Connaughton & Pukallus, 2024). This case study examines how Fuentes constructs supremacist masculinity through podcasting and digital media, blending discursive, affective, and mobilizing strategies that move from ironic commentary to incitements of real-world violence.

Moreover, his construction of masculinity relies heavily on affective registers of grievance, resentment, and perceived cultural victimhood, presenting himself as a “proud incel” (Downen, 2023). In one livestream, Fuentes talked about his fantasies about marrying a 16-year-old girl because, he claimed, “that’s right when the milk is good” (Downen, 2023). Fuentes frames both women and marginalized groups as existential threats to a white, Christian patriarchal order. His livestreams regularly assert that women are emotionally unfit for leadership and should be

subordinated “forever” (Conner et al., 2024). Similarly, he portrays the erosion of traditional gender hierarchies as symptomatic of national and civilizational decline, claiming in a December 2023 podcast that immigration spells “the end of whites as a group” and “the end of white civilization” (ADL, 2025). Fuentes’ performative style is crucial to his influence. He employs a strategy known as “irony poisoning,” coating his most extreme views in humour, satire, and memes to deflect criticism and normalize hate speech among his audiences (ADL, 2025; Downen, 2023; Moore, 2024). In one notorious instance, Fuentes joked about Holocaust denial through a “Cookie Monster” analogy designed to trivialize the murder of six million Jews, a tactic he framed as playful skepticism rather than explicit antisemitism (Connaughton & Pukallus, 2024, p. 156; Downen, 2023). This ironic veneer enables plausible deniability while simultaneously radicalizing listeners by repeatedly exposing them to supremacist ideas in a casual, accessible format. Similar forms of irony poisoning show up in his podcast rants where he repeatedly advocates for violence against women only to walk it back as a joke, numbing listeners to the initial vitriol, and yet it lingers.

Deplatforming efforts have had limited success in curbing Fuentes’ reach. After YouTube banned his channel in 2020 for hate speech violations (JTA, 2020) and Google removed his monetization options, Fuentes migrated to alternative platforms like Rumble, Telegram, and X, where he continues to command significant audiences (ADL, 2025; Conner et al., 2024). As of March 2025, Fuentes maintained approximately 724,000 followers across his social media profiles (ADL, 2025), demonstrating how alternative digital infrastructures sustain and even amplify radicalized influencers post-deplatforming.

Fuentes’ movement-building efforts are epitomized by the “Groyper Army,” a youth-oriented far-right network he leads. The Groypers actively infiltrate mainstream conservative spaces, attempting to steer the Republican Party toward white nationalism (Conner et al., 2024, p. 253; JTA, 2020). Fuentes openly encourages his followers to confront and harass more

moderate conservatives, a practice known as “groypping” (Conner et al., 2024, p. 253). His influence extends onto college campuses, where student Republican organizations have hosted Groyppers and identified with the movement (Lorber, 2021). Over time, Fuentes’ rhetoric has escalated from ironic provocation to open calls for violence and ethnic cleansing. In a 2023 livestream, he stated, “I love you, and I love Hitler,” later adding that Jews are “perfidious” and should be “absolutely annihilated” (Connaughton & Pukallus, 2024). Fuentes has called for a “holy war” against Jews (Downen, 2023) and advocated a Christian theocracy that excludes non-Christians, women, and immigrants from political life. His followers have adapted extremist slogans into their social media interactions, promoting the acronym “RKD4NJF” – “rape, kill and die for Nicholas Joseph Fuentes” (ADL, 2025).

Fuentes’ rhetoric also directly incited political violence. Two days before the January 6, 2021 insurrection, Fuentes urged his followers to “be prepared” to “take this country back by force” if legislators failed to overturn the election results (Downen, 2023). On the day of the riot, Fuentes stood outside the Capitol, telling the crowd not to leave until Donald Trump was reinstated as president (Lorber, 2021). While Fuentes himself did not enter the building, his rhetoric and presence galvanized followers: his *America First* flags were carried into the Senate chamber, and individuals wearing Groyper insignias were photographed occupying Vice President Mike Pence’s chair (Lorber, 2021). Significantly, Fuentes’ misogyny also escalates into explicit discourse around physical violence against women. During a January 2025 livestream, Fuentes described how to “punch a woman” by “putting your whole body behind it,” immediately following up with, “that’s a joke, kidding” (ADL, 2025). Similarly, on the evening of Trump’s 2024 presidential win, Fuentes gleefully yelled the slogan “Your Body, My Choice. Forever” on his YouTube stream to undermine women’s reproductive rights and sexual autonomy; it garnered over 100 million views and was widely replicated across social media (Gooding, 2024). Former insiders and scholars describe Fuentes’ movement as cult-like, characterized by extreme loyalty, sexual control

(including prohibitions on masturbation and relationships), and adulation of Fuentes himself as an ideological leader (Downen, 2023; Frances-Wright & Ayad, 2024). Jared Holt, a senior researcher at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, has noted that although Fuentes has lost some mainstream visibility since Trump's presidency, he retains a "cult following" capable of pressuring conservative campaigns toward more extreme positions (Frances-Wright & Ayad, 2024).

### **3.3.3 Gavin McInnes: Turning Digital Chauvinism into Street Violence**

Gavin McInnes, co-founder of *Vice* and self-described far-right provocateur (Grigoriadis, 2003), illustrates how podcast-style discourse can weaponize masculinity into organized, real-world political violence. Through his creation of the Proud Boys and his ongoing digital commentary (Miller, 2018), McInnes constructed a cultural template in which patriarchal grievance, male aggression, and anti-progressive outrage were not only normalized but valorized as necessary expressions of manhood. His case demonstrates how affective bonds formed through long-form media can escalate into collective violence, blurring the line between rhetoric and insurgency. McInnes's evolution from countercultural entrepreneur to far-right influencer reflects broader shifts in the digital landscape of radicalization. During his tenure at *Vice*, McInnes helped shape the magazine's reputation for "pure punk publishing, filthy, hilarious, utterly without shame," producing content ranging from "How to Survive in Prison" to the "Vice Guide to Guilty Pleasures," and guides on crafting subversive CVs (Grigoriadis, 2003; Patten, 2002). This transgressive, boundary-pushing sensibility, once marketed as countercultural irreverence, later evolved into a more explicitly reactionary and supremacist digital style. His transition illustrates how provocateur media tactics can migrate across ideological lines, from edgy humour into organized extremist discourse.

In the mid-2010s, McInnes shifted decisively toward far-right politics, positioning himself as a defender of "Western chauvinism" against what he portrayed as the feminization and decline

of Western civilization (Motyl, 2024). Proud Boys describe themselves as “Western chauvinists,” meaning “men who refuse to apologize for creating the modern world” (Bulent, 2021), a slogan that frames patriarchal dominance and Western cultural supremacy as natural and defensible. He claimed that a “war on masculinity” had been underway since kindergarten, dismissing feminism as obsolete since the 1970s and characterizing contemporary gender inequality as “just blatant lies to justify [feminists’] existence” (Hall, 2017). The Proud Boys were the most consequential manifestation of McInnes’s ideological project. Founded in 2016, the group blended traditional male bonding rituals with overt political violence, offering an accessible model for performing masculinity through aggression. Members underwent a tiered initiation process emphasizing loyalty, physical toughness, and ideological conformity (Ismail, 2025, p. 3). This structure provided what scholars call a “digital brotherhood,” emotionally manipulating recruits into accepting violence as a normal and even heroic aspect of their identity (Ismail, 2025). McInnes’s messaging constructed street violence not as aberrant but as a redemptive and necessary act of masculine restoration.

Through his podcasts and livestreams, McInnes repeatedly incited violence while cloaking his calls in humour. In a 2016 broadcast, he declared, “We will kill you. That’s the Proud Boys in a nutshell. We will kill you” (Miller, 2018). Following the Charlottesville rally, McInnes defended the event organizers and minimized the violence, asserting that “fighting solves everything” and urging his audience to prepare for “serious battles” against leftists (Miller, 2018). In another 2018 episode, he explicitly advocated anti-trans violence, telling listeners, “You need to choke a tranny. You need to punch a tranny, and you need to shoot a tranny” (Miller, 2018). Statements like these reveal how McInnes positioned political violence not as regrettable but as a necessary and valorous expression of manhood. McInnes’s incitements were not limited to fighting left-wing activists. In the buildup to major confrontations, he encouraged Proud Boys and other far-right actors to escalate violence by disregarding police orders. During speeches and broadcasts,

McInnes promoted the idea that “breaking down barriers” and “disregarding the police” were legitimate and necessary actions when facing perceived liberal or government oppression (Hayden, 2022). This move toward explicit insurrectionary rhetoric reflected an increasingly militant conception of masculinity, where authentic manhood was measured by one’s willingness to confront not only political opponents but the state itself. Such messaging helped pave the way for the Proud Boys’ frontline role during the January 6 Capitol insurrection.

This ideology translated into real-world violence. Proud Boys were heavily involved in violent confrontations across the United States, including the 2017 Berkeley protests, the Charlottesville “Unite the Right” rally, and the January 6, 2021 Capitol insurrection (Bulent, 2021; Kunzelman et al., 2023; Padda, 2025). At Charlottesville, Proud Boys and other white supremacist groups marched by torchlight chanting “You will not replace us” and “Blood and Soil,” explicitly invoking racist and Nazi slogans (Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2025). The death of Heather Heyer, who was killed when a white supremacist drove a car into counter-protesters, underscored how rhetorical incitements had crossed into fatal real-world consequences. Although McInnes formally stepped down from the Proud Boys in 2018 amid mounting legal scrutiny, the culture he cultivated persisted and even escalated. During the January 6 Capitol attack, Proud Boys played a frontline role, with several members, including former leader Enrique Tarrio, convicted of seditious conspiracy (Lowell, 2023). McInnes, meanwhile, continued to promote the same ideological framework through shows on platforms like CENSORED.tv and Compound Media, reinforcing a narrative that framed violence as a legitimate response to perceived cultural decline (Motyl, 2024).

### **3.4 Methods**

This study employs a mixed-method approach to examine how podcast influencers construct and circulate ideologies of hegemonic masculinity that intersect with misogyny, affect, and crime.

Combining computational and qualitative techniques, the analysis identifies latent thematic patterns, emotional tone, and the presence of misogynistic and hateful discourse. The research is situated within broader concerns around gender-based extremism and digital radicalization, particularly how influencers contribute to the spread and normalization of gendered violence through affective and ideological appeal.

### 3.4.1 Data Source and Analytical Approach

As part of a larger research project on the disinformation of misogyny, we compiled a dataset of over 21,000 podcast episodes drawn from 20 shows associated with the Intellectual Dark Web, conspiracy theory culture, QAnon, the alt-right, white nationalist movements, and the manosphere (Ruest and Padda, 2025). Additional transcripts were sourced from public archives and the searchable repository at [fight.fudgie.org](http://fight.fudgie.org) (Simonsen, 2025). For this study, we focus on a targeted subset of 1,834 episodes from three key influencers (Table 3.1), selected for their significant cultural reach and recurring appearance in online radicalization discourses (see Case Studies section for details).

**Table 3.1** Selected Podcasters and Episode Counts

Influencer Name	Podcast Name	Total Episodes
Andrew Tate	Tate Speech	570
Nick Fuentes	America First	852
Gavin McInnes	Get Off My Lawn	412
Total	-	<b>1834</b>

As DiMaggio et al. (2013) have shown, topic modeling can be a useful complement to qualitative analysis, helping researchers identify patterns in discourse across large bodies of text. Building on this approach, we apply topic modeling to podcast data using the framework of *Computational Grounded Theory* (CGT) as outlined by Nelson (2020). CGT combines unsupervised machine learning with iterative, interpretive analysis, allowing researchers to move between broad pattern detection and close reading. This approach is particularly well-suited to

studying extremist media, where ideology is often conveyed not through overt argument but through humour, emotional appeals, and subtle rhetorical shifts.

### 3.4.2 Data Preprocessing and Topic Modeling

To prepare the podcast transcripts for analysis, we developed a Python script to clean the original subtitle files (.vtt format) (Ruest & Padda, 2025). This process removed timecodes, metadata (such as “WEBVTT” and “NOTE”), and blank lines, leaving only the spoken dialogue. The cleaned text was then processed using spaCy’s English language model (en\_core\_web\_sm) to segment it into individual sentences (Honnibal et al., 2023). Sentence-level segmentation was chosen to better capture the fragmented and nonlinear structure of podcast discourse, where ideological content often appears in offhand comments, rhetorical asides, or emotionally charged statements.

We applied BERTopic, a transformer-based topic modeling method designed to detect patterns in large text datasets (Grootendorst, 2022). The model was run separately on each podcaster’s content to keep their distinct rhetorical styles intact. BERTopic uses HDBScan to cluster sentences based on contextual embeddings, which in this case were generated by the all-MiniLM-L6-v2<sup>4</sup> model. Each cluster represents sentences with latent themes within and across episodes. We also used a customized text processor to pick up on common word pairs (like “gender roles” or “toxic masculinity”) and to filter out very common filler words. To ensure the clusters were specific enough to be useful but still interpretable, we set a minimum topic size of 30. This process produced a large number of fine-grained topics for each podcaster: Andrew Tate (n = 1,500), Nick Fuentes (n = 5,949), and Gavin McInnes (n = 1,530). Rather than combining similar topics into larger groups, as some topic models like BERTopic hierarchical clustering allow, we kept the original clusters, since merging them often blurred important distinctions. For

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<sup>4</sup> Additional details about the pretrained model <https://huggingface.co/sentence-transformers/all-MiniLM-L6-v2>

example, content expressing open hostility toward women was sometimes grouped with generic self-help advice, making it harder to see how misogyny operates across different tones and registers. These topic clusters worked as an exploratory foundation for our qualitative analysis. They helped us trace how gender, power, and identity are framed in these podcasts, and how emotional and ideological patterns are woven into everyday speech.

### **3.4.3 Emotion and Misogyny Classification**

To further contextualize discursive and affective patterns, we applied sentence-level classification using transformer-based models (Ruest & Padda, 2025). Emotion detection was performed using emotion-english-distilroberta-base (Hartmann, 2022), which classifies core affective states such as anger, sadness, joy, fear, and disgust. Misogyny classification used bert-base-uncased-ear-misogyny (Attanasio et al., 2022). These classifiers were selected because they have been widely used and validated in prior research on online hate, affective polarization, and gender-based harassment, and are well suited for large-scale analysis of informal, conversational text such as podcasts (Attanasio et al., 2022; Bonaldi et al., 2023; Haque et al., 2024; Hartmann, 2022; Muti & Mancini, 2023; Nozza et al., 2022).

### **3.4.4 Qualitative Coding and Thematic Interpretation**

For the qualitative analysis, we used a thematic discourse analysis approach as a rigorous method for identifying central patterns across the outputs generated through topic modeling (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). We explored the topic clusters and selected those with high ideological salience and strong emotional intensity. For each selected topic, we exported representative sentences and conducted inductive coding, grouping the data into broader themes that traced how affect and ideology interact in the context of gender, power, and cultural and political grievance. While the full thematic interpretation appears in the Analysis

section, this stage of coding allowed us to identify recurring discursive patterns that ranged from overt misogyny to more covert strategies of gender regulation and symbolic exclusion.

The significance of our analytical approach allows us to trace how influencers use podcasting to enact hegemonic masculinity in ways that feel personal, persuasive, and politically charged. By treating podcasts as rhetorical and affective artifacts, sites where ideology, embodiment, and public discourse are produced, negotiated, and reinforced (Conley, 2021), we are able to move beyond surface-level content analysis. Through a mixed-method design that combines topic modeling, emotion analysis, hate and misogyny classification, and qualitative thematic discourse analysis, we were able to identify how gendered ideologies are not only expressed through content, but also charged with affect, particularly anger, resentment, and humiliation. Methodologically, this project shows how computational tools can enhance feminist and critical qualitative research by making visible the structures, repetitions, and emotional intensities through which gendered violence is normalized.

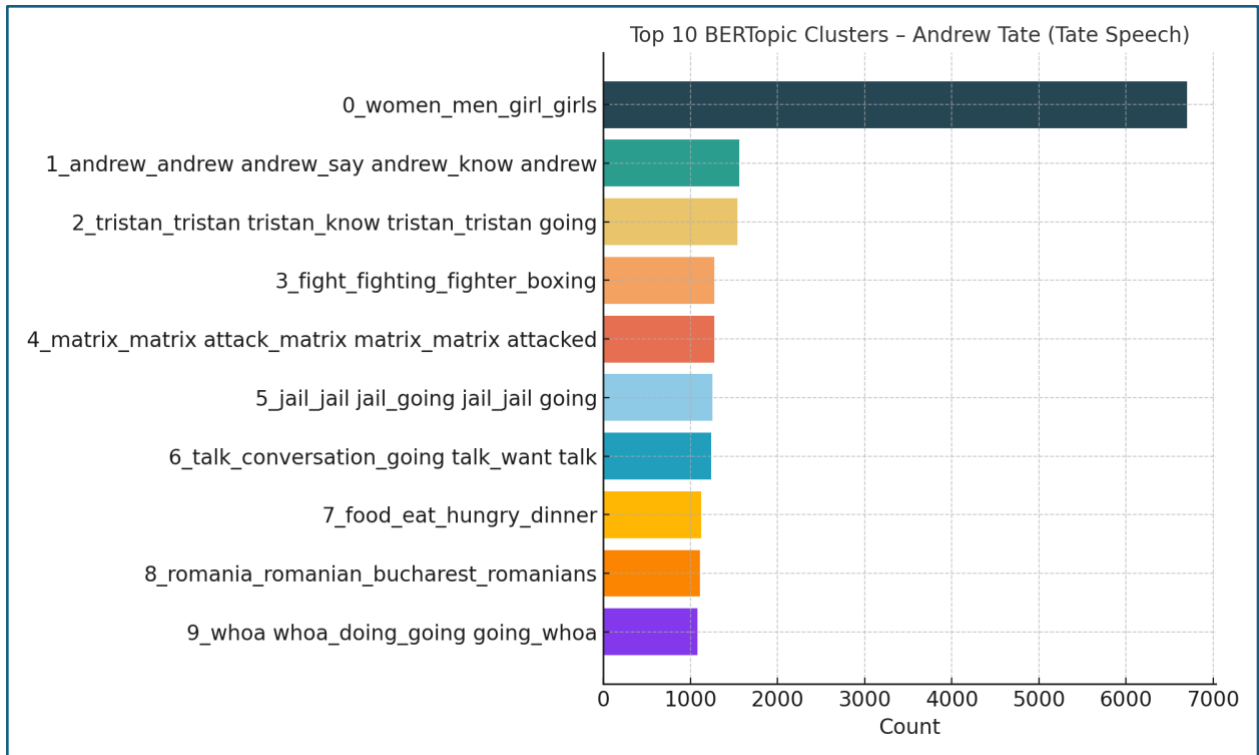
### **3.5 Analysis**

Drawing on topic clusters generated via BERTopic modeling as an exploratory tool, we identify three dominant formations that shape their discourse: the naturalization of patriarchal order, the construction of grievance as masculine identity, and the escalation of grievance into calls for violence. Consistent with Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach to critical thematic analysis and Jørgensen and Phillips's (2002) framework for discourse analysis, themes were constructed inductively through close interpretive reading rather than assigned mechanically. These thematic formations were selected for their high ideological salience and strong emotional intensity across the corpus, tracing how hegemonic masculinity, grievance politics, racial and gendered hierarchies interact to sustain digital ecosystems of gendered extremism via affective mobilization. The analysis highlights the shared discursive logics that cut across their styles,

