Misogynistic Extremism: A Scoping Review

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Abstract

In recent years, the concept of "misogynistic extremism" has emerged as a subject of interest among scholars, governments, law enforcement personnel, and the media. Yet a consistent understanding of how misogynistic extremism is defined and conceptualized has not yet emerged. Varying epistemological orientations may contribute to the current conceptual muddle of this topic, reflecting long-standing and on-going challenges with the conceptualization of its individual components. To address the potential impact of misogynistic extremism (i.e., violent attacks), a more precise understanding of what this phenomenon entails is needed. To summarize the existing knowledge base on the nature of misogynistic extremism, this scoping review analyzed publications within English-language peer-reviewed and gray literature sources. Seven electronic databases and citation indexes were systematically searched using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for scoping reviews (PRISMA-ScR) checklist and charted using the 2020 PRISMA flow diagram. Inclusion criteria included English peer-reviewed articles and relevant gray literature publications, which contained the term "misogynistic extremism" and other closely related terms. No date restrictions were imposed. The search strategy initially yielded 475 publications. After exclusion of ineligible articles, 40 publications remained for synthesis. We found that misogynistic extremism is most frequently conceptualized in the context of misogynistic incels, male supremacism, far-right extremism, terrorism, and the black pill ideology. Policy recommendations include increased education among law enforcement and Countering and Preventing Violent Extremism experts on male supremacist violence and encouraging legal and educational mechanisms to bolster gender equality. Violence stemming from misogynistic worldviews must be addressed by directly acknowledging and challenging socially embedded systems of oppression such as white supremacy and cisheteropatriarchy.

Keywords

misogynistic extremism, male supremacy, male supremacist violence, violent extremism, misogynist incels, male supremacist terrorism, black pill

Introduction

This scoping review analyzes current definitions of misogynistic extremism and how researchers have conceptualized and studied the phenomenon thus far. Recently, the United States Secret Service published a case study on a shooting that took place at a Florida yoga studio in 2018 entitled "Hot Yoga Tallahassee: A case study of misogynistic extremism" (2022). This review seeks to explore the concept central to that report—misogynistic extremism. While recent attempts at conceptualizing male supremacist ideologies and male supremacist violence indicate increased interest in these phenomena, what constitutes "misogynistic extremism" remains unclear. What, precisely, is meant by the term "misogynistic extremism?" How, where, and should, the line be drawn between extreme and non-extreme misogynistic violence?

To effectively address the potential impacts of misogynistic extremism (i.e., extremist violence), we must first

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understand what it entails. As such, this review will analyze how researchers have conceptualized and studied misogynistic extremism thus far. It will also explore historical debates and on-going challenges surrounding the conceptualization of misogynistic extremism. Developing a clear understanding of what misogynistic extremism entails is critical, as a lack of conceptual clarity will impede our ability to identify and address areas, which are relevant for both further study and policy development. This lack of clarity also risks further reinforcing normative narratives which tend to individualize and pathologize male violence, such as the "lone wolf." Rather than solely debating terminology, there is an opportunity to focus on the central components underpinning the concept of "misogynistic extremism."

It should be noted that extreme acts of violence rooted in misogyny have a well-established history (Kelly et al., 2022). After a self-identified "involuntary celibate" (incel) killed 6 people and injured 14 others in the name of a "war on women," journalist Laurie Penny (2014) argued that the attack represented what a "new ideology of misogyny looks like at its most extreme." Penny was careful to note, however, that violent extremist acts rooted in misogyny do not represent a particularly novel phenomenon. It has been, after all, over 30 years since a man entered the École Polytechnique de Montréal, shouted "I hate feminists," and proceeded to murder 14 women and injure 14 others. Yet the Montreal Massacre has historically been referred to as a "mass shooting" rather than an act of violence motivated by misogynistic extremism. Bates (2021) argues that when men kill in the name of misogynistic extremism, the motive tends to receive "little attention" (p. 138). We agree with this assessment and posit that acts of violence, which are currently being dubbed as being motivated by the "new" phenomenon of misogynistic extremism instead reflect forms of violence which are ancient in origin.

While like other forms of ideologically motivated extremism, "misogynistic extremism" as a phenomenon may not be particularly new, new technologies have contributed to different pathways to radicalization and extremist violence (Holt et al., 2018; O'Malley & Helm, 2022). "Online" manifestations of misogynist extremism as typified by many communities represented within the "manosphere" may expose individuals to subcultures and radical messaging which foment "real world" violence. We would further argue that many of the ideological underpinnings of these "new" subcultures are in fact historically rooted. "Modern" misogynist incels, for example, have a predecessor in the perpetrator of the 1938 Tsuyama massacre.

The distinct characteristics and dimensions of misogynistic extremism are the subject of scholarly debate (Williams et al., 2021). Cottee (2020), for example, argues that classifying violent attacks carried out by misogynist incels as a form of violent extremism would be "a mistake" because incel subculture members "do not advocate the use of violence as a necessary remedy for in-group defense" (p. 108). Yet, other scholars dispute this claim, noting that the major components of the incel worldview are indeed those that are present in other extremist worldviews, and that some incels may rationalize violence as a natural reaction against what they interpret as male oppression (S. J. Baele et al., 2021; DeCook & Kelly, 2022; O'Malley et al., 2020). Tomkinson et al. (2020) advocate for the securitization of misogynistic violence, specifically in terms of incels, arguing that without securitization "political interventions against misogynistic violence will be next to impossible" (p. 152). Bates argues that governments should begin "monitoring, legislating for, and tackling" misogynist extremism in the same manner as "other forms of terrorism" (p. 298). DeCook and Kelly (2022) argue against "classifying and securitising the 'incel' movement as a unique and extraordinary form of misogynistic violence" (p. 1). They posit that the true threat lies in the deeply embedded social structures that promote misogyny and heteropatriarchy. The existing literature indicates that accounts of misogynistic extremism are disputed and that different researchers and groups may be using the term to refer to different types of activities and ideologies. We would argue that before steps can be taken to either classify or securitize violence rooted in ideology of male supremacism, we must have a better conceptual understanding of how this violence operates.

According to Wrisley (2021), while there has been a great deal of feminist scholarship dedicated to the social, cultural, and political effects of misogyny, the ancillary theories produced by these analyses "remain partial, fragmented, vague or conceptually inconsistent" (p. 1). Wrisley highlights the challenge of addressing the conflation of sexism and misogyny, noting that synonymization of these terms is contrary to the larger project of understanding and resolving women's subjugation. Manne (2017) explains that while sexism operates as the "justificatory" branch of the patriarchal order, misogyny can be defined as the "law enforcement" of this order (p. 65) wherein the primary function is to police and enforce its governing ideology. Dworkin (1976) describes sexism as a "system of male dominance" (p. 17) and that central to sexism are "polar role" definitions, essentially masculinities and femininities.

Closely related to sexism is the concept of the patriarchy, which according to hooks (2015), is a "political-social system" which insists men are inherently superior to women and are therefore "endowed with the right to dominate. . . and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence" (p. 1). Facio (2013) argues that cisgender men justify their domination by fixating on "real and perceived biological differences" between genders and that the patriarchy works to maintain and reinforce different "institutions linked closely together to achieve consensus on the lesser value of women and their roles" (p. 1–2). These institutions interconnect with one another to reinforce structures of domination over women. The concept of gender

polarity is further reinforced by MacKinnon (1987) who argues that to treat gender as a "difference" rather than a hierarchy means to treat it as a bipolar distinction, "each pole of which is defined in contrast to the other" and that this construing of gender as "difference" effectively "obscures and legitimizes the way gender is imposed by force" (p. 3). It is in these environments that male supremacism is permitted to manifest and flourish.