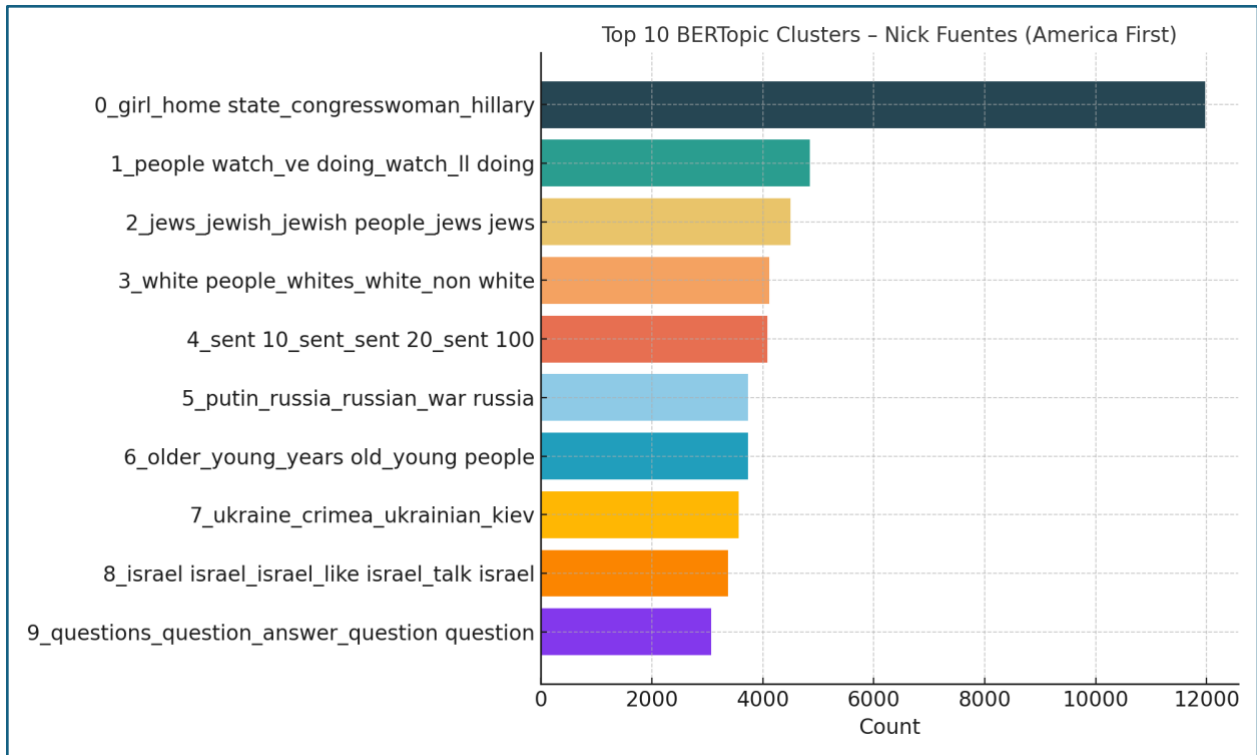
whether framed through humour, grievance, religious crusade, or entrepreneurial self-help. These shared logics show how masculinities are weaponized to radicalize targeted audiences in contemporary digital media.

Overall, the BERTopic model generated thousands of topic clusters based on semantically similar sentence embeddings. Figures 3.1-3.3 below visualize the ten most prominent topics for each podcaster, revealing how each constructs their ideological agenda through recurring discursive patterns. For Tate, the most frequent cluster (Topic 0) centers explicitly on gendered language (“women\_men\_girls\_girls”), followed by topics focused on his personal brand, combat imagery, and narratives of persecution involving “the matrix” (Topics 1-4). Fuentes’s top clusters similarly reflect recurring gendered and racialized anxieties: Topic 0 emphasizes a discursive fixation on girls and domestic politics, while Topics 2 and 3 directly invoke antisemitic and white supremacist tropes. McInnes’s top clusters include homophobic (Topic 0) and gendered labour discourse (Topic 5), interspersed with recurring discussions on policing, education, and racial tension. While these clusters alone do not capture the full ideological depth of each podcaster’s content, they provide a quantitative entry point into the rhetorical terrain.

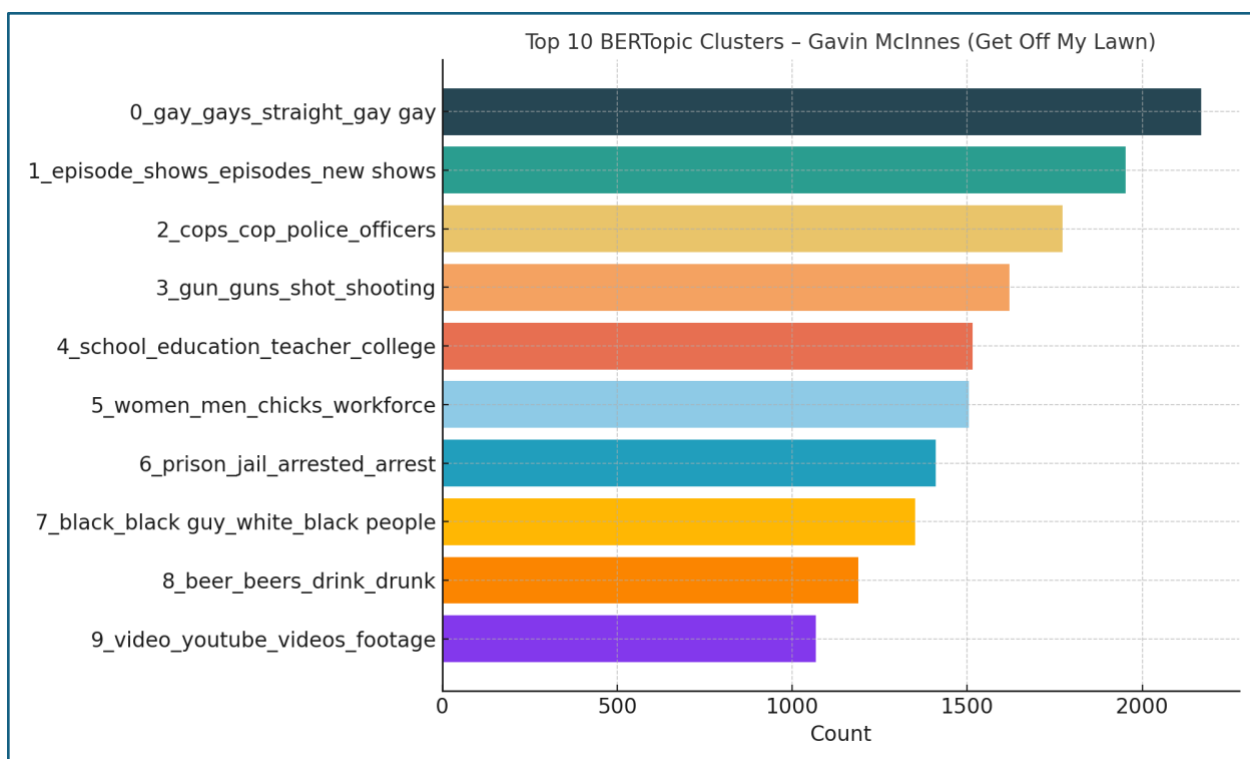
**Figure 3.1** *BERTopic-Derived Topic Prevalence in Andrew Tate's Tate Speech*



**Figure 3.2** *BERTopic-Derived Topic Prevalence in Nick Fuentes's America First*



**Figure 3.3** *BERTopic-Derived Topic Prevalence in Gavin McInnes’s Get Off My Lawn*



### 3.5.1 Naturalizing Patriarchal Order

A foundational discursive strategy employed by Tate, Fuentes, and McInnes is to present male dominance not as an extremist stance but as the inevitable, natural, and even moral framework for social life. This mirrors the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which “legitimizes” male authority by framing it as culturally and biologically ordained (R. W. Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Across their podcasts, contempt for women is reframed not as hatred but as commonsense realism. This naturalization also situates masculinity as a role of protective duty, suggesting forms of patriarchal dominance are both natural and virtuous.

Andrew Tate’s discourse exemplifies this strategy most explicitly. Throughout his podcast Tate repeatedly asserts that women are inherently less rational, less loyal, and less capable of leadership than men. In one podcast episode, Tate recounts reading a novel about a fictional female UN negotiator, using it to launch a broader attack on women’s intelligence and decision-

making abilities. After mocking the female character for “falling in love with and fucking the leader of one of the tribes” (*Tate on the Best Book Ever*, 00:02:24) during a negotiation mission, Tate generalizes her actions as proof of women’s essential stupidity. For example, Tate bluntly declares, “Women are fucking stupid. Fictional ones, real ones, doesn’t matter if they’re on TV or in a book, they’re fucking dumb. Women are dumb. We know it, we’re not supposed to say it, but it’s fucking true” (*Tate on the Best Book Ever*, 00:03:24 – 00:03:58). By casting misogynistic insults as truths suppressed by “political correctness,” Tate normalizes the idea that women’s inferiority is self-evident (see R. Connell, 1995). By claiming that society *knows* women are less intelligent yet *cannot* speak it, he constructs female subordination as a self-evident fact, shrouded only by social taboos. This is not bigotry, he insists, but merely exposing the “real” nature of gender difference. He asserts that the fictional story he is referencing simply reflects “the kind of dumb shit a woman would do” (*Tate on the Best Book Ever*, 00:04:12). Extending the fictional example to real-world women, he asserts, “loads of them are fucking me” (*Tate on the Best Book Ever*, 00:04:22) despite having no future or stability with him. Here he collapses a disparaging assessment of women’s intelligence with a denigration of women’s sexual agency. In doing this he asserts, and thus naturalizes, the idea that women should not engage in sex outside of secure relationships, and if they do, they are in his words, “dumb.” Sex becomes transactional by this logic and women are in a position of inferiority in their relationship to men.

Relatedly, Tate will often pivot to a paternalistic rationale, insisting that men, whether father, brother, husband, must step in to *protect* women from their own “emotional” misjudgments. As he advises his listeners, “You have to take care of her and protect and provide” (*EMERGENCY MEETING EPISODE 34 - Clown World*, 02:42:53). This framing casts male dominance not as coercion but as moral obligation. It is only by asserting control, Tate argues, that men can prevent women from making catastrophic choices that endanger themselves and others, thus infantilizing

them and removing their agency. He reinforces this logic in his call for the reinstatement of arranged marriages, insisting:

Women don't know what's good for them. Women ain't got a fucking clue what's good for them. But do you know who does know what's good for chicks? Their father. I guarantee there would be less divorce, happier families, and a better society as a whole if the women could only marry the men their father says they could marry. You're giving women this free choice shit. When is the last time a woman made a good choice? (*Tate on the Best Book Ever*, 00:04:50 – 00:05:10).

This argument sets up a dangerous rhetoric that women are to blame for social problems and the break-up of nuclear families because they are unable to make good life choices including in their intimate partner. The logic puts a disproportionate amount of pressure on women's role in upholding the family and men as only responsible for controlling women's actions rather than their own. This paternalistic narrative intensifies in another podcast where Tate and his brother Tristan discuss the human trafficking allegations against them. In it they further the notion that women need protecting because they are gullible. Tate argues:

Because women are so easily tricked and fooled by a man's manipulation...That's why they have to adhere to the rules their fathers give them to protect them, which is why America is a society where we have accepted that women can be tricked into anything and they have no control over their own actions (*EMERGENCY MEETING EPISODE 36*, 01:49:04 – 01:49:09).

He sarcastically suggests that if women were truly free to make their own choices, "they'd clearly be human trafficked" (*EMERGENCY MEETING EPISODE 36*, 01:49:26). Tate's framing situates women's autonomy as an illusion that inevitably leads to self-destruction unless a male authority

intervenes. This paternalism echoes Kimmel's notion of "aggrieved entitlement," where men frame their authority as a rightful correction to perceived gendered losses (Kimmel, 2013).

Nick Fuentes employs a parallel logic but infuses it with anti-feminist, political, and religious grievances. In one episode, he vows, "I'm going to undo a century of feminist propaganda and help people build traditional families" (*America First Ep. 845*, 03:03:01). Here, reversing women's liberation becomes a project in returning to so-called tradition. It is not an attack on women as individuals, but rather a crusade to "restore" timeless and idealized patriarchal family structures. This aligns with critical masculinity studies, which emphasize how extremist ideologies appropriate gender norms to buttress broader political aims such as a return to gender conservative social formations (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014; Ging, 2017). Fuentes frames feminism as malignant propaganda that has fractured social cohesion, promising to "restore" an idealized past in the name of collective well-being. While denouncing feminism, Fuentes also attempts to shield his misogyny in the language of affection and reason. For instance, he asserts, "And now listen, I love women, but even women can acknowledge there are these women...they're just a stupid bitch..." (*America First Ep. 997*, 00:58:01). By presenting misogynistic claims as reasonable observations and appeals to common sense, Fuentes frames patriarchal dominance as both a moral and emotional necessity for restoring collective cohesion. He also minimizes and normalizes the use of slurs against women as part of reasonable, logical discourse.

Gavin McInnes adopts more of a performative and ironically detached style, blending satire, humour, and faux concern, but ultimately reinforces the same patriarchal logic. He frames workplaces as dangerous spaces for women, citing it as a "reason women shouldn't be in the workforce" (*Get Off My Lawn Podcast #18*, 00:35:25), even suggesting that their exclusion is an act of mercy. This uses a false rationale that absents any responsibility for anyone, including his listeners, to make workspaces safer. It also amplifies an increasingly common misogynist call for women to remain in the private sphere as caregivers rather than as part of the workforce. Across

his episodes, McInnes frequently uses humour to downplay and naturalize patriarchal gender roles, presenting traditionalism as both protective and inevitable. Even when joking, the underlying message remains consistent and very much like the one advanced by Fuentes. For instance, like Fuentes, McInnes argues feminism has upended the natural order, and only a return to traditional gender roles – men as providers, women as nurturers – can restore societal stability.

This framework is evident in his critiques of feminist representations in popular culture where he mocks the portrayal of women as action heroes:

Hey, Hollywood. Lesbians want to kick ass. Nerds, they like watching violence because it's not in their lives and they like to fantasize. They also like to see pretty girls. So when you have pretty girls fighting, it gives them a little stupid boner. So those two groups like seeing it. The rest of us, including normal women, we're not enjoying all of these kick-ass chicks because it doesn't make sense. And the fact that a feminist saved the universe is so fucking gay (*Get Off My Lawn Podcast #139*, 00:37:55 – 00:38:20).

Through satire and casual vulgarity, McInnes normalizes a vision of gender rooted in passivity and abnormalizes the inverse – women as protectors and heroes. His casual asides, delivered with a smirk, position misogynistic and homophobic statements as harmless banter yet the ideological work remains clear: male governance is rational and necessary for preserving societal order. This use of humour reflects a similar use of irony poisoning to that used by Fuentes in order to avoid accountability for the harm of their language (Gais, 2021; P. Smith, 2023).

Although Tate, Fuentes, and McInnes frequently articulate contemptuous views about women, misogyny classification reveals that explicit misogynistic language constitutes only a small fraction of their overall podcast discourse. The majority of speech acts in their podcasts are classified as “non-misogynistic.” For instance, only approximately 4.6% of Tate’s content, 2.9% of Fuentes’s, and 4.5% of McInnes’s podcast speech acts are flagged as misogynistic. This

pattern highlights how misogyny operates less through isolated slurs and more through less explicitly violent language that contributes to the mainstreaming and normalization of patriarchal hierarchies, paternalistic narratives, and ironic disavowal. It suggests, importantly, that the emotional and ideological reproduction of gender inequality is embedded in broader discursive frameworks reducible to isolated instances of verbal hostility.

Tate, Fuentes, and McInnes reconstruct patriarchal dominance through a set of interlocking strategies that present misogynistic beliefs as truth, thus naturalizing gender hierarchy as a universal fact merely suppressed by social taboos (R. W. Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Paternalism is recast as virtue, positioning male control as necessary for women's safety and societal stability (Das, 2022). Efforts to reverse gender equality are framed not as regressions but as noble acts of civilizational rescue, aligning personal grievance with broader restorationist politics (Awan, 2017; Ribeiro et al., 2021). Throughout, humour and irony are deployed to disavow extremism, enabling listeners to internalize reactionary messages while dismissing them as harmless entertainment (Gais, 2021; P. Smith, 2023). Across their podcasts, the normalization of patriarchal order thus emerges not through explicit declarations alone, but through affective appeals to the audience that situate gendered dominance as natural, necessary, and morally righteous.

### **3.5.2 Grievance as Identity**

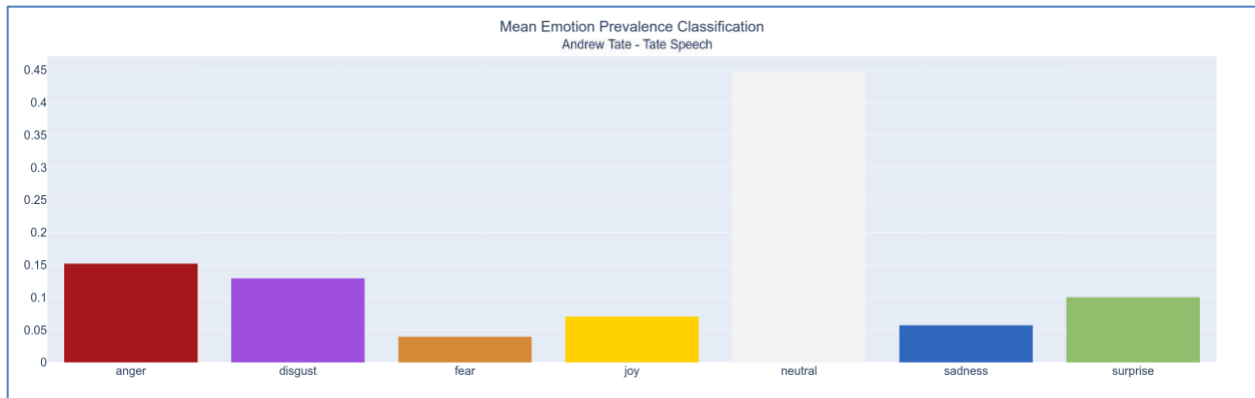
A second major discursive strategy among Tate, Fuentes, and McInnes is the construction of grievance not merely as a feeling, but as a valid masculine identity. Grievance becomes the defining emotional register of modern manhood: a constant sense of betrayal and exclusion by feminism, liberalism, and multiculturalism. Rather than portraying men as dominant and secure, these influencers frame masculinity as embattled and requiring perpetual vigilance to survive.

Tate uses the common metaphor of “the Matrix,” popular among Red Pill misogynist discourse. He uses it to delineate a vast conspiracy of media, legal systems, and cultural institutions designed to suppress men who speak “truth.” He warns his audience, “The Matrix is out to fuck you. Okay. This is The Matrix. TM. Big schlong. And what it does is it aims to fuck you and everybody else, because that’s what it’s always done” (*EMERGENCY MEETING EPISODE 51*, 02:05:03 – 02:05:17). He frames every deplatforming incident or legal challenge he personally faces as evidence of a system-wide conspiracy. In doing so he externalizes the consequences of his actions as proof of all men being engaged in a battle for survival. This narrative is present in his description of a BBC interview set-up, where he portrays himself as the target of government-orchestrated ambush:

The Matrix has tried to take us down...They arrested us for no reason in Romania... First day in jail, the BBC has been instructed by the UK government, we have to damage your reputation... Before they can get out there and tell the truth, we need to put in the kill shot... You have been tasked with the mission, Agent Lucy of the Matrix... train up your best agent... a feminist woman... sit down with her questions... come out swinging... Are you a rapist?... expecting me to sit there like a pussy, unaware... realizing that my perspicacity is unmatched... I Aikido the first one and the second one... I recorded them... and I release the interview before they can release their edited version... YOU FAILED! This took months to set up!... The Matrix has set up this whole scam and you fucking ruined it woman Lucy... (*EMERGENCY MEETING EPISODE 42*, 01:35:53 – 01:37:50).

In this narrative, Tate casts himself not as a controversial figure but as a righteous fighter, embodying masculine strength through resistance. His discourse models a worldview where constant readiness for battle – rhetorical, cultural, and physical – becomes a proof of manhood. Here, grievance is not incidental; it is constitutive of masculine identity itself.

**Figure 3.4 Mean Emotion Prevalence in Andrew Tate's Podcasts**



This identity formation is not only discursive but affectively saturated. As shown in Figure 3.4, Tate's podcasts are marked by a heightened prevalence of anger (15.2%) and disgust (13%), revealing how grievance is not simply argued but saturated throughout his discursive performances.

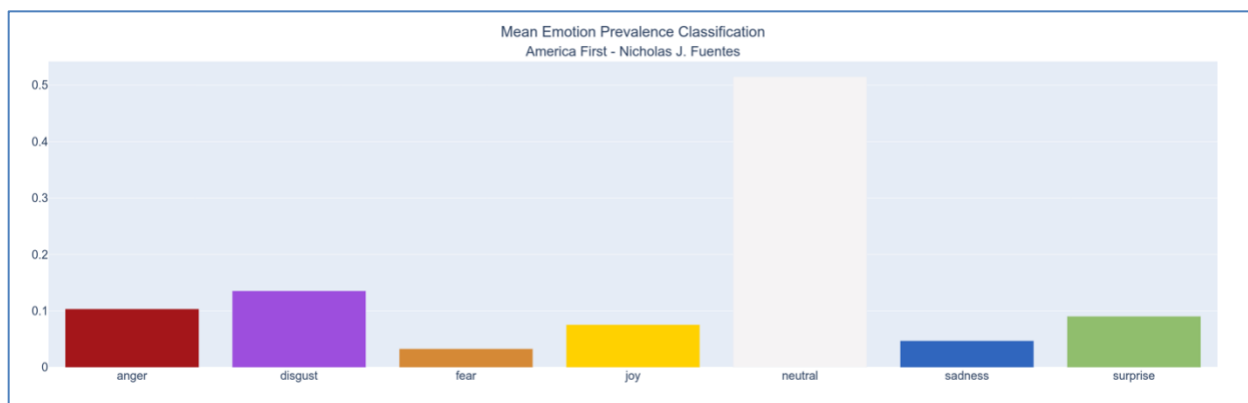
Fuentes amplifies the strategy of grievance by fusing it with racial paranoia. He portrays white Christian men as an oppressed minority, framing demographic change as an existential threat. In a typical example, he states:

There was a black school shooter the other day... and he was out the next day. School shooter. Black, by the way. Now why do you think that was? This is an apartheid state... We are not going to preserve our quality of life and our standard of living as white people until that aspect of it is addressed... We have to stand up for ourselves, not as Americans... not necessarily as Christians. As white people. Because it is under that pretext that we are being attacked... We are being attacked because of our whiteness and because of our expressions as white people, because of our history and heritage as white people... It is that part of our identity which we have to stand up unapologetically and defend without apologizing (*America First Ep. 890*, 02:23:04 – 02:24:53).

Fuentes elevates white Christian male victimhood to a civilizational crisis, insisting that whiteness itself must be defended unapologetically. His rhetoric fuses personal grievance with racial and political identity, constructing a siege mentality that mirrors Kimmel's (2013) notion of "aggrieved entitlement," where the perceived loss of privilege is experienced as profound existential injustice.

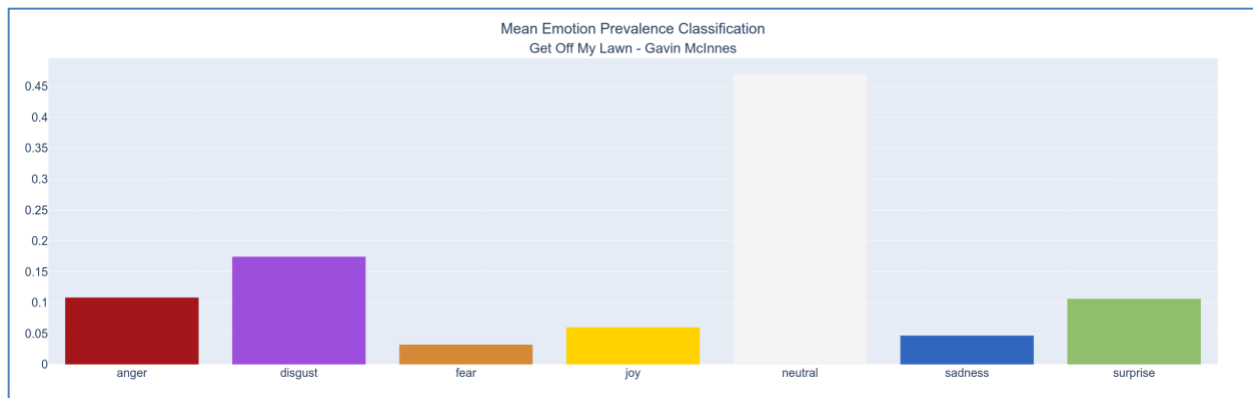
This affective pattern outlined with Tate above is also visible in Figure 3.5, where disgust is the most prevalent emotional register (13.5%) across Fuentes's content, closely followed by anger. This emotional infrastructure fortifies grievance narratives by saturating them with moral panic and urgency.

**Figure 3.5** Mean Emotion Prevalence in Nick Fuentes's Podcasts



Gavin McInnes similarly cultivates a narrative of masculine siege, lamenting that "straight white males" are the only group society permits to ridicule without consequence. Across his podcast episodes, he claims that men defending traditional values are "cancelled, censored, banned..." tapping into everyday users' fears to forge in-group solidarity through a sense of shared persecution. By highlighting experiences of social marginalization, McInnes constructs masculinity itself as a precarious and endangered position. His podcasts present grievance as both cultural reality and masculine duty reflecting broader patterns in extremist recruitment, where shared perceptions of injustice foster resentment, loyalty, and oppositional identity (Beirich & Via, 2022).

**Figure 3.6** Mean Emotion Prevalence in Gavin McInnes's Podcasts



As shown in Figure 3.6, McInnes's podcasts exhibit the highest overall levels of disgust (17.5%), suggesting that contempt (and by extension grievance) are part of the deep affective pulls structuring his discourse.

Across all three influencers, grievance is not a passing emotion but a foundational identity. Masculinity is framed as inherently embattled, requiring vigilance and solidarity against feminized, liberalized, and multicultural forces. Grievance becomes a lens through which audiences interpret their personal struggles, political frustrations, and cultural anxieties, transforming everyday discontents into a collective identity of righteous defiance.

### 3.5.3 From Grievance to Call for Violence

Establishing grievance as a defining masculine trait, Tate, Fuentes, and McInnes' discourse escalates toward militarization, situating violence, confrontation, and coercive force as not only justified, but necessary for the survival of authentic masculinity. Across their podcasts, grievance transforms from a condition of emotional injury into a call for combative, and often physical, restoration of male power.

Tate glorifies masculine worth as found in the willingness to fight and defend oneself. Drawing on his kickboxing background, he advises:

It's not always the winning and the losing. It's the fighting in the first place... If you're only going to fight when you're guaranteed to win, then no bravery is required... You have to fight because it's the right thing to do and because God is watching (*EMERGENCY MEETING EPISODE 53, 02:44:41 – 02:45:31*)

By framing struggle as a divine moral obligation, Tate binds masculinity to sacrifice, duty, and accountability before a higher power. In his view, refusing to fight is a profound failure of manhood; exerting violence, even in the face of probable defeat, becomes the ultimate proof of masculine authenticity.

Fuentes extends this logic into explicit calls for state force. By casting multiculturalism, immigration, and feminism as coordinated assaults on white masculinity, he inflames racial grievance and invites his primarily young, male audience to see themselves as persecuted insiders fighting for survival. He quickly pivots directly from victimhood to militarization. For example, in clashes between the “Groyper Army” and campus activists (Anderson, 2019), as well as his complaints about digital censorship on platforms like Tiktok, Fuentes insists that passive resistance is futile. He contends that force – cultural, political, even physical – is justified. He urges the construction of a robust enforcement apparatus, telling his listeners:

What's really unfair too when these people jump the border wall... is the immigrants that bribed their way into the country... the real victims of illegal immigration are all the Chinese people that had to pay a bribe to get citizenship. Or all these Indians that had corporations smuggle them in... It's really unfair to all the other immigrants that came in... Like anchor babies... I never hear this said. That these people do not belong to us... They have a home... Why is that our responsibility in any way? They should be treated like escaped convicts in this country, running around. And we should be building up a massive police force to get rid of every single one of them (*America First Ep. 586, 00:32:27 – 00:33:57*).

By casting immigrants as criminal invaders, Fuentes reimagines demographic change not as a policy debate, but as a security threat requiring mass surveillance and expulsion. What begins as personal grievance against liberal pluralism crystallizes into demands for militarized expulsion of targeted groups. This rhetorical move reflects broader patterns in digital radicalization, where affective grievance escalates into political prescriptions for domination, exclusion, and authoritarian enforcement (Awan, 2017; Ging, 2017). Fuentes's discourse fuses white racial grievance with the concrete machinery of state violence, positioning militarization as the inevitable defense of masculine, racial, and civilizational integrity.

McInnes's discourse also circulates within a paramilitary logic as is crystalized in the Proud Boys' ethos of "Western chauvinism." While he couches much of his rhetoric in humour, McInnes gives overt celebration to street-level violence as a means of enforcing masculine hierarchy. He recounts anecdotes from brawls with a shrug, treating punching and intimidation as routine ritual rather than deviant behaviour (*Get Off My Lawn Podcast #51*, 00:31:53). The very design of Proud Boys initiation rites, which involved controlled physical confrontations, underscores McInnes's conviction that violence is a sacrament of brotherhood.

In one episode, McInnes fantasizes about "getting back to violence" as a solution to social ills:

And I noticed this in the New York Post... these two boys got quote-unquote tuned up... The New York Post's angle was, Nazis beat up wonderful little angels just because they had an Antifa sticker on their phone. How did you know they had an Antifa sticker? Because their phone was in the guy's face and he was being recorded... These guys can't afford to be fired. They work for, you know, craft beer distributors lugging kegs. So when you try to ruin their lives and make their children starve, you get beat up... This is why the press and the police are too involved in our lives. Everything we could handle ourselves,

thank you very much. We need to get back to violence, don't you think? Someone messes with you, beat them up (*Get Off My Lawn Podcast #35*, 00:27:53 - 00:29:14).

Here, grievance against media and political opponents shifts seamlessly into a call for personal retribution. Within this framework, law enforcement and journalism are portrayed as obstacles to natural justice, while personal retribution becomes framed as civic duty. McInnes's rhetoric collapses the line between grievance and militancy, portraying violence as both self-defense and a moral reclamation of masculine sovereignty.

Across Tate, Fuentes, and McInnes, the emotional energy of grievance is converted into calls for violent restoration. The defense of masculinity is no longer symbolic; it demands action – physical, political, and structural. As critical masculinity studies have observed, when hegemonic masculinity perceives its dominance as threatened, it often intensifies its reliance on coercive force (R. W. Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Within these podcasts, grievance culture serves not simply to diagnose the alleged crisis of manhood, but to authorize militant responses as virtuous, necessary, and heroic acts of gendered reclamation.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This study shows that podcasting has become a significant cultural site for the construction and circulation of supremacist masculinities. Through the cases of Andrew Tate, Nick Fuentes, and Gavin McInnes, we trace how podcasting enables the normalization of hegemonic masculine ideals centered on masculine dominance, grievance, and violent coercive restoration. Rather than relying primarily on overt hate speech, these influencers embed gendered and racialized dominance into everyday discourse through affective infrastructures of resentment, disgust, and outrage. Supremacist masculinities are framed not as extremist deviations but as necessary defenses against perceived civilizational decline, binding personal grievance to broader projects of political and cultural restoration.

Our mixed-method analysis shows how affect and ideology work together to construct masculinities that are simultaneously embattled and militant. Through humour, storytelling, and moralizing frames, influencers transform feelings of emasculation into calls for confrontation, both rhetorical and physical. Podcasting, in this context, operates as a channel for ideological transmission via affective performances that mainstream radicalized masculinities as well as political and gendered extremism. This study suggests masculinities are produced through everyday speech acts, emotional bonding, and the iterative normalization of violence within current manosphere media landscapes that include podcasts. Podcasting is not a peripheral medium, it is a key terrain where contemporary formations of gendered extremism are constructed, legitimized, and sustained.

At its core, the podcasting of supremacist masculinities is not simply talk; it is a rehearsal for violence. The narratives spun across these digital spaces do not end at grievance; they harden grievance into identity, into duty, and ultimately into a license to harm. In these ecosystems, violence is not just normalized, it becomes valorized, a space where grievance finds redemption through domination. As long as these affective infrastructures remain unregulated and unchecked, the normalization of gendered hatred and coercive force will continue to spread, shaping not only digital cultures but the material conditions of violence beyond them.

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## Chapter 4

# Read Me When I'm Dead: Manifestos and the Gendered Rage Behind Lone-Actor Attacks

### Preface

This article, submitted as a single-authored piece, completes the empirical arc of the dissertation. If forums collectivize affect, and podcasts translate it into mainstream cultural logics, manifestos codify grievance into legacy texts that justify violence and pass ideological scripts to future actors. Manifestos are therefore not isolated ramblings of “lone actors,” but function as ideological batons through which violent extremism circulates across generations.

Drawing on a database of 100 violent extremist manifestos written between 1966 and 2025, this paper uses a mixed-methods approach that combines topic modeling with thematic discourse analysis to examine how gender-driven hatred circulates across these texts. The analysis identifies recurring clusters of misogyny, sexual grievance, and gender-based rage across both explicitly gender-motivated manifestos and in texts where misogyny operate as a connective thread linking racism, antisemitism, and anti-government sentiment. This approach balances scale with interpretive depth, allowing broad patterns to emerge while remaining attentive to the emotional and rhetorical features that make manifestos powerful tools of radicalization.

The findings reveal three interconnected dynamics. First, misogyny appears not as a secondary grievance but as a central, recurring formation. Whether expressed through incel-style narratives of rejection, traditionalist complaints about feminism, or contempt toward LGBTQ+ communities, gendered hate provides the emotional coherence that holds otherwise disparate ideologies together. Second, the manifestos reflect “salad bar extremism,” where perpetrators

draw selectively from many worldviews. Yet misogyny is not a topping but the base layer – the lettuce that appears in almost every combination. It provides the foundational logic for interpreting social decline and legitimizing violence. These patterns show that contemporary violent extremism cannot be understood without recognizing how fundamentally gendered it is. Third, suicidality is structurally embedded in many gender-driven manifestos, echoing the patterns identified in Chapter 2 where suicidal despair often fused with fantasies of revenge and legacy. Unlike xenophobic attackers who often plan to survive, misogynist perpetrators frequently script their own death as a final act of agency, framing self-annihilation as both revenge and legacy.

This paper extends the dissertation’s mythological framework. It applies three tailored BERTopic models (full corpus, gender-driven cases, and mixed-motive cases) to nearly three million words of manifesto text. The patterns identified through computational models are then validated and contextualized through qualitative coding, ensuring that both dominant clusters and subtle expressions of gendered grievance are captured. This dual approach reflects the dissertation’s broader commitment to integrating computational and qualitative methods.

## 4.1 Introduction

Ideologically motivated violence has become a pressing global security concern, with extremist narratives driving mass casualty events across North America, Europe, and beyond. Unlike traditional forms of terrorism driven by hierarchical organizations (e.g., Al-Qaeda or ISIS), what Canadian security agencies classify as Ideologically Motivated Violent Extremism (IMVE) encompasses a decentralized and fluid network of individuals and groups motivated by xenophobic, anti-authority, gender-driven, and other ideological grievances (Beirich & Via, 2022; CSIS, 2025; Flynn & Demkiw, 2022; Public Safety Canada, 2024). IMVE has led to real-world consequences, with ideological narratives fueling racism, hate speech, and mass violence. Events such as the Charlottesville “Unite the Right” rally that led to the death of anti-hate protesters (Atkinson, 2018), the Christchurch mosque shootings in New Zealand (Gilbert & Elley, 2020), the Texas outlet mall shooting (Gais et al., 2023), the mosque stabbing in Turkey (Center on Extremism, 2024), the recent 2025 Antioch school shooting in Nashville (Latham, 2025) illustrate the global scale of this threat. A common and increasingly prominent feature of these events is the presence of extremist manifestos – written, audio, or video declarations that expose the radical ideologies, motivations, and justifications of the perpetrators (Ebner et al., 2022; Ganor, 2002; Kaldor, 2021; Kupper & Meloy, 2021; Ware, 2020). These written declarations have become essential elements of extremists’ ideological and affective infrastructures, functioning as communicative repertoires that provide justification, validation, and tactical guidance. They serve as major tools for group signal-boosting, badge-of-honor communication, and recipe-books for copycats (Ebner et al., 2022; Johnston & Meger, 2022; O’Hanlon et al., 2024; Ware, 2020).