Male supremacism may ultimately be defined as "the belief in cisgender men's superiority and right to control and dominate others" while, a male supremacist system refers to a "cultural, political, economic and social system in which cisgender men disproportionately control status, power, and resources, and women, trans men, and nonbinary people are subordinated" (Carian et al., 2022, p. vii). While they may at times act as "individual agents" (Manne, p. 89), both misogyny and sexism work together to uphold the patriarchal order. Beyond the commonly understood concept of misogyny being analogous to "hatred of women," it is an agent of enforcement wherein male supremacist power structures are reinforced. We find the above definition of male supremacism to be particularly useful; in that, it not only captures the ideological belief central to its premise but also reflects the idea that this belief contributes to systematized oppression.

Extremism too has a fraught definitional history. Schweppe and Perry (2021) deem it a "particularly slippery concept" (p. 3). At a fundamental level, there is disagreement within the literature regarding what precisely extremism does and does not entail (Bötticher, 2017; Lowe, 2017). There has also been within the literature acknowledgement that definitions may tend to become politicized and racialized depending on the motivations and priorities of its creator (Sian, 2017). Although more descriptive terms such as "violent extremism" and "right-wing extremism" may provide additional context and clarity, there are still gaps in understanding in terms of how these phenomena are conceptualized. For example, as recently as 2022, researchers acknowledged that there is "no universally accepted" (p. 308) definition of right-wing extremism (Chermak et al., 2022).

Adding to this conceptual muddle is that extremism is frequently conflated with other highly contested topics, such as terrorism (Schmid, 2011) and radicalization (Borum, 2011). As power and the construction of knowledge are inextricably linked (Foucault, 1975), groups in the United States who hold significant political power have a vested interest in the development of definitions which can rationally explain complicated phenomena such as terrorism and extremism. Often, however, these definitions are subject to significant racial, religious, and political bias, reflecting the political motivations and priorities of their creators. Gentry (2020) argues that Terrorism Studies will never settle on an "objective" definition of terrorism because terrorism represents a "thick signifier" that works to organize "social relations into ones that revolve around the (extra)normative ideation of terrorist

violence" and that these social relations are indicative of deeply embedded "structures and hierarchies of race, gender and heteronormativity" (p. 28). In this sense, one may worry that the same concerns about extremism and its links to terrorism may be replicated in attempts to obtain an "objective" definition of extremism.

However, drawing on the pragmatic tradition of the sociology of knowledge, Stampnitzky (2013) explores the social construction of terrorism and argues that despite its "contradictions and instability" (p. 5), terrorism can retain power as a concept in the public imagination because it allows political actors to effectively rationalize their responses to political violence. Scholars who pursue such topics then, are forced to engage "hybrid concepts" (p. 200) that do work, and thus are intertwined with power relations, and the public debates that become debates about power. Rather than reject definition efforts, Stampnitzky suggests to better understand the concept we should chart its various uses, manifestations, and forms of public significance (see also Eyal, 2019). Given that misogynistic extremism encompasses two definitionally contested phenomena, it stands to reason that contradicting viewpoints and epistemological orientations may be contributing to the variation in research findings. We agree with Stampnitzky's assessment that we should seek to more cogently understand how concepts such as misogynistic extremism as currently defined and conceptualized, and to explore the meanings and priorities that these conceptualizations represent in our social world.

Scoping reviews are useful in clarifying key concepts and definitions in the literature, examining how research on a topic of interest is being carried out, and identifying and analyzing knowledge gaps (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). The aim of a scoping review is to explore the full breadth and depth of the literature on a specific topic to identify and better understand the contours and boundaries of the phenomenon of interest.

The current scoping review was guided by three research questions:

1. How is misogynistic extremism defined and conceptualized within the literature?
2. How is research related to misogynistic extremism designed and executed?
3. What, if any, policy and practice implications are provided in the context of misogynistic extremism?

Please note: This review will adhere to No Notoriety's protocol recommendation not to name perpetrators of mass violence.

Methods

This review follows the scoping review framework established by Arksey and O'Malley (2005), as clarified by Levac et al. (2010) and includes the following steps: (1) identifying

the research question; (2) identifying relevant studies; (3) study selection; (4) charting the data; and (5) collating, summarizing, and reporting the results.