One of the defining characteristics of contemporary IMVE is that perpetrators are frequently self-radicalized through digital platforms rather than recruited through direct organizational contact. These actors may never affiliate with an extremist group but are instead socialized in decentralized online environments where algorithmic curation and echo chambers

expose them to increasingly radical content (Beirich & Via, 2022; Bundtzen, 2023; Hemmila & Perliger, 2025; Holzer et al., 2022; Kennedy-Kollar, 2024, p. 96). Peer validation and anonymity further reinforce grievance narratives and mobilization toward violence (Beirich & Via, 2022; Bundtzen, 2023; Hemmila & Perliger, 2025). Such individuals often engage in what scholars term “salad bar extremism” or hybridization, picking and choosing elements from different extremist worldviews that best suit their personal circumstances and grievances, blending disparate logics like misogyny, racism, antisemitism, and conspiracism according to individual preference (Deliso, 2023; Gartenstein-Ross & Plant, 2023; Hemmila & Perliger, 2025; Meleagrou-Hitchens & Ayad, 2023). This fluidity and mixing of ideological components, shaped by online subcultures and digital infrastructures, makes detection and prevention of extremist violence notably more complex than with traditional group-based terrorism.

Existing scholarship on violent extremist manifestos has produced valuable insights into individual motivation, ideological framing, and pathways to violence, but it remains limited in its comparative scope, scale, and sustained engagement with gender (O’Hanlon et al., 2024). Much of the literature focuses on single cases, specific movements, or narrow time periods, which constrains our ability to identify patterns that cut across ideologies and historical contexts. In addition, while misogyny and gender-based grievance are increasingly recognized as relevant to violent extremism, they are often treated as secondary or derivative of racial, religious, or political motivations rather than as structuring forces in their own right.

Against this backdrop, this study makes four interrelated contributions. First, it extends the limited literature on comparative manifesto analysis by examining violent extremist texts across ideological categories and historical periods. Second, it introduces a systematically curated database of 100 violent extremist manifestos spanning 1966–2025, addressing the absence of large-scale, cross-ideological corpora in manifesto research. Third, it demonstrates the value of integrating computational topic modeling (BERTopic) with qualitative discourse analysis to

examine long-form extremist texts at scale while retaining interpretive depth. Fourth, it treats misogyny and gender-driven hate as a core ideological element and gateway to violent extremism.

In the following section, I establish the groundwork for the subsequent analysis by examining the ideological and discursive intersections between violent extremism and gender-driven hatred. This literature review addresses three interrelated dimensions. First, it traces the growing recognition of gender-motivated extremism as a distinct and escalating security threat, showing how violent misogyny and anti-LGBTQ+ hatred have evolved from being dismissed as “personal” grievances to being acknowledged as primary extremist motivations. Second, it extends this discussion by showing how gender-driven hatred functions as a connective ideology linking racism, ethnonationalism, antisemitism, and anti-government conspiracism – what scholars often describe as the “salad bar” structure of contemporary extremism. Third, it examines how extremist manifestos function as communicative and ideological batons that carry violent ideas, tactics, and justifications across generations of attackers. The paper proceeds by detailing the manifesto database and mixed-methods approach, including quantitative classification, BERTopic modeling, and qualitative discourse analysis, followed by presentation of the empirical findings and a discussion of their theoretical and policy implications.

## **4.2 Literature Review**

### **4.2.1 Gender-Motivated Extremism as a Growing Threat**

Research increasingly recognizes violent misogyny and male-supremacist ideology as a security threat that has evolved from being dismissed as “personal” grievances to being acknowledged as primary extremist motivations (Johnston & Meger, 2022; O’Hanlon et al., 2024). This recognition reflects broader shifts in the extremism research field, which has moved beyond narrow terrorism-focused approaches to examine ideologically motivated violence as a broader phenomenon

(Berger, 2019; Miller-Idriss, 2025; Pruden et al., 2022). Traditionally, counter-extremism efforts focused on political, religious, or ethnonationalist motives, often overlooking gender-driven factors. However, recent analyses by security agencies and researchers point to misogynist extremism on the rise across multiple jurisdictions (CSIS, 2024; Hastings et al., 2020; Johnston & Meger, 2022). This shift is exemplified by debates in the United Kingdom about adding extreme misogyny as an official category of extremism, given fears that misogynist radicalization is “gaining traction and fueling extremism” among young men (Wong, 2024). International bodies like the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) have likewise called for integrating gender perspectives into counter-radicalization strategies, noting the strong overlap between violent misogynistic attitudes and support for extremist violence (Johnston & Meger, 2022).

Canada’s expansion of IMVE threats to include gender-driven attacks represents a watershed moment in this recognition. A 17-year-old’s deadly 2020 stabbing in Toronto – inspired by incel ideology – became the first such case prosecuted as terrorism on Canadian soil (Isai, 2023; Lockyer et al., 2024; O’Hanlon et al., 2024). The perpetrator was part of an online incel community that “expresses a gender-driven, violent misogynist worldview,” and his attack was treated as an act of terrorism motivated by hatred of women, underscoring that violent anti-female ideology is not mere social pathology but can rise to the level of terrorism (Carr, 2022). However, legal recognition remains inconsistent. The 2023 University of Waterloo attack case demonstrates these challenges, where despite clear ideological motivation and references to prior mass attackers, the judge ruled the perpetrator’s beliefs were “too scattered and disparate” to constitute a coherent ideology sufficient for terrorism charges (Baker, 2025; Padda, 2025). Despite growing recognition of gender-motivated extremism, the continued refusal to treat such violence as ideological exposes how outdated legal and policy frameworks remain (Padda, 2025).

Much of this threat emerges from the “manosphere” – an umbrella term for a constellation of online communities united by anti-feminist and anti-women sentiment, including incels, Men’s Rights Activists (MRAs), “Men Going Their Own Way” (MGTOW), pickup artist forums, and other male supremacist groups (Kennedy-Kollar, 2024; Wong, 2024). These subcultures share the belief that cisgender men are oppressed by the advances of women and 2SLGBTQ+ people, creating what researchers describe as “networked misogyny” where ideas circulate and amplify across different platforms, creating feedback loops of hatred with proven links to real-world violence (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Bundtzen, 2023; Chan, 2023; Sugiura, 2021). Central to understanding this gender-motivated extremism is the concept of “aggrieved entitlement” – the anger men feel when denied what they believe is rightfully theirs by virtue of their gender (Haase, 2021; Kalish & Kimmel, 2010; Kimmel, 2013; Miller, 2024). This psychological mechanism helps explain how perceived personal rejection becomes transformed into ideological grievance. As feminist theorist Kate Manne (2017) argues, misogyny frequently operates through logics of enforced recognition: when women do not offer men the attention, sex, or care presumed to be their due, this absence is reframed as rejection or betrayal. In this sense, manifestos serve as vehicles for expressing rage at being denied sexual access, romantic relationships, or social status (Thorburn et al., 2023). Aggrieved entitlement manifests as fury toward women who refuse traditional gender roles and LGBTQ+ individuals who represent threats to conventional masculine identity, with violence framed as justified retribution for perceived injustices. The Isla Vista shooter exemplified this pattern, writing extensively about his entitlement to women’s attention and positioning his attack as righteous revenge against those who “wronged” him, while the 2018 Toronto van attacker similarly told police he was “angry that they [women] would give their love and affection to obnoxious brutes” rather than to him (Miller, 2024).

The incel subculture in particular has been tied to numerous attacks starting with the Isla Vista killings – often cited as the first incel terrorist attack – followed by multiple deadly incidents

where perpetrators explicitly cited their hatred of women or sexual rejection as motivation (Hoffman et al., 2020; Miller, 2024; Witt, 2020). Each high-profile attack is celebrated in incel forums and often referenced by subsequent attackers, creating a copycat effect evident in manifestos where later attackers praise or draw inspiration from earlier misogynistic killers, creating what scholars have traced as a “lineage of influence” stretching from one manifesto to the next – effectively a discursive chain linking one extremist to another (Baele et al., 2021; Ebner et al., 2022; K. K. Padda, Forthcoming; Ware, 2020; Witt, 2020).

#### **4.2.2 Misogyny as a Connective Tissue of Violent Extremism**

A critical insight from recent research is that misogyny rarely exists in isolation within extremist ideologies; instead, it frequently intersects with and serves as what scholars describe as “connective tissue”, the bridging element that links racism, ethnonationalism, antisemitism, and anti-government conspiracism across different forms of violent extremism (Bundtzen, 2023; Pruden et al., 2022). This “connective tissue” operates within a broader ideological framework, in which gender-based hatred provides both the emotional resonance and structural continuity that sustain hybrid extremist worldviews. This pattern challenges traditional approaches that treat different extremist motivations as separate phenomena, revealing instead how gender-driven hatred operates both as a standalone extremist worldview and as a bridge connecting disparate forms of hate (DiBranco, 2020; Johnston & Meger, 2022). White supremacists and ethnonationalists routinely incorporate virulent anti-feminism into their worldview, with conspiracy theories like the “Great Replacement” often pinning blame on feminism for lowering birth rates among white women (Global Observatory Administrator, 2023; Pruden et al., 2022; Wong, 2024). In these narratives, women’s liberation and gender equality are cast as existential threats to the nation or race, with women who refuse traditional gender roles viewed as traitors deserving of violence as a means to restore patriarchal order alongside racial purity. Similarly, anti-LGBTQ+ hatred frequently intersects with misogyny, as many extreme-right attackers view feminism and

LGBTQ+ acceptance as interconnected aspects of a “liberal agenda” destroying social norms (Global Observatory Administrator, 2023; Wong, 2024).

Recent attacks underscore this ideological convergence, with perpetrators like the 2023 Allen, Texas mass shooter harbouring misogynistic, white supremacist, and racist beliefs simultaneously, while the 2021 Atlanta spa shooter combined anti-Asian racism with misogynistic objectification of women (ADL, 2023; Bundtzen, 2023). The 2020 Hanau shooter similarly combined misogynistic grievances with racist targeting, demonstrating how attackers simultaneously target women, feminists, LGBTQ+ individuals, and racial minorities as interconnected threats to traditional hierarchies (Bundtzen, 2023; DeCook & Kelly, 2022).

This intersectional hatred reflects what experts describe as contemporary extremism’s “salad bar” approach – a mix of racist, antisemitic, anti-2SLGBTQ+, anti-government, and misogynistic narratives where gender anxieties often intersect with and reinforce other hate ideologies (Deliso, 2023; Gartenstein-Ross & Plant, 2023; Hemmila & Perliger, 2025; Meleagrou-Hitchens & Ayad, 2023; Pruden et al., 2022). Misogyny acts as both a gateway and common denominator: once individuals internalize narratives blaming women for personal and societal problems, it becomes a cognitive stepping stone to adding other hated out-groups to that framework (Bundtzen, 2023; European Commission, 2025; Miller-Idriss, 2025; Wong, 2024).

The “manosphere” exemplifies this dynamic, serving as a pipeline where disaffected men can be introduced to broader extremist ideologies through initially gender-focused grievance (Global Observatory Administrator, 2023). Neo-fascist and alt-right influencers often lament the loss of “traditional” gender roles and capitalize on male insecurities about masculinity in crisis, positioning themselves as defenders of manhood and, by extension, of the nation or race. This fusion of gender grievances with broader extremist ideologies demonstrates how combating one facet of extremism (say, racist propaganda) in isolation may fail if misogynistic messaging –

sometimes subtler or seen as more socially acceptable – is left unaddressed. Researchers argue for a more holistic approach that recognizes male supremacism as a form of extremist ideology in its own right, one that both stands alone and bolsters other violent worldviews (Carr, 2022; Global Observatory Administrator, 2023).

#### **4.2.3 Manifestos as Ideological Batons**

Mainstream discourse often dismisses attackers who author manifestos as isolated “nutters” or deranged loners (Colman, 2010). This interpretation overlooks the role manifestos play as communicative and ideological texts. These are critical documents for understanding how extremist ideology operates and spreads. Manifestos, whether written or in audio/video format, serve as a means of communication for attackers, revealing a network of extremist beliefs, motivations, and justifications (Ebner et al., 2022; Ganor, 2002; Kaldor, 2021; Kupper & Meloy, 2021; Ware, 2020). They show how individuals rationalize violence and where their ideas come from, often revealing a sense of political or societal purpose behind acts of terror (Ebner et al., 2022). Scholars describe this intergenerational influence as “baton-passing,” where attackers reference and build on previous perpetrators (Wood, 2022). In this article, I extend this concept by showing manifestos themselves function as ideological batons – the material objects through which violent narratives and tactical scripts are transmitted across attacks.

Manifesto authors frequently frame themselves as ideological soldiers, martyrs, or crusaders who are continuing a mission initiated by previous attackers, explicitly drawing inspiration from earlier texts while positioning their own violence as the next link in an ongoing extremist campaign (Baele et al., 2021; Demir & Çona, 2024; Lockyer et al., 2024; O’Hanlon et al., 2024). The El Paso shooter’s explicit praise for the Christchurch shooter – stating “in general, I support the Christchurch shooter and his manifesto” – exemplifies this direct ideological transmission (Ware, 2020, p. 3). Moreover, the 2022 Bratislava, Slovakia shooter referenced

multiple attackers in his manifesto, including the 2022 Buffalo and 2019 Christchurch attackers. He not only was inspired by their actions but also mimicked the structure of their manifesto in its question-and-answer format (Rose, 2022). This demonstrates the power of these written *ex ante* and *post facto* statements that are being used as blueprints (DeCook & Kelly, 2022; Pruden et al., 2022).

Crucially, this extends across ideological boundaries. Attackers frequently cite manifestos from different extremists and ideologies, based on their preferences or tactical insights (aka salad-bar extremism) (Hemmila & Perliger, 2025; Pruden et al., 2022). Even individuals whose primary motivations center on racism, anti-government sentiment, or religious extremism often reference manifestos from misogynistic attackers like the Isla Vista shooter, suggesting that gender-driven hatred serves as a common ideological bridge across different forms of extremism, and exemplifies misogyny as the “lettuce” in the salad bar (Hoffman et al., 2020; Lockyer et al., 2024; Miller, 2024).

Digital platforms play a significant role in transforming the traditional concept of “leaderless resistance” from simple organizational decentralization into complex networks of distributed leadership where manifestos serve as persistent ideological infrastructure (Bundtzen, 2023; Chermak et al., 2010; Kennedy-Kollar, 2024). While “leaderless resistance” originally emerged as “an effort to shield leaders of the violent right from criminal prosecution” by creating isolated “lone wolf” actors, contemporary digital ecosystems enable perpetual baton-passing. In these networks, extremists simultaneously operate as both followers and leaders within interconnected networks (Dampousse & Smith, 2004; Dupré et al., 2024; O’Hanlon et al., 2024). Attackers like the 2014 Isla Vista shooter have posthumously become “leaders” and “saints” whose manifestos continue passing ideological batons to new generations of extremists, providing foundational texts that guide subsequent radicalization processes without requiring formal organizational structures (Baele et al., 2021; K. K. Padda, Forthcoming; Witt, 2020).

This contemporary extremism challenges traditional counterterrorism approaches focused on disrupting hierarchical organizations, as it reveals how manifestos create self-sustaining cycles of ideological transmission that operate across platforms, subcultures, and national boundaries (Kennedy-Kollar, 2024; O’Hanlon et al., 2024). Understanding manifestos as strategic communication batons allows researchers and policymakers to map broader ideological patterns, identify how extremist narratives evolve and spread, and develop prevention strategies that address the systemic transmission mechanisms rather than merely individual cases of radicalization (Pruden et al., 2022; Ware, 2020).

### **4.3 Data and Methods**

#### **4.3.1 Overview and Scope**

This study is part of a broader research initiative aimed at building a comprehensive database of violent extremist manifestos to better understand the pathways linking extremist ideological beliefs and violent actions. Specifically, this paper analyzes a subset of 100 manifestos authored by lone-actor violent extremists who committed attacks between 1966 and 2025. The dataset is distinctive for its scale and diversity, encompassing incidents across multiple countries and spanning nearly six decades, while focusing exclusively on manifestos tied to actualized acts of violence. These individuals carried out ideologically, politically, and/or religiously motivated violence, including mass shootings, stabbings, vehicular attacks, and other violent acts across multiple countries, with the majority (81%) occurring in the United States (Table 4.1). The analysis presented here focuses specifically on texts authored by individuals who have carried out violent attacks, and non-violent extremists and aspirational extremist writings were excluded. This approach ensures the data directly reflect the ideological beliefs and motivations that were operationalized into concrete acts of violence.

**Table 4.1** Geographic Distribution of Violent Extremist Manifestos (1966–2025)

<b>Country</b>	<b>Number of Attack</b>
USA	81
Canada	7
Germany	3
Australia	2
Slovakia	1
Brazil	1
Türkiye	1
United Kingdom	1
Finland	1
Norway	1
New Zealand	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

The inclusion criteria were as follows:

1. The attack was committed by a single person with no known formal affiliation to established terrorist organizations.
2. There is reasonable certainty that the text was written personally by the perpetrator.
3. The text was written before or shortly after the attack.
4. The text was either written in English or was translated into English by a credible source.

Initially, 127 cases were collected, from which 27 cases were excluded because they either did not result in an actualized violent act, were too brief to contain meaningful ideological content (e.g., two-word farewell notes), or were hand-written in languages for which no reliable translation was available at the time of analysis. This iterative screening resulted in a finalized dataset of 100 violent extremist cases.

#### **4.3.2 Data Collection and Sources**

The initial list of cases was developed through a multi-stage process. First, I systematically reviewed existing academic literature, open-source repositories, and legal/media archives. Second, I drew on professional networks and informal exchanges with colleagues in extremism research to identify additional cases and verify grey-area incidents. In this study, “manifesto” is

treated as a functional category, referring to perpetrator-authored texts that articulate ideological grievance, justification for violence, and self-positioning in relation to an attack. Accordingly, the dataset includes not only formal written manifestos but also personal journals, suicide notes, confessional letters, transcripts of audio/video recordings when they clearly articulated ideological motivations. In a small number of cases, such as the Toronto van attack or the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting, police interview transcripts were used in place of formal manifestos, provided they contained clear ideological content. In these instances, interviewer questions and narrative framing were removed to retain focus on the perpetrator's own statements and belief system, aiming to minimize distortion during topic modeling and preserve the integrity of the ideological voice being analyzed. Other manifesto studies have similarly included texts beyond formal manifestos when they served the same ideological purpose (see Pruden et al., 2022; Van Brunt & Taylor, 2020). Similarly, where materials were obtained from curated sources like SchoolShooters.info and contained editorial commentary or researcher annotations, only the original words of the perpetrator were retained to maintain fidelity to the attacker's own narrative.

The final corpus included approximately 2.85 million words, with document lengths varying considerably from as few as 23 words to more than 717,000 words. This substantial variation reflects the diverse nature of extremist communication, ranging from brief suicide notes or social media posts preceding attacks to extensive autobiographical manifestos detailing years of ideological development and grievance formation.

#### **4.3.3 Violent Extremist Manifesto Database**

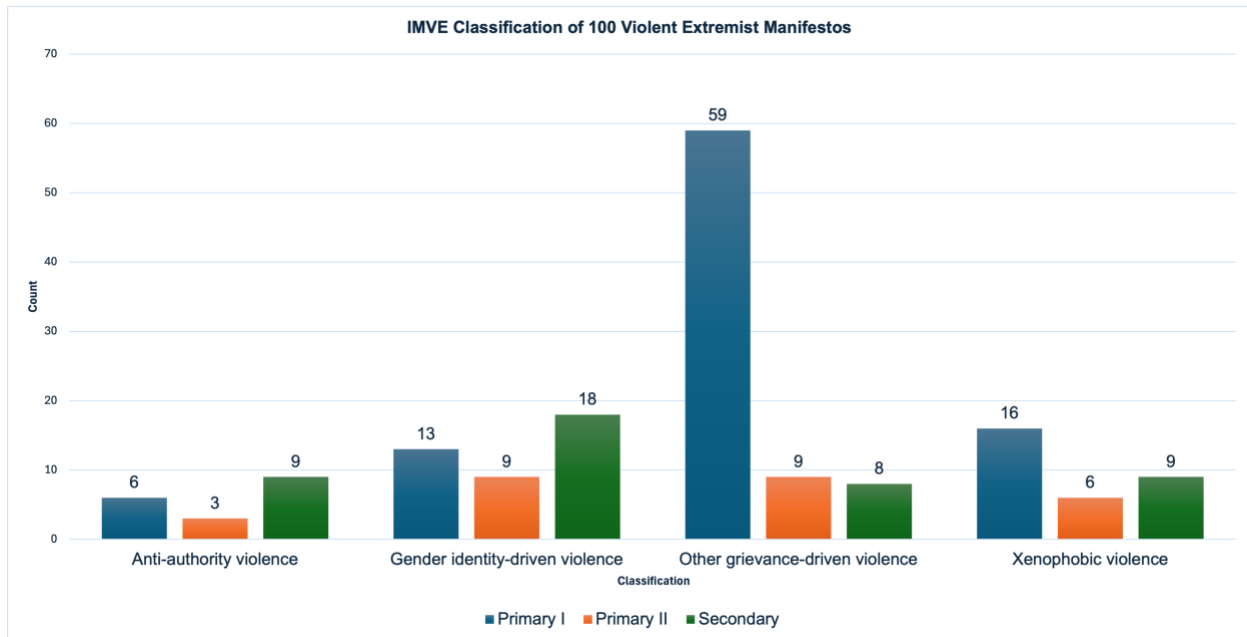
The database contains extensive metadata, including perpetrator demographics (name, age, gender, race), educational background, mental health status, attack characteristics (type of violence, weapons, location), plea outcomes, sentencing, and social media activity, among other variables. These texts were subjected to systematic content analysis to capture key themes,

motivational narratives, rhetorical strategies, and indications of suicidal ideation. The decision to include suicidality as a coding category was guided by preliminary readings of the manifestos, which underscored its recurrent presence. In particular, gender-driven cases frequently frame self-annihilation as integral to the ideological mission, making suicidality analytically significant for understanding how violence is rationalized and communicated in these texts. This focus also builds on my previous research on incel and alt-tech forums (see, K. K. Padda, Forthcoming), where suicidal discourse also functioned as an ideological expression. In those online spaces, users frequently reimagined self-destruction as a form of revenge, purification, or symbolic protest, blurring the line between victimhood and aggression. The manifestos examined here reflect similar patterns. Perpetrators express suicidality in multiple ways, ranging from explicit statements of intent to die during an attack to more indirect expressions of fatalism, hopelessness, or martyrdom.

Insights from the content coding guided the creation of a structured classification scheme to ensure consistency across cases. One core component of this schema involved classifying each case using the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) framework for Ideologically, Politically, and Religiously Motivated Violent Extremism (IMVE/PMVE/RMVE) (Carr, 2022; CSIS, 2021, 2024, 2025). CSIS identifies four sub-categories of IMVE: xenophobic, gender-driven, anti-authority and other personal grievance-driven violence and recognizes that threat actors may be motivated by multiple grievances, occupy more than one category, or shift between categories over time (Carr, 2022, p. 11). Each manifesto was therefore assessed for both primary and secondary ideological motivations. Where more than one primary driver was evident, these were coded as Primary I (PMI) and Primary II (PMII), with additional influences classified as Secondary Motivations (SM). As illustrated in Figure 4.1, many manifestos reflected multiple number of texts ideologies. For example, 40 manifestos contained gender identity driven violent ideologies, but

these were often intertwined with other forms of extremist ideologies, such as racial hatred, anti-government sentiment, or conspiratorial grievance.

**Figure 4.1** *Primary and Secondary Ideological Classifications of 100 Manifestos, based on the CSIS IMVE Framework*



**Note:** The “Other grievance-driven violence” category (n=59) primarily includes cases motivated by school-centered grievances (e.g., hatred of school or Columbine obsession), strong suicidality and fatalistic despair, personal vendettas against individuals or institutions (e.g., academics, workplaces), and diffuse grievances such as resentment, entitlement, or a desire for notoriety.

To maintain ethical standards and limit notoriety, perpetrator names are excluded from this paper to reduce the risk of glorification and copycat effects. However, names are retained in the full database for internal research purposes only, where they are used for case tracking and verification.

#### 4.3.4 Computational Modeling: BERTopic Approach

Following the content analysis stage, I applied BERTopic to the full text corpus in order to identify latent discursive themes at scale. BERTopic is a state-of-the-art topic modeling technique that combines transformer-based language models with density-based clustering (Grootendorst, 2022). Unlike traditional models such as Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) (Blei, 2012; DiMaggio

et al., 2013), BERTopic uses contextual embeddings, in this case from the “BAAI/bge-large-en-v1.5” model (Xiao et al., 2025), which is a powerful pre-trained transformer that captures the semantic meaning of sentences rather than relying solely on word frequency. This allows the model to group together passages that express similar ideas, even when they use different vocabulary. This was particularly important given the informal language, slang, and irregular grammar found in many of the texts. After testing multiple embedding models, I selected “BAAI/bge-large-en-v1.5” because it produced clusters that were the most interpretable and thematically consistent with patterns identified during earlier content analysis.

After encoding the documents into vector space, BERTopic applies HDBSCAN – a hierarchical density-based clustering algorithm that identifies semantically coherent topic clusters while filtering out noise or less meaningful patterns (Campello et al., 2013). Unlike traditional clustering methods, HDBSCAN does not require predefining the number of clusters, making it well-suited for exploratory analysis of ideologically diverse and unevenly structured texts. To increase topic resolution and prevent longer documents from dominating the model, I split each manifesto into overlapping five-sentence chunks, using a sliding window with one-sentence overlap. This method preserved thematic nuance within each document and allowed the model to detect multiple topics per manifesto – especially important given the multimodal and ideologically complex nature of many texts.

To capture variation in gender-driven discourse, I ran this modeling process across three distinct subsets of the corpus:

1. **Model 1 – Full Corpus (n = 100):** This model includes all 100 manifestos to identify overarching discursive patterns and ideological themes across the dataset.
2. **Model 2 – Gender-Driven Violence Primary Ideology Subset (n = 12):** This targeted model analyzes 12 manifestos (see Table 4.2) where gender-driven violence (e.g.,

misogyny, anti-feminism, anti-LGBTQ+ ideology) was the perpetrator's *primary* ideological motivation (PMI)<sup>5</sup>. These cases have been widely recognized in academic literature, grey literature, court records, and media reports.

3. **Model 3 – Gender-Driven Violence Mixed Ideology Subset (n = 40):** This broader subset includes 40 manifestos (see Table 4.2) in which gender-driven ideology was identified as either a *primary or secondary* motive (PMI, PMII, and SM). These cases were derived through close qualitative reading undertaken during the database creation and content analysis process, where misogynistic discourse was frequently found to intersect with other ideological formations such as white supremacy, anti-government sentiment, or religious extremism.

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<sup>5</sup> One additional case, the *Kennesaw FedEx Shooting (2014)*, is included in Figure 4.1 as gender-motivated based on the perpetrator's writings. Although not widely classified as such in external sources, my manual analysis of the attacker's materials justifies its inclusion. However, to ensure consistency with widely accepted case categorizations, this manifesto was not included in the BERTopic model 2.

**Table 4.2** Manifesto Cases Included in Dender-Driven Violence Subset Models (Model 2 and Model 3)

<b>Name of Act</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Word Count</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>
École Polytechnique massacre	1989	559	✓	✓
Centennial Olympic Park Bombing and Other Attacks	1996 - 1998	184,991		✓
Pearl High School Shooting	1997	1,698		✓
Columbine High School Shooting	1999	7,179		✓
Murder of Stacie Reed	1999	2,000	✓	✓
Sacramento Shooting Spree	2001	1,196		✓
University of Arizona Nursing College Shooting	2002	6,119		✓
Campbell County High School Shooting	2005	141		✓
Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church Shooting	2008	1,050		✓
Henry Ford Community College Shooting	2009	1,882	✓	✓
LA Fitness Shooting	2009	4,621	✓	✓
Norway Attacks (Oslo Bombing and Utøya Shooting)	2011	717,202		✓
Realengo School Shooting	2011	377		✓
Sandy Hook Elementary Shooting	2012	2,100		✓
Isla Vista killings	2014	137,759	✓	✓
Kennesaw FedEx Shooting	2014	2,953		✓
Portsmouth Stabbings	2014	307	✓	✓
Charleston Church Shooting (Mother Emanuel AME Church)	2015	7,989		✓
Delta State University shooting	2015	28		✓
Lafayette Theater Shooting	2015	2,960	✓	✓
Umpqua Community College Shooting	2015	2,420	✓	✓
Aztec High School shooting	2017	48,647		✓
Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Shooting	2018	25,292		✓
Tallahassee Yoga Studio Shooting	2018	14,876	✓	✓
Toronto Van Attack	2018	31,128	✓	✓
Poway Synagogue Shooting	2019	4,217		✓
Attack on Judge Esther Salas's Family	2020	76,726	✓	✓
Oxford High School Shooting	2021	385		✓
Bend Oregon Shooting	2022	17,207		✓
Bratislava LGBT Bar Shooting	2022	21,287		✓
Buffalo Tops Supermarket Shooting	2022	132,651		✓

Central Visual and Performing Arts High School Shooting	2022	1,695		✓
Allen Premium Outlets Mall Shooting	2023	40,235		✓
Covenant School Shooting	2023	8,344		✓
Jacksonville Dollar General Shooting	2023	10,402		✓
Michigan State University Shooting	2023	281		✓
University of Waterloo Stabbing	2023	223	✓	✓
Planned Attack on MP Tim Crakanthorp	2024	88,476		✓
Tepebaşı Tea Garden Attack	2024	3,573		✓
Antioch High School Shooting	2025	18,098		✓

This three-tiered application of BERTopic enables a layered understanding of gender-driven violent ideology in lone-actor extremist discourse, ranging from manifestos where misogyny is central, to those where it intersects with other belief systems, to broader ideological trends across the full corpus.

#### **4.3.5 Validating Computational Findings with Qualitative Coding**

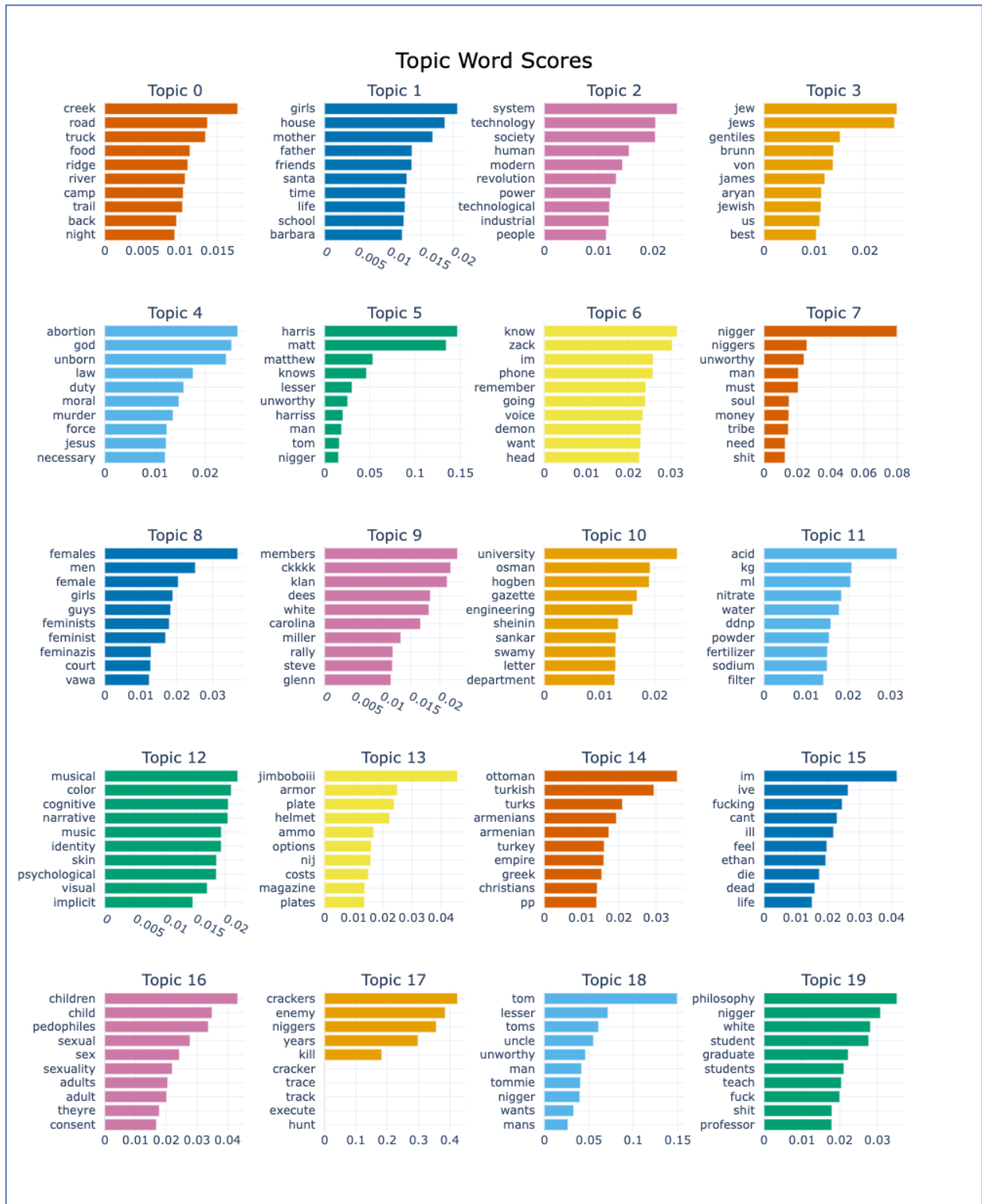
In the final stage, BERTopic outputs served as the foundation for thematic discourse analysis. Clusters and their representative texts were examined through close reading, allowing for refinement and deeper interpretation of the computational findings. This step drew on the earlier content analysis to guide interpretation but moved beyond descriptive coding to unpack the rhetorical strategies, motivational narratives, and gendered logics embedded in the manifestos. In particular, qualitative analysis was essential for capturing subtle or diffuse forms of misogyny that might otherwise remain undetected in computational clusters. For instance, in shorter manifestos or those blending multiple ideologies such as Christian fundamentalism, white supremacy, or incelism, references to gender and power appeared indirectly or were affectively charged rather than explicitly stated. In such cases, qualitative analysis played a critical role in capturing and contextualizing these gendered logics, even when they did not appear as dominant clusters in the topic model. This sequential integration of computational topic modeling and thematic discourse analysis responds directly to critiques that research on misogynistic extremism has relied too heavily on a handful of high-profile cases (O'Hanlon et al., 2024).

#### **4.4 Analysis**

This section presents an integrated analysis of the 100 violent extremist manifestos drawing on insights from the three BERTopic models: the full corpus (n = 100), the gender-driven violence primary ideology subset (n = 12), and the gender-driven violence mixed ideology subset (n = 40).

As visualized in Figures 4.2–4.4 below, these models provide comparative view of how gendered, racial, religious, and anti-state discourses cluster across different subsets of texts, establishing the foundation for the thematic discussion that follows.