Eligibility Criteria

Peer-reviewed studies published in scholarly journals were eligible for selection, along with relevant gray literature (e.g., dissertations, conference papers, government, and watch group reports). Including gray literature in evidence syntheses can serve to reduce publication bias, increase comprehensiveness, and timeliness, and foster a holistic view of available evidence (Paez, 2017). Gray literature can also provide useful contextual information on ambiguous concepts and assist applied researchers and practitioners in understanding "real-world" implications in terms of intervention development and evaluation (Adams et al., 2016). Types of gray literature included in this review were doctoral level theses/dissertations, government reports and policy briefs (e.g., law enforcement reports), nongovernment organization reports, think tank and watch group reports, academic conference papers, academic reports, book chapters published in books under a scholarly press, and preprints available on select preprint servers (i.e., CrimRxiv, SocArXiv, ArXiv, and PsyArXiv).

Publications were included if they included the term "misogynistic extremism" or closely related terms (e.g., "extreme misogyny," "extremist misogyny," and "extremist ideology of male supremacy"). Due to resource limitations, only English language publications were included in the study. No publication date or geographic limits were imposed. Search strategies carried out in these databases were designed in collaboration with a subject specialist librarian at the first author's institution and underwent Peer Review of Electronic Search Strategies (PRESS) reviews by a second information professional. Searches were initially conducted in June 2022. In February 2023, the searches were updated to include additional terms based on reviewer feedback and were re-run to capture any new publications. The original search strategy and a revised sample search strategy are included in Supplemental Appendix A.

Search Strategy

Multiple strategies were employed to identify relevant studies and publications across related disciplines. First, comprehensive searches were conducted in seven electronic databases and citation indexes: Scopus, SocINDEX, Sociological Abstracts, NexisUni, Criminal Justice Abstracts, International Security and Counter Terrorism Reference Center, and Google Scholar.

Next, hand searching was conducted to identify potentially relevant studies that had not been captured within the initial database searches. Hand searching refers to a manual page-by-page examination of the entire contents of a journal issue or conference proceedings to identify relevant information. We identified the top 5 journals across 4 disciplines germane

to our research topic: sociology, criminology, political science, and gender studies, according to the Scimago Journal Rank indicator, resulting in a total of 21 journals. We hand searched all articles published in these 21 journals between the years 2002 and 2023.

Studies were loaded into EndNote, a citation management software, and de-duplicated using the Bramer method (Bramer et al., 2016). Studies were then uploaded to the screening and data extraction tool Covidence for the screening process.

Study Selection

A pilot test was carried out to ensure adequate interrater reliability between the two reviewers. Twenty studies were screened, with a Cohen's kappa indicating an interrater reliability rate of 94%. The screening process took place in two stages. First, the reviewers reviewed the titles and abstracts of all included studies, with any discrepancies resolved during team research meetings. After the title/abstract screening process was completed, a snowball method was adopted wherein the reference lists for all publications, which had progressed to the full text round of screening were checked for any additional potentially relevant publications. These studies were then retrieved and screened. Next, the studies in the full text round of screening were reviewed by both reviewers for inclusion in the final analysis.

Charting the Data

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines were followed using the PRISMA extension for scoping reviews (PRISMA-ScR) checklist (Tricco et al., 2018). We produced a study protocol and registered the protocol on the Open Science Framework (osf.io/3knwd/) to enhance methodological transparency and improve reproducibility of results and evidence synthesis. Figure 1 summarizes the search and data extraction process.