Figure 4.2 Top Topic Clusters in Model 1: Full Corpus BERTopic Model (n = 100)



**Figure 4.3 Top Topic Clusters in Model 2: Gender-Driven Violence Primary Ideology Subset (n = 12)**

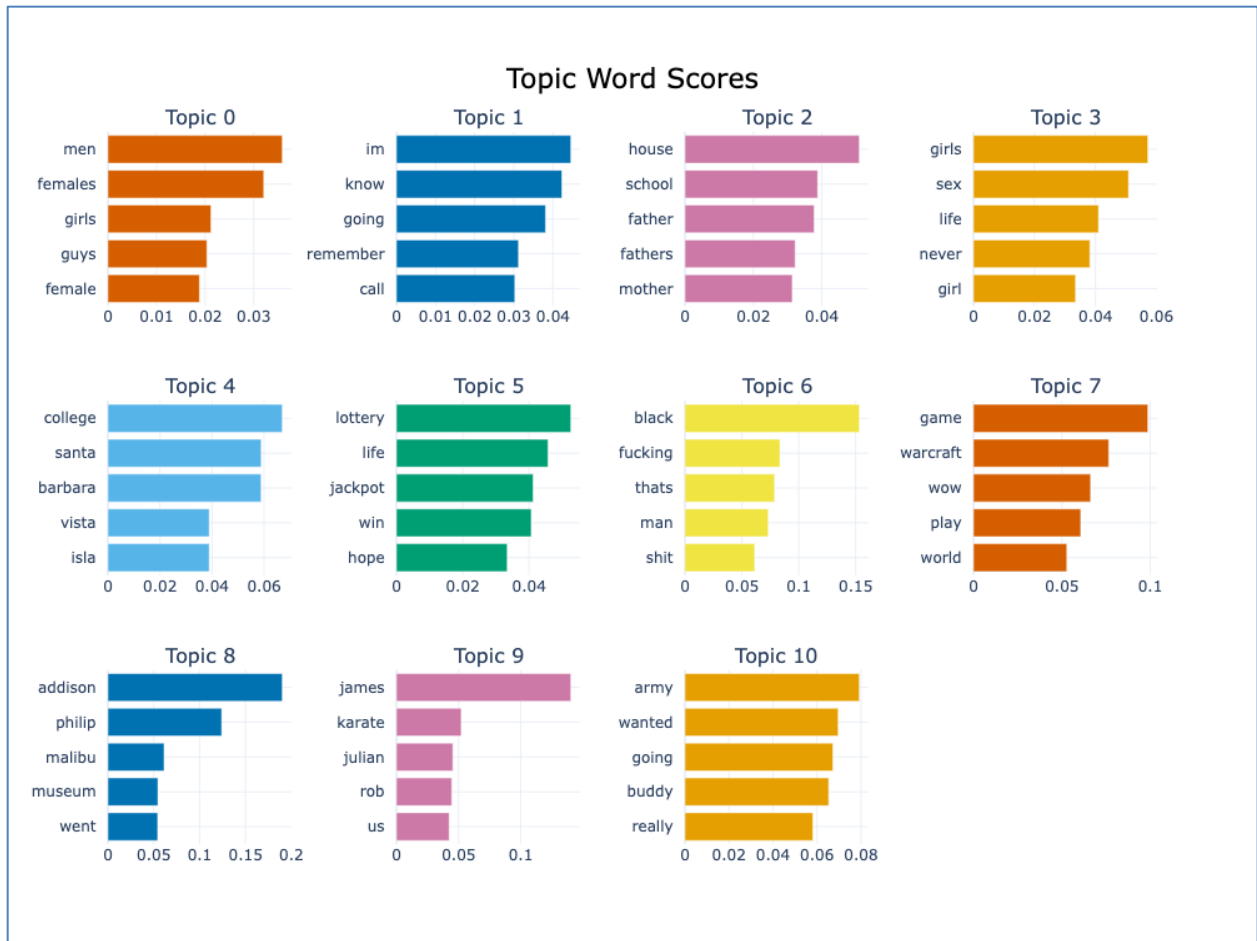
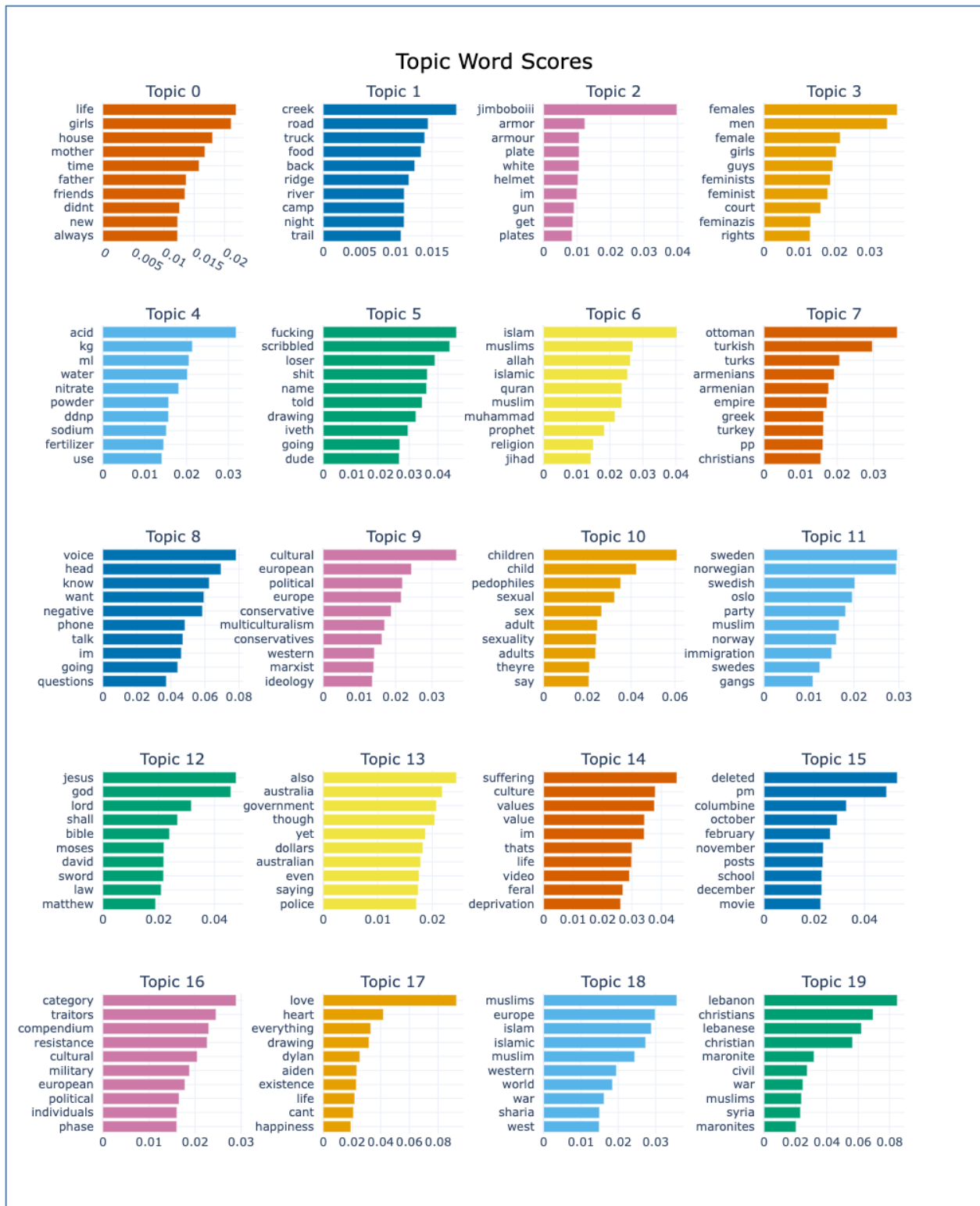


Figure 4.4 Top Topic Clusters in Model 3: Gender-Driven Violence Mixed Ideology Subset (n = 40)



The findings that follow are organized around three overarching thematic patterns: (1) the emergence of gender-based extremism as a distinct ideological formation; (2) the function of misogyny as ideological link to diverse extremist ideologies; (3) the entanglement of suicidality with tactical instruction, with manifestos functioning both as blueprints for violence and affective narratives passed between perpetrators as batons.

#### **4.4.1 Gender-Based Extremism as a Distinct Ideological Formation**

One of the most consistent findings across the models was the prominence of gender-based discourse, both as a primary ideological focus and a recurring narrative thread. In model 1, Topic 8 includes keywords such as “females,” “girls,” “feminists,” “feminazis,” “court,” and “vawa” (Violence Against Women Act), illustrating the salience of anti-feminist grievance and resentment toward institutional protections for women. This discourse blends frustration over wage equity policies, alimony, domestic violence laws, and female workforce participation into a broader conspiratorial worldview. One manifesto refers to this as the work of a “Feminazi Establishment” and “Estrogen Tyranny,” suggesting an imagined regime in which feminist power has overtaken state institutions. The same perpetrator writes, “The lives of more guys are destroyed by females using the deadly weapon of ideologically corrupt courts—an aspect of state violence wholly endorsed by Feminists. Females now have a monopoly on the use of state violence against men.” Here, feminists are accused of weaponizing the legal system, through false accusations, biased custody rulings, and punitive alimony, as part of a broader ideological war against masculinity.

In model 2 (Figure 4.3), Topic 0 surfaces terms such as “men,” “females,” “girls,” and “guys,” while Topic 3 includes “girls,” “sex,” “life,” and “never.” Similarly, in model 3 (Figure 4.4) Topic 0 is still anchored by “girls,” “men,” “life,” and “never,” while Topic 3 clusters around “females,” “sex,” “deserve,” and “reject.” These clusters articulate a worldview in which female sexual agency is experienced as a cosmic injustice. As one self-identified incel writes:

They give their sex and affection to all those undeserving [sic] rowdy obnoxious boys, but not to me, leaving me to wallow in my loneliness and unworthiness. It's an absolute injustice! An insult that cannot go unpunished! If I can't have what I desire, then the only thing to live for is to punish those who denied it to me.

Sexual and social exclusion is recast not as individual misfortune but as systemic oppression. The perceived failure to attract women is transformed into a broader ideological grievance, where rejection becomes proof of a corrupt, feminist-controlled society in which traditional male roles are devalued or punished. Violence, in this frame, is not only retaliatory but also restorative, aimed at reclaiming a lost or denied masculine agency. These findings echo Kimmel's notion of aggrieved entitlement, wherein men who feel deprived of status, sex, or recognition transform private frustration into a political narrative that licenses violence (Kimmel, 2013).

#### **4.4.2 The Lettuce of Hate: Misogyny as the Base Layer of Hybrid Extremism**

While some manifestos articulate misogyny as a primary ideological commitment, many others, particularly those motivated by white supremacy, ethnonationalism, or anti-government grievance, nonetheless incorporate gendered hate as a key secondary logic. Model 1 (n = 100) and model 3 (n = 40) were particularly useful in identifying this pattern. In these texts, misogyny links otherwise disparate ideological narratives. For example, in model 1, Topic 3 includes terms such as "jew," "gentiles," "aryan," and "jewish," and in model 3, Topic 6 is dominated by terms such as "islam," "muslims," "quran," and "muhammad," flagging antisemitic and anti-Muslim frames. Yet the same documents that fuel these ethno-religious topics also populate Topic 8 in model 1 and Topics 0 and 3 in model 3 clusters built around "females," "sex," "reject," "life," and "never." In other words, race-war and civilizational-war rhetoric is literally co-located with incel-style sexual grievance in the same texts.

A close reading of the texts confirms the braid. One extremist rails that Muslims “spend a colossal amount of valuable time” in prayer, leaving them unproductive, then pivots seamlessly to warn:

In cases where they have no women of their own to produce children for them, they trap the Western women and, after converting them to Islam, they produce their desired number of children with them. After their number, in this way, has become large and politically powerful.

Another laments that feminism has “bartered away their self-esteem, political independence, and sovereignty,” leaving the West defenseless against both “Islamic conquest” and “Estrogen Tyranny.” The narrative alchemy is consistent: racial or religious threats (Muslims, migrants, Jews) are rendered terrifying because, so the story goes, feminism has already emasculated the nation’s men and handed women a monopoly on the use of state violence.

This pattern supports existing scholarship identifying the rise of hybrid or “salad bar” extremism, in which perpetrators combine elements from various hate-based worldviews – racism, antisemitism, misogyny, and conspiracism – into a flexible, grievance-driven composite (Deliso, 2023; Gartenstein-Ross & Plant, 2023; Hemmila & Perlinger, 2025; Meleagrou-Hitchens & Ayad, 2023; Padda, 2025). What binds these disparate logics is the affective coherence, with anger, humiliation, and resentment supplying the connective force across domains of grievances. Yet the findings here complicate the metaphor. “Salad bar” suggests optionality, as if perpetrators simply select from a range of available grievances. In practice, misogyny appears less as one ingredient among others and more as the lettuce – the base layer present in nearly every combination. Within this context, misogyny plays a foundational role by providing an emotionally resonant and culturally legible framework for interpreting broader social decline. For example, multiple manifestos linked feminism to falling birthrates among white women, blaming

gender equality for the alleged demographic decline of the “white race.” Others framed feminist and LGBTQ+ movements as evidence of Western moral decay or liberal conspiracy. In such narratives, misogyny operates as glue that connects racial anxiety, anti-globalist sentiment, and moral panic into a singular story of betrayal and collapse.

#### 4.4.3 Suicidality and the Baton-Passing Function of Manifestos

Across the corpus, extremist manifestos display two closely intertwined patterns: an explicit desire for self-annihilation and a detailed preoccupation with the “how-to” of mass violence. These documents function both as tactical guides and as emotionally charged narratives, offering future perpetrators both step-by-step instructions and ideological validation.

As shown in Table 4.3, perpetrators motivated primarily by xenophobic ideologies (PMI and PMII) were the least likely to exhibit suicidal ideation in their manifestos. Among the 22 manifestos with xenophobic primary motives, nearly half (45.5%) showed no indication of suicidal desire. This stands in stark contrast to the manifestos driven by other types of grievance-based motives (n = 68) and especially those with gender-based motives (n = 22), which were far more likely to contain clear signs of suicidality. Specifically, 33.8% of other grievance-driven and 31.8% of gender-driven manifestos explicitly expressed a desire to die.

**Table 4.3** Suicidal Ideation by Primary I & II Violent Extremist Motive

	<b>Other Grievance-Driven Violence (n = 68)</b>	<b>Gender-Driven Violence (n = 22)</b>	<b>Xenophobic Violence (n = 22)</b>	<b>Anti-Authority Violence (n = 9)</b>
<b>Blatant Suicidal Desire</b>	23 (33.8%)	7 (31.8%)	3 (13.6%)	-
<b>Likely Suicidal Desire</b>	9 (13.2%)	3 (13.8%)	1 (4.5%)	-
<b>Some Signs of Suicidal Desire</b>	8 (11.8%)	2 (9.1%)	1 (4.5%)	1 (11.1%)
<b>Hints of Suicidal Desire</b>	11 (16.2%)	3 (13.6%)	1 (4.5%)	1 (11.1%)
<b>Necessary Byproduct</b>	5 (7.4%)	1 (4.5%)	6 (27.3%)	3 (33.3%)
<b>No Signs of Suicidal Desire</b>	12 (17.6%)	6 (27.3%)	10 (45.5%)	4 (44.4%)

Gender-motivated extremists typically frame their attacks as a fusion of revenge and self-erasure. One manifesto, for instance, promises that “girls will finally see my worth.” In such cases, death is presented as a climactic act of control that converts perceived shame, humiliation, and marginalization into fleeting visibility and power. These narratives blend grief, humiliation, and sexual entitlement into a moral logic where violence and self-destruction appear both justified and inevitable. Topic modeling reinforces this point: across multiple model variants, bomb-making lexicons (model 1, Topic 11: “acid,” “nitrate,” “powder,” “fertilizer”) and ballistic terminology (model 3, Topic 2: armor,” “helmet,” “gun”; Topic 4: “acid,” “nitrate,” “sodium”), underscoring their practical utility for would-be attackers. Taken together, the evidence suggests that suicidality is structurally embedded within gender-based extremism. Whereas xenophobic or anti-state actors often intend to survive, or view death as an unintended cost, misogynist perpetrators script their own demise as the ultimate proof of agency: if they cannot dominate interpersonal relationships, they will at least dictate the terms of their exit.

Manifestos function as a distributed-leadership network: references to prior attackers abound, revealing a decentralized yet tightly woven process of inspiration. Far from operating in isolation, authors cite, quote, and emulate predecessors, thereby converting so-called “leaderless resistance” into an infrastructure of distributed leadership (Bundtzen, 2023; Chermak et al., 2010; Kennedy-Kollar, 2024). In effect, manifestos become durable conduits through which strategy, rhetoric, and emotional framing flow from one generation of extremists to the next. The 2022 Bratislava LGBT-bar attacker, for example, openly credits the 2022 Buffalo Supermarket shooter:

The final nail in the coffin was [name]. His livestream gave me new inspiration, a new impulse to do what had to be done after years of procrastination. And in [name], I saw myself - a young man with his whole life ahead, who decided to fight for something bigger than himself, who fought for what he believed in. He had the same feeling that many others before him, and he took it. In May of this year, I began writing this document and seriously

preparing myself for carrying out a strike against ZOG. Saint [name] gave me the final nudge, allowing me to overcome my own indecision and begin seriously working towards carrying out an operation.

The Buffalo Tops Supermarket shooter, in turn, cites the 2019 Christchurch Mosque shooter:

Is there a particular person that radicalized you the most?

Yes and his name is [name]. [name]'s livestream started everything you see here. [name] started my real research into the problems with immigration and foreigners in our White lands, without his livestream I would likely have no idea about the real problems the West is facing.

Likewise, the 2019 Poway synagogue attacker calls the Christchurch manifesto a personal catalyst:

[name] was a catalyst for me personally. He showed me that it could be done. And that it needed to be done. "WHY WON'T SOMEBODY DO SOMETHING? WHY WON'T SOMEBODY DO SOMETHING? WHY DON'T I DO SOMETHING?"—the most powerful words in his entire manifesto.

Even the Christchurch perpetrator situated himself in this lineage, claiming to have read the 2015 Charleston manifesto but drawing his "true inspiration" from the 2011 Norway attacker. Such chains of citation demonstrate how manifestos are used to replicate tone, structure, and rhetoric but also model concrete deeds. Research further shows that gender-driven attackers referenced in these texts are venerated as "saints" on incel forums, giving the manifestos a long afterlife as both tactical playbooks and emotional lodestars for individuals teetering on the edge of radicalization (Baele et al., 2021; Dearden, 2019; K. K. Padda, Forthcoming; Kupper & Christensen, 2022; Witt, 2020).

## 4.5 Discussion

This study set out to clarify how lone-actor violent extremist manifestos ( $n = 100$ ) operate simultaneously as ideological infrastructure, tactical manuals, and affective narratives. Building on the four research gaps identified in the introduction, the discussion demonstrates how a comparative manifesto approach – supported by a newly developed database and the integration of computational and qualitative discourse analysis – advances understanding of violent extremist communication across ideological boundaries. As outlined in the literature review, recent scholarship has increasingly recognized gender-driven extremism and violent misogyny as growing yet under-theorized components of contemporary extremist violence (Johnston & Meger, 2022; O’Hanlon et al., 2024). The findings presented here empirically substantiate these concerns by demonstrating that misogyny operates not at the margins but at the structural core of extremist manifestos across ideological categories.

A central contribution of this study is the recognition of violent misogyny as more than a peripheral grievance: it functions as both a standalone ideological formation and a structural foundation across hybrid extremist worldviews. Addressing the need to foreground gender-driven hate, the analysis demonstrates that misogyny consistently underpins broader extremist logics. In nearly 40 percent of the manifestos analyzed, gender-based hatred was identified as a primary or secondary motivation; in many others, it operated as an interpretive framework shaping how grievances about race, religion, or the state were articulated. These findings align with emerging scholarship on “hybrid” or “salad-bar” extremism (Deliso, 2023; Hemmila & Perliger, 2025; Meleagrou-Hitchens & Ayad, 2023), where perpetrators combine elements from multiple hate-based ideologies according to personal grievances and online exposure. At the same time, the results here refine that metaphor. The “salad bar” model captures hybridity but implies optionality, as if attackers simply select from a menu of hatred. In practice, misogyny appears less as one ingredient among others and more as the base layer that binds disparate grievances into a

coherent worldview. Even when attackers foreground xenophobic, conspiratorial, or anti-government motives, misogynistic narratives supply the affective and explanatory coherence that gives these hybrid ideologies emotional depth. Anger, humiliation, and resentment directed toward women often serve as the emotional current through which racial anxiety, anti-state resentment, and moral panic are fused into a single narrative of societal decline and betrayal. Misogyny therefore operates not only as a direct motivation for violence but as the ideological infrastructure that sustains and amplifies other extremist worldviews. By analyzing 100 manifestos spanning six decades and multiple ideological categories, this study demonstrates empirically how gendered logics recur across political, religious, and ethnonationalist contexts. The combined use of topic modeling and discourse analysis allows large-scale pattern detection alongside fine-grained textual interpretation, enabling misogyny's integrative role to emerge clearly from the data rather than from presupposition.

A second key finding foregrounds a dimension often treated as incidental: suicidality is not evenly distributed across ideological types but is structurally embedded in gender-driven manifestos. Roughly one-third of gender-motivated extremists expressed a clear intent to die, compared with fewer than one-seventh of xenophobia-driven extremists. For misogynist attackers, self-destruction is cast as the ultimate proof of agency: if they cannot compel recognition in life, they will force it in death (Witt, 2020). This ideological embrace of self-annihilation shapes both tactics and timelines. Expecting no legal aftermath, these perpetrators favour compressed planning cycles and high-lethality methods that guarantee notoriety, such as livestreamed assaults. Suicidality transforms the manifesto into a ritual artifact – a farewell declaration that confers martyr status and instructs the next aspirant (Baele et al., 2021; Dearden, 2019; Kupper & Christensen, 2022; Witt, 2020). Designed to outlive its author, the text becomes a durable node in a distributed-leadership network. Each new manifesto refreshes an online archive of tactics, rhetoric, and emotional justification that followers mine for inspiration. The result

is a self-reinforcing cycle in which scripts of self-destruction propagate as readily as technical guidance. The manifestos' emotional register is central to its political function. By converting personal pain into a righteous mission, the document provides a ready-made script that others can adopt verbatim. In this sense, suicidality becomes part of the affective coherence that binds extremist narratives: death is framed not as failure but as fulfillment.

These findings also have direct implications for how national security and prevention frameworks conceptualize extremist threats. The CSIS has been at the forefront of adopting the language of IMVE, explicitly identifying “gender-driven” extremism as part of the contemporary threat landscape (Carr, 2022; CSIS, 2021, 2024, 2025). Yet, as the uneven treatment of gender-motivated attacks in Canadian courts demonstrates, legal and policy frameworks remain inconsistent in recognizing misogyny as a coherent extremist ideology. The divergence between Canada’s classification of the 2020 Toronto incel stabbing as terrorism and the 2023 University of Waterloo attack, which was ruled ideologically incoherent, exemplifies this inconsistency (Baker, 2025; Padda, 2025). Situating misogyny as a unifying force across hate-based worldviews underscores why counter-violent-extremism (CVE) strategies must move beyond narrow doctrinal categories. These findings reinforce arguments in the literature that male supremacism and gender-driven hatred must be treated as extremist ideologies in their own right rather than as secondary or purely personal grievances (Carr, 2022; Johnston & Meger, 2022; Pruden et al., 2022).

Threat-assessment models likewise need updating to reflect these findings. While misogyny may intersect with individual vulnerabilities, its consistent appearance as a motivational structure across manifestos demonstrates that it cannot be reduced to “personal pathology.” As the suicidality analysis shows, the emotional content of manifestos, particularly the convergence of despair, shame, and rage, can be as revealing for risk assessment as explicit ideological

declarations. Threat-assessment protocols that track behavioural “leakage” should therefore incorporate affective markers alongside ideological indicators.

Effective prevention also requires sustained attention to the digital subcultures that normalize or glamorize gendered grievance. Incel forums, manosphere influencers, and related male-supremacist channels often operate with minimal moderation (see, K. Padda, MacDonald, et al., Forthcoming; K. Padda, Ruest, et al., Forthcoming; K. K. Padda, Forthcoming), allowing emotionally charged content to circulate unimpeded. These spaces facilitate and reinforce transnational and cross-platform grievance narratives and provide tactical blueprints. Countering this infrastructure demands coordinated action from tech platforms, educators, and policymakers – particularly those working in violent-extremism prevention and youth engagement – combining robust content-moderation policies with alternative, pro-social avenues for belonging.

Finally, the findings presented here point toward several fruitful directions for future research. Further study is needed to map how affective narratives circulate across languages and platforms, particularly as gender-driven extremism becomes increasingly transnational. While this study focused on manifestos from violent attackers, similar discursive and affective patterns likely appear in adjacent online communities not yet linked to violence. Examining these spaces could help identify earlier stages of radicalization and create opportunities for intervention before attacks occur. Another fruitful direction is to compare the discourse and narratives across non-violent/aspirational texts with the violent texts. Interdisciplinary approaches that integrate computational modeling with affect theory, gender studies, and media analysis will be essential for understanding the evolving contours of IMVE and designing more holistic prevention strategies.

## 4.6 Conclusion

This study has shown that extremist manifestos are not marginal or incoherent documents but central nodes in the circulation of contemporary ideologies of violence. By analyzing 100 lone-actor manifestos across nearly six decades, it demonstrates how gender-driven hatred operates both as a standalone ideological formation and as the affective and structural base through which disparate worldviews – racism, antisemitism, anti-government conspiracism – are bound together. Misogyny functions as a lettuce in the “salad bar” of extremism: the recurring layer that provides emotional coherence and explanatory power across otherwise fragmented ideologies. Just as importantly, suicidality emerges as structurally embedded in gender-driven attacks, where self-annihilation is reframed as the ultimate assertion of agency and the manifesto plays the part of baton – passed across extremist networks.

These findings speak to how violent extremist communications construct, justify, and normalize violence within broader ideological ecosystems. Counter-extremism frameworks must recognize misogyny as a strategic ideological threat rather than a personal pathology or secondary grievance. Future work should deepen attention to the role of affect and digital infrastructures in sustaining hybrid extremist formations, while prevention efforts should address the manosphere and its adjacent subcultures as key discursive environments in which gendered grievance is produced and circulated. Ultimately, manifestos do more than justify violence: they script it, transmit it, and enshrine it. Written in gendered rage, these manifestos are crafted as instructions and legacies – to be read when their authors are dead.

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## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

#### 5.1 Revisiting the Dissertation's Aims and Core Argument

Scholarship on contemporary extremism increasingly emphasizes the role of digital environments in shaping grievance, identity, and political violence (Conway, 2017; Marwick et al., 2022; Rogers, 2020). Scholars have shown that online spaces facilitate the circulation of affect, the formation of networked communities, and the normalization of hostile ideologies through repetition and social validation (Ahmed, 2014; Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Papacharissi, 2016). This dissertation builds on and extends this scholarship by examining how extremist discourse circulates across multiple digital infrastructures – forums, podcasts, and manifestos – and how these spaces interact to stabilize grievance, normalize misogyny, and, in some cases, justify violence. Rather than treating extremism as a phenomenon confined to isolated individuals or formal organizations, the dissertation traces how ideas, emotions, and narratives move across digital environments over time. This infrastructural approach aligns with scholarship that conceptualizes radicalization as distributed, relational, and media-driven rather than linear or centrally coordinated (Bosworth, 2023; Neumann, 2013). Across all three empirical studies, misogyny consistently emerges as a central organizing force. Gendered narratives structure how grievance is expressed, how blame is assigned, and how violence is rendered intelligible. These findings challenge approaches that treat gender as a secondary variable in extremism research, instead positioning misogyny as foundational to contemporary extremist discourse (DiBranco, 2020; Johnston & Meger, 2022; Manne, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2025).

The analysis of incel forums in Chapter 2 demonstrates how personal experiences of rejection, loneliness, and humiliation are transformed into shared epistemic frameworks. Within these communities, grievance is ritualized through recurring discursive patterns, such as

biologized fatalism, dehumanization through “foid” logic, and the framing of violence as moral retribution, that convert affect into knowledge claims about gender and society. These findings resonate with feminist and affect-theoretical scholarship that highlights how emotions circulate, “stick,” and become politically meaningful within communities (Ahmed, 2014). It also aligns with research on grievance-based online subcultures, where repeated validation produces a sense of certainty and inevitability (Ging, 2019; Hoffman et al., 2020). In this sense, incel forums function as affective epistemologies: spaces where pain is not merely expressed but collectively interpreted as truth.

Chapter 3 extends this analysis by examining manosphere podcasts as cultural infrastructures that carry misogynistic grievance beyond subcultural forums into more mainstream digital spaces. Podcasts hosted by figures such as Andrew Tate, Nick Fuentes, and Gavin McInnes embed gendered narratives within humour, self-help narratives, and cultural critique. This process mirrors the alternative influence network, in which extremist ideas are laundered through relatability and entertainment (Gais, 2021; R. Lewis, 2018). Parasocial intimacy plays a central role here, allowing hosts to frame grievance as authenticity and authority (Rizwan et al., 2025; Shamburg et al., 2023; Singh, 2024). As Banet-Weiser and Miltner (2016) argue in their work on networked misogyny, such environments amplify gendered hostility while presenting it as common sense or irony. The findings show that podcasts do not simply reproduce extremist ideas; they normalize them by embedding misogyny into everyday talk, making violence appear ordinary, humorous, or necessary for masculine restoration.

Chapter 4 examines the violent extremist manifesto as the most explicit articulation of these dynamics. Drawing on a database of 100 manifestos written between 1966 and 2025, the analysis shows how misogyny anchors hybrid extremist ideologies and provides emotional coherence across otherwise disparate belief systems. These findings align with scholarship on “salad bar” extremism, where lone actors assemble personalized ideological composites rather

than adhering to a single doctrine (Berger, 2022; Hemmila & Perliger, 2025; Pruden et al., 2022). Within these composites, misogyny repeatedly supplies both explanatory power and moral justification. The chapter also demonstrates that suicidality is structurally embedded in many gender-driven attacks, echoing research on aggrieved entitlement and masculine despair (Kalish & Kimmel, 2010; Kimmel, 2013). Unlike xenophobic attackers who often plan to survive, misogynist perpetrators frequently script self-annihilation as part of the violent act itself, framing death as legacy, protest, or final assertion of agency.

Across these infrastructures, grievance, normalization, violence, and legacy interact in ways that do not follow a single or linear sequence. These dynamics recur across forums, podcasts, and manifestos, appearing in different forms while reinforcing one another over time. Grievance may appear as personal frustration in one context and as cultural decline or entitlement in another. Misogyny provides emotional coherence across these shifts, linking extremist discourses that might otherwise appear disconnected. This pattern supports research that conceptualizes radicalization as recursive and infrastructural rather than progressive or stage-based (Bosworth, 2023; Ribeiro et al., 2021). Extremist ideas persist not because they move smoothly from grievance to violence, but because they circulate, adapt, and reappear across digital environments.

Finally, the dissertation demonstrates the value of combining computational and qualitative approaches in the study of extremism. Using BERTopic modeling, sentence-level classification of emotion and misogyny, and close discourse analysis, it applies a Computational Grounded Theory approach in which computational models identify large-scale patterns that are then interpreted through critical reading (Grimmer et al., 2022; Nelson, 2020). This design allows the analysis to scale across millions of data points while remaining attentive to emotion, irony, and cultural meaning. A major methodological contribution is the creation of the first comprehensive database of violent extremist manifestos, including full texts and detailed

metadata on perpetrators, attacks, ideological framing, and legal outcomes. This resource extends beyond the dissertation itself and provides a foundation for future comparative, longitudinal, and interdisciplinary research on extremist discourse.

## **5.2 Limitations and Future Research**

While this dissertation makes substantial contributions to the study of gendered extremism and platform governance, it is equally important to acknowledge its limitations and outline avenues for future research. The following is a detailed look at the limitations and ways to move ahead.

### **5.2.1 Digital Infrastructure Selection**

This dissertation examines three digital infrastructures selected for their empirical relevance and analytical richness. However, this focus excludes other important environments where radicalization and ideological transmission take place. Encrypted messaging platforms such as Telegram, alternative social media platforms like Gab, imageboard communities, and gaming-related spaces all play an increasingly significant role in contemporary extremist ecosystems.

Gaming ecosystems, in particular, warrant closer attention. Research and recent reporting suggest that multiplayer games, game-adjacent forums, and voice-chat platforms have been used to normalize misogynistic and extremist discourse, facilitate recruitment, and build social bonds that can later extend beyond the gaming environment (Buckley, 2025; GPAHE, 2025). These spaces often combine anonymity, competitiveness, irony, and youth-oriented cultures, which can make hateful or extremist ideas feel playful, ironic, or apolitical. In some cases, misogynistic slurs, racialized jokes, or violent rhetoric circulate as part of “trash talk,” gradually lowering the threshold for more explicit ideological engagement. Future research that examines how grievance and identity formation unfold within gaming communities would deepen understanding of

radicalization pathways that emerge in spaces not typically treated as political, but that nonetheless play a meaningful role in contemporary extremist trajectories.

Another emerging area that falls outside the scope of this dissertation is the use of artificial intelligence-driven companion platforms. Recent cases and media reports have documented how individuals have used AI chatbot services such as Character.AI, nomi.ai, and Replika.com to rehearse violent fantasies, seek validation for misogynistic grievances, or engage in prolonged interactions that reinforce feelings of entitlement, resentment, or victimhood. Unlike forums or social media platforms, these systems can simulate intimacy, affirmation, and responsiveness without social friction, potentially intensifying grievance in highly personalized ways. While these technologies were not designed for radicalization, their capacity to mirror and reinforce user inputs raises important questions about how affective attachment, loneliness, and ideological reinforcement may operate in AI-mediated environments.

More broadly, as extremist actors respond to moderation, deplatforming, and platform governance, they often migrate across infrastructures rather than disengage altogether. Narratives, symbols, and social ties are frequently reconstituted across platforms, moving from public forums to encrypted channels, from influencer media to private chats, or from gaming spaces to explicitly ideological communities. Limiting analysis to a small number of platforms therefore constrains the ability to fully capture how extremist ideas and networks adapt over time. Future research should extend this work by examining a wider range of fringe and emergent infrastructures in order to better understand cross-platform dynamics, infrastructural resilience, and the evolving pathways through which radicalization unfolds.

### **5.2.2 Sample Selection**

All three studies in this dissertation rely primarily on English-language materials or cases for which reliable translations were available. This choice was necessary for methodological consistency, but it limits the geographic and cultural scope of the analysis. As a result, the findings do not fully capture how misogynistic and extremist discourse circulates in non-English-speaking contexts, where gendered grievance may be shaped by different political histories, cultural norms, and media environments. This limitation is particularly relevant given the cross-platform and transnational nature of contemporary digital extremism. Online content frequently travels across borders, is translated informally by users, or is recontextualized within new political settings. Without systematic multilingual analysis, it is difficult to assess how these processes unfold or how gendered extremist narratives gain traction outside Anglophone environments. Future research should therefore expand this work by incorporating multilingual corpora and regionally grounded datasets, allowing for comparative analysis of how misogynistic grievance is expressed, circulated, and normalized across different linguistic and cultural contexts.

Sampling decisions within platforms also shape the scope and limits of this dissertation. In the first study, although more than 30 million posts were analyzed across three subreddits and the Incels.is forum, the analysis focused only on original posts authored by users and did not include comment-level responses. This decision allowed the study to scale across a very large corpus, but it limits insight into how other users reacted to expressions of grievance, despair, or violent ideation. Excluding comments means that this study cannot fully capture interactional dynamics such as encouragement, validation, ridicule, escalation, or attempts at discouragement. For example, when a user on r/Incels wrote, *“How to commit suicide to bring attention to incelism? ... Lighting myself on fire in public or streaming it live. At least I’d be remembered,”* the analysis captures the post itself but not how the community responded. Examining comment threads would make it possible to assess whether such statements were challenged, normalized, amplified, or reframed by others. Resource constraints made this level of interactional analysis

infeasible within the scope of the dissertation, but future research that incorporates comment-level data would provide a more complete picture of how extremist discourse is socially produced and reinforced.

Similar sampling limitations apply to the podcast analysis. While this study examined more than 1,800 podcast episodes produced by three influential figures, this represents only a small subset of a much larger archive assembled for this project. That broader collection includes over 58,000 podcast episodes – representing more than 77,000 hours of audio – from the Intellectual Dark Web, conspiracy networks, QAnon communities, the alt-right, white supremacist movements, and the manosphere (Ruest & Padda, 2025). The scale of this archive far exceeds what could be analyzed within a single dissertation. As a result, the podcast analysis prioritizes depth over breadth, leaving substantial opportunities for future research to examine comparative dynamics, cross-network influence, and longer-term shifts across podcast ecosystems.

The manifesto database developed for this dissertation also involves deliberate sampling boundaries. The dataset is limited to manifestos associated with violent extremist attacks. While this focus was intentional and analytically important, it raises questions about how violent manifestos differ from non-violent or aspirational ideological texts produced within extremist movements. Without a comparative corpus, it is difficult to determine whether certain narrative, affective, or rhetorical features are unique to perpetrators of violence or are more broadly present within extremist discourse. Future research could expand the database to include non-violent manifestos, ideological statements, or online declarations, enabling systematic comparison of pathways toward and away from violence.

One of the strengths of the manifesto database developed in this dissertation is its temporal depth, spanning nearly six decades (1966–2025). At the same time, this dissertation does not conduct a full time-series or event-based analysis of the data. As a result, it does not

systematically examine how extremist narratives shift in response to specific political events, policy changes, or cultural moments. This was a deliberate scoping decision rather than an analytical oversight. The structure of the database makes such analyses possible in future work. Longitudinal and event-based approaches could be used to trace how misogynistic tropes, grievance narratives, and justifications for violence intensify, fade, or change over time.

The dataset also supports relational analyses that move beyond individual texts to examine how manifestos reference and connect people, ideologies, organizations, and prior attacks. Future research could build on this foundation by integrating Natural Language Processing (NLP), social network analysis (SNA), and discourse network analysis (DNA). NLP can be used to extract entities and relationships at scale (Fields et al., 2023; Jurafsky & Martin, 2024; Lokare, 2023); SNA can identify patterns of connection and influence across actors and texts (McLevey et al., 2024; Papachristos & Smith, 2017; Piquette et al., 2014); and DNA can combine network methods with close reading to examine how extremist ideas, frames, and grievances are linked, reinforced, or contested over time (Leifeld, 2020; Leifeld & Haunss, 2012). Together, these approaches would allow researchers to situate extremist manifestos within a broader, evolving discursive ecosystem, extending the contributions of this dissertation rather than correcting its limits.

Finally, this dissertation relies on digital trace data rather than direct engagement with individuals involved in extremist or disengagement processes. While this approach is well suited for large-scale discourse analysis, it cannot capture how individuals interpret, negotiate, or resist these narratives in everyday life. Future research could complement this work through interviews with individuals disengaging from extremist movements, participants in deradicalization programs, frontline practitioners, and those working to counter misogynist or extremist narratives. This kind of qualitative engagement would provide valuable insight into how infrastructures of grievance are experienced and how infrastructures of prevention might be built.

### 5.2.3 Modal Limitations of the Data

This project analyzes text-based content, audio, and video transcripts; however, it does not fully capture the multimodal nature of contemporary digital extremism. Images, memes, GIFs, symbols, and video aesthetics play a critical role in producing affect, reinforcing in-group identity, and transmitting ideology in ways that are not fully accessible through textual analysis alone. Many of the forums and manifestos included in this study contain images, GIFs, and symbols that were not part of the analysis. Although video recordings were reviewed to contextualize tone, posture, and affective presentation, the analysis did not systematically examine visual performance, production aesthetics, or embodied cues such as gesture, facial expression, and staging. These elements are increasingly central to influencer-driven media ecosystems, where credibility, authority, and intimacy are often communicated visually as much as verbally. Future research should therefore integrate multimodal discourse analysis and computational visual methods, including computer vision techniques, to examine how text, image, sound, and embodiment interact across platforms. Such approaches would enable a more comprehensive understanding of how extremist ideologies are not only articulated, but felt, normalized, and made persuasive through coordinated multimodal infrastructures.

The computational methods used in this dissertation, including topic modeling and text classification, made it possible to identify large-scale patterns across very large datasets, but they also have clear limits. Model selection was an iterative process: I tested multiple transformer-based models before choosing those that produced the most coherent and interpretable results for the specific datasets. Even so, topic models tend to emphasize dominant themes and can miss less frequent but meaningful narratives, while classification models may struggle with irony, humour, or coded language common in misogynistic and extremist spaces. For this reason, computational analysis was always used alongside close qualitative reading. In practice, the models helped surface patterns and points of concentration, while qualitative analysis was used

to interpret context, ambiguity, and affect. This mixed approach helped mitigate many of the weaknesses of automated methods, but it does not eliminate them. Future research could build on this work by expanding training data, refining models for specific platforms, and further integrating human annotation to better capture emerging narratives and subtle shifts in extremist discourse.

### **5.3 Implications: Rethinking Extremism Studies and Prevention Frameworks**

The findings of this dissertation have important implications for both the study of extremism and the design of prevention efforts. For researchers, the results highlight the limits of approaches that examine platforms, ideologies, or movements in isolation. Extremist ideas, emotions, and narratives move across forums, podcasts, and texts, creating interconnected environments that sustain grievance and normalize violence over time. Studying these spaces separately risks missing how misogynistic discourse overlaps and circulates across different media contexts. This suggests the need for interdisciplinary approaches that draw on sociology, criminology, feminist theory, media studies, and computational social science to understand extremism as a process shaped by digital environments, emotional dynamics, and social relationships.

Building on this cross-platform and mixed-method design, the empirical chapters identify concrete points that matter for policy and prevention. The analysis of online forums shows that grievance does not turn into extremist belief all at once. It develops slowly through repetition, validation, and shared interpretation over time. Platform design, moderation practices, and community norms shape this process. When misogynistic narratives circulate without challenge, they begin to feel normal, factual, and unavoidable to participants. From a prevention perspective, this suggests that focusing only on removing explicit threats or violent content is not enough. What matters is how everyday expressions of entitlement, resentment, and dehumanization are reinforced through interaction.

The findings also show that many individuals in these spaces describe feeling lonely, isolated, and lacking confidence. They often frame these feelings as permanent defects, believing they were “born this way” and cannot change their appearance, social status, or prospects. Writing becomes a way to make sense of these doubts and to seek recognition. When people feel unheard offline, finding a space where others listen and share similar experiences can be powerful. In these forums, grievance is not only expressed but affirmed, creating a sense of belonging built around shared resentment. When platforms intervene by banning subreddits without addressing the underlying grievances, this sense of being silenced can intensify rather than resolve the problem. Several users interpret moderation not as protection, but as further evidence that the system is hostile and unwilling to listen. This dynamic often pushes communities toward alternative spaces with little or no moderation, where grievances, ideologies, and attitudes become more extreme over time. This could include creating and supporting moderated spaces where expressions of frustration are met with challenge and care rather than validation of resentment, expanding exit-oriented communities that offer alternatives to misogynistic identity formation, and pairing moderation with outreach or referral to mental health and social support resources. Without such measures, removing platforms or communities’ risks displacing grievance into less visible spaces where it can harden and become more extreme.

The podcast analysis shows how misogynistic and extremist ideas move beyond fringe communities and into more mainstream spaces through everyday talk. In these settings, grievance is rarely presented as ideology. Instead, it is woven into jokes, personal stories, dating advice, and discussions about masculinity, success, or self-improvement. Hosts often frame resentment toward women as honesty, realism, or hard-earned truth, which makes these ideas feel reasonable rather than extreme. Over time, repeated exposure to this framing can normalize misogyny without listeners necessarily identifying the content as political or extremist. Long-form audio and video formats are particularly important because they allow hosts to build familiarity

and trust with audiences over time. Listeners spend hours with the same voices, hearing similar messages reinforced across episodes. This creates a sense of intimacy in which hosts are treated as mentors or role models rather than commentators. These dynamics pose challenges for prevention because they are not easily addressed through standard moderation tools that focus on individual statements or explicit violations. The influence of podcasts operates through tone, performance, repetition, and the authority built over time.

Platform responses such as deplatforming often fail to address this dynamic. In several cases examined in this study, influencers who were removed from mainstream platforms migrated to self-hosted or subscription-based sites. These spaces are frequently unmoderated and financially supported by dedicated audiences, which can further intensify grievance and insulate creators from scrutiny. At the same time, mainstream media outlets often continue to amplify these figures by featuring their clips, quoting their statements, or framing them as controversial personalities, even after platform bans. One concrete step toward accountability would be for media organizations to adopt clearer editorial standards that limit the repeated circulation of banned influencers' content. Without such measures, deplatforming risks displacing influence rather than reducing it.

The analysis of violent extremist manifestos shows what can happen when earlier processes of grievance and normalization are left unaddressed. These texts do more than explain violence after the fact. They actively shape how attackers understand their actions and how future perpetrators imagine their own paths to violence. Manifestos often frame attacks as necessary responses to humiliation, rejection, or loss of status, and they frequently reference earlier attackers as examples to follow. In doing so, they turn violence into something that appears purposeful, justified, and worthy of recognition. This circulation matters because manifestos rarely disappear once an attack occurs. Even when removed from mainstream platforms, they are archived, reposted, summarized, and discussed across forums, messaging apps, and alternative

sites. Future attackers often draw on these texts to borrow language, grievances, and scripts for action, treating them as guides rather than historical records. Prevention efforts that focus only on takedown or censorship therefore risk missing how these documents continue to function within extremist ecosystems. Reducing the impact of manifestos requires earlier attention to the narratives that make violence feel legitimate long before an attack takes place. The findings show that gendered entitlement, resentment, and perceived humiliation are repeatedly used to frame violence as a final assertion of meaning or control. Addressing these narratives earlier, before they harden into scripts for action, is critical. Without this upstream focus, manifestos will continue to operate as relay points that connect personal grievance to collective memory and future violence.

For practitioners and policymakers, the dissertation's findings indicate that effective prevention cannot focus solely on identifying individual "bad actors" or detecting imminent threats. Instead, prevention frameworks must address the digital infrastructures that sustain grievance, normalize misogyny, and render violence thinkable. These environments shape how grievance is sustained, how misogyny is normalized, and how violence becomes imaginable. When prevention efforts overlook these spaces, they risk responding to visible outcomes rather than the conditions that produce them. Treating misogyny as a central driver of ideologically motivated violent extremism has practical consequences for how risk is assessed and prioritized. Gender-based hatred should be understood as an early and meaningful indicator of radicalization, particularly where it overlaps with racism, ethnonationalism, or hostility toward institutions.

The findings highlight the importance of attending to the affective dimensions of radicalization. Feelings of loneliness, humiliation, resentment, and perceived injustice are repeatedly transformed into ideological certainty and moral justification for violence across the platforms examined in this dissertation. Prevention strategies that focus narrowly on ideology or content risk misdiagnosing the problem if they fail to address these emotional dynamics.

Programs aimed at countering extremism should therefore incorporate trauma-informed, gender-aware approaches that acknowledge how affective vulnerability is exploited within extremist infrastructures. This has implications for early intervention, disengagement programs, and community-based prevention efforts, particularly those working with young men and boys who may be drawn into misogynistic grievance narratives.

Finally, this research highlights the need for prevention efforts that do more than analyze extremist infrastructures after harm has occurred. Addressing gendered extremism also requires building alternatives. This could include platform practices that reduce the repeated amplification of grievance, support services that address social isolation and gender-based harm, and public interventions that challenge narratives of entitlement and victimhood without reinforcing stigma. As part of my work as a Doctoral Policy Hub Fellow (2025) and incoming Postdoctoral Policy Hub Fellow (2026) at the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), in collaboration with Mitacs Accelerate, I have begun exploring how these insights can inform applied policy settings. This dissertation represents a starting point rather than a finished solution. Translating research on gendered digital extremism into effective prevention will require sustained collaboration between researchers, policymakers, platform actors, and community organizations, as well as a willingness to address the social and emotional roots of grievance alongside its ideological expressions.

#### **5.4 Behind the Screens: Researcher Reflections**

Before closing this dissertation, I want to reflect on what it has meant to do this research – not only intellectually, but personally. Immersing myself in thousands of pages of incel forums, hours of manosphere podcasts, and over a hundred extremist manifestos was never a neutral exercise. These texts were not written for me as a researcher; they were written to persuade, to wound,

and in many cases, to radicalize. Their violence was not just analytical material but an affective presence in my daily life.

As a racialized, first-generation scholar, I came to this research already familiar with what it feels like to be positioned as an outsider. Reading these materials often meant encountering amplified versions of the gendered, racial, and cultural hierarchies I have had to navigate in my entire life. When influencers like Tate and Fuentes spoke about women's "place," I recognized the echoes of expectations I had resisted growing up – expectations that sought to constrain possibility, dictate gender roles, and naturalize inequality. This made the research deeply personal: the misogyny on the page and in the audio was not abstract ideology, it was an articulation of the same cultural logics that shape everyday life.

This proximity carried risks. Some days, the sheer repetition of misogynist hate was overwhelming. Some days, after hours of coding violent posts or listening to podcast episodes full of casual hate, I felt drained or heavy in a way I couldn't easily shake. Keeping a reflexive journal became essential. I used it not only to track my methodological decisions but to record my own responses: the anger that bubbled up when women were described as "foids," the hollow feeling after reading a manifesto that justified murder in the language of grievance, or the moments of grim recognition when masculinist rhetoric mirrored casual comments I had heard outside of research spaces. Writing these reflections did not erase the emotional weight of the material, but it gave me a structure for holding it.

At times, I wondered whether immersing myself so deeply in extremist material would desensitize me, or worse, pull me into its logic. But I found the opposite: constant exposure sharpened my awareness of how insidious and repetitive these discourses are. The very banality of misogyny – its everydayness, its normalization – became impossible to ignore. This is partly why I argue so strongly that misogyny must be treated not as a secondary grievance but as an

infrastructure of extremism itself. The data made that very clear, but so did the process of living with the data.

There were also ethical challenges. Working with violent extremist manifestos, for instance, meant encountering not just ideology but the words of perpetrators who had killed in real life. Their texts are often intended as propaganda. To analyze them without reproducing their allure required constant methodological vigilance: how much to quote directly, how to contextualize excerpts, how to resist inadvertently amplifying their messages. These were not abstract questions. Every decision carried a weight, and I was acutely aware that future readers, whether scholars, students, or practitioners, would encounter these texts through the frame I provided.

Doing this work during the isolating years of the PhD also intensified its emotional demands. Academic life is already structured by precarity and solitude, and adding extremist misogyny to that mix often made the days feel heavier. I often found myself carrying the emotional weight of this project quietly. The lack of structured check-ins or institutional mechanisms of care meant that much of this work was done alone, which at times made the process feel heavier than it needed to be. There were moments when I had to deliberately step back: to take breaks from coding, to ground myself with community, and to remind myself that my wellbeing mattered as much as my productivity. It felt important to write this into the conclusion, because too often in extremism research, the toll on researchers themselves is invisible. But the emotional labour is real, especially for scholars who study hate that directly implicates their own identities.

In making space for these reflections, I draw on feminist and reflexive traditions in sociology that remind us of the researcher's standpoint is not a distraction from analysis but part of how knowledge is produced (England, 1994; Haraway, 1988; Pillow, 2003). Building on feminist standpoint theory (Harding, 1991; Hill Collins, 2008; Smith, 1989), I understand my position not

as a bias to be eliminated but as a *resource* for insight. Standpoint theorists argue that knowledge emerges from lived experience and that those situated outside dominant social locations often perceive power and inequality with particular clarity. My standpoint as a racialized, first-generation scholar therefore shaped both my analytic focus and my emotional responses to the data. Rather than threatening objectivity, this orientation reveals how emotional and embodied engagement can deepen our understanding of misogyny's operations across everyday and extremist contexts.

Recognizing how identity and wellbeing affect the research process is, I believe, a methodological contribution in its own right. It shows that the study of hate cannot be detached from the positionalities of those who study it. My reflections are therefore not an “add-on” but a continuation of the dissertation's core argument: infrastructures matter. Just as digital infrastructures sustain extremism, academic and personal infrastructures shape how we encounter it, withstand it, and sometimes are changed by it. By naming these experiences, I hope to contribute not only to scholarly debates about radicalization but also to the effort to make this work survivable – for me now, and for those who come after me.

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## Appendix A

### Manifesto Cases Included in All BERTopic models

**Table 5** Manifesto Cases Included in All BERTopic models

<b>Name Act</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Word Count</b>	<b>MODEL 1</b>	<b>MODEL 2</b>	<b>MODEL 3</b>
University of Texas Tower Shooting	1966	1,123	✓		
Brampton Centennial Secondary School Shooting	1975	89	✓		
Unabomber Attacks	1978 – 1995	185,725	✓		
Queen Street Massacre	1987	966	✓		
École Polytechnique massacre	1989	559	✓	✓	✓
University of Iowa Shooting	1991	2,916	✓		
Concordia University Shooting	1992	70,111	✓		
Pensacola Abortion Clinic Shooting	1994	64,744	✓		
Centennial Olympic Park Bombing and Others	1996 – 1998	184,991	✓		✓
Empire State Building Shooting	1997	529	✓		
Bethel Regional High School Shooting	1997	397	✓		
Pearl High School Shooting	1997	1,698	✓		✓
Thurston High School Shooting	1998	1,691	✓		
Columbine High School Shooting	1999	12,696	✓		
Columbine High School Shooting	1999	7,179	✓		✓
Murder of Stacie Reed	1999	2,000	✓	✓	✓
Sacramento Shooting Spree	2001	1,196	✓		✓
Tampa Airplane Suicide Attack	2002	162	✓		
Beltway Sniper Attacks	2002	245	✓		
Midwest Mail Bombings	2002	2,736	✓		
University of Arizona Nursing College Shooting	2002	6,119	✓		✓
Columbia High School Shooting	2004	1,503	✓		
Red Lake High School Shooting	2005	25,124	✓		
Campbell County High School Shooting	2005	141	✓		✓
Orange High School Shooting	2006	811	✓		

Emsdetten School Shooting	2006	6,605	✓		
Platte Canyon High School Shooting	2006	1,877	✓		
Weston High School Shooting	2006	1,870	✓		
Dawson College Shooting	2006	9,571	✓		
Capitol Hill Massacre	2006	438	✓		
Jokela High School Shooting	2007	1,841	✓		
Omaha Westroads Mall Shooting	2007	334	✓		
Virginia Tech Shooting	2007	2,069	✓		
Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church Shooting	2008	1,050	✓		✓
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Shooting	2009	92,394	✓		
Binghamton Shooting	2009	559	✓		
Henry Ford Community College Shooting	2009	1,882	✓	✓	✓
LA Fitness Shooting	2009	4,621	✓	✓	✓
IRS Building Attack	2010	3,044	✓		
Millard South High School Shooting	2011	85	✓		
Norway Attacks (Oslo Bombing and Utøya Shooting)	2011	717,202	✓		✓
Realengo School Shooting	2011	377	✓		✓
Aurora cinema shooting	2012	3,362	✓		
Chardon High School Shooting	2012	426	✓		
Sandy Hook Elementary Shooting	2012	2,100	✓		✓
Taft Union High School Shooting	2013	5,252	✓		
2013 Southern California Manhunt	2013	11,280	✓		
Boston Marathon Bombing	2013	1,705	✓		
Sparks Middle School Shooting	2013	329	✓		
Arapahoe High School Shooting	2013	1,082	✓		
Seattle Pacific University Shooting	2014	1,006	✓		
Franklin Regional High School Stabbing	2014	983	✓		
Overland Park Jewish Center Shooting	2014	89,893	✓		
Parliament Hill Attack	2014	292	✓		
Florida State University Library Shooting	2014	10,434	✓		
Kennesaw FedEx Shooting	2014	2,953	✓		✓
Portsmouth Stabbings	2014	307	✓	✓	✓

Isla Vista killings	2014	137,759	✓	✓	✓
Charleston Church Shooting (Mother Emanuel AME Church)	2015	7,989	✓		✓
Delta State University shooting	2015	28	✓		✓
Umpqua Community College Shooting	2015	2,420	✓	✓	✓
Lafayette Theater Shooting	2015	2,960	✓	✓	✓
Pipe Bomb Case	2016	507	✓		
Independence High Shooting	2016	663	✓		
Baton Rouge Police Shooting	2016	663	✓		
Madison Jr./Sr. High School Shooting	2016	23	✓		
Couer d'Alene Church Shooting	2016	8,850	✓		
Weis Markets Shooting	2017	42,849	✓		
Aztec High School Shooting	2017	48,647	✓		✓
Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Shooting	2018	25,292	✓		✓
Forest High School Shooting	2018	1,594	✓		
Toronto Van Attack	2018	31,128	✓	✓	✓
Tallahassee Yoga Studio Shooting	2018	14,876	✓	✓	✓
Christchurch Mosque Shootings	2019	16,761	✓		
El Paso Walmart Shooting	2019	2,366	✓		
Halle Synagogue Shooting	2019	2,248	✓		
Attack on Tacoma ICE Detention Center	2019	997	✓		
Poway Synagogue Shooting	2019	4,217	✓		✓
Hanau Shooting	2020	8,895	✓		
Attack on Judge Esther Salas's Family	2020	76,726	✓	✓	✓
Oxford High School Shooting	2021	385	✓		✓
UCLA Threat Incident	2022	505,322	✓		
2022 Bend Oregon Shooting	2022	17,207	✓		✓
Bratislava LGBT Bar Shooting	2022	21,287	✓		✓
Central Visual and Performing Arts High School Shooting	2022	1,695	✓		✓
Buffalo Tops Supermarket Shooting	2022	132,651	✓		✓
UNLV Shooting	2023	10,214	✓		
2023 Farmington New Mexico Shooting	2023	28	✓		
Old National Bank Shooting	2023	1,725	✓		

Michigan State University Shooting	2023	281	✓		✓
Covenant School Shooting	2023	8,344	✓		✓
Allen Premium Outlets Mall Shooting	2023	40,235	✓		✓
Jacksonville Dollar General Shooting	2023	10,402	✓		✓
University of Waterloo Stabbing	2023	223	✓	✓	✓
Killing of Brian Thompson	2024	263	✓		
Tepebaşı Tea Garden Attack	2024	3,573	✓		✓
Planned Attack on MP Tim Crakanthorp	2024	88,476	✓		✓
California fertility clinic bombing	2025	6,080	✓		
DC Museum Shooting	2025	984	✓		
Antioch High School Shooting	2025	18,098	✓		✓