Extraction of the Results

Data extraction took place using a custom Covidence 2.0 data extraction template. The initial data extraction form contained the following information:

1. Author(s)
2. Year of publication
3. Issue, volume, page number(s)
4. DOI or stable URL
5. First author location (country)
6. First author primary discipline/subject area
7. Aims/objectives or research question(s)
8. Study methodology
9. Publication type
10. Formal definition of "misogynistic extremism" (Yes/No)
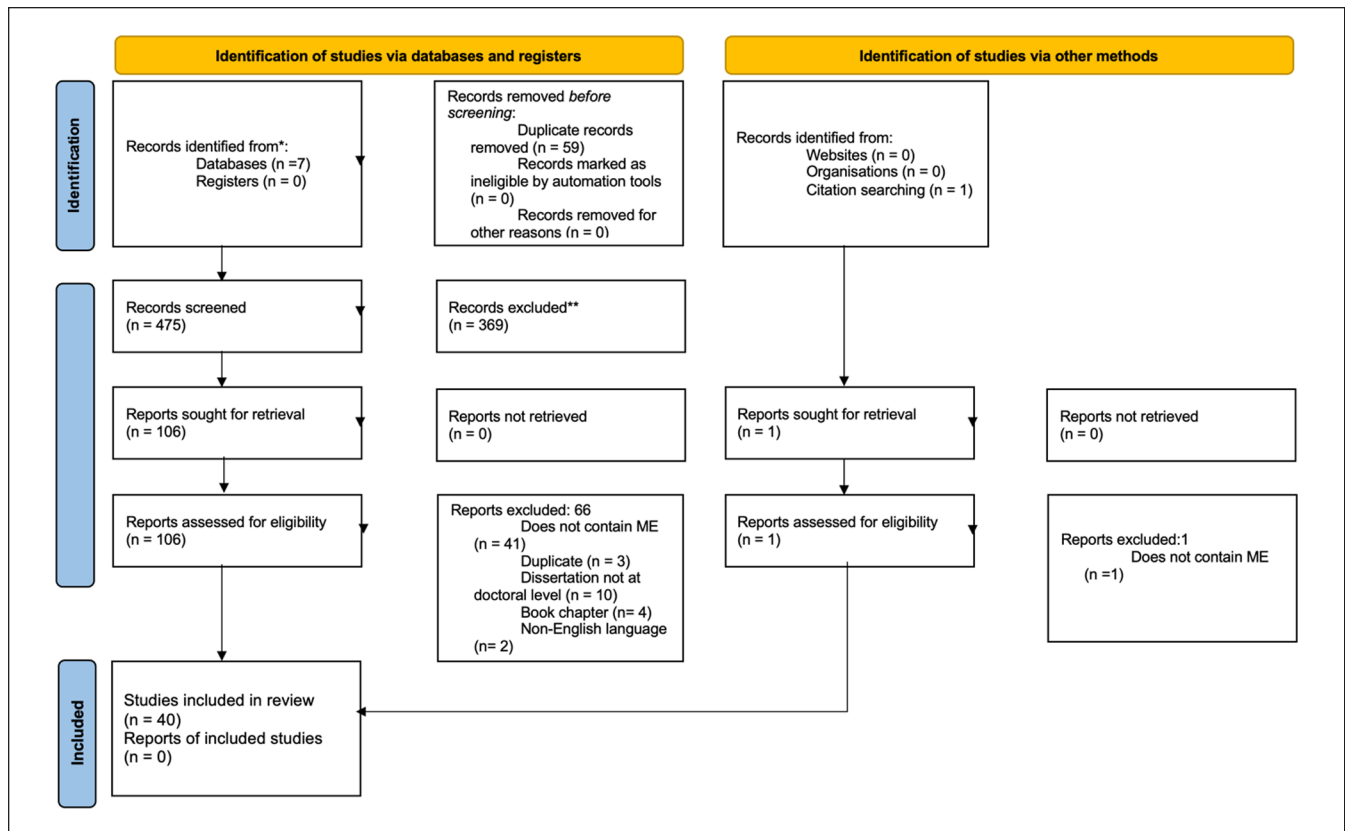11. Key concepts

Figure 1. Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) flow diagram (updated February 2023).

Due to the exploratory nature of this scoping review, the data extraction template was reviewed and adapted as the data extraction proceeded in an iterative fashion. The template was also adapted to accommodate gray literature publications included in the review. Publications that have been included in the review are indicated by an asterisk in the References list.

Collating, Summarizing, and Reporting the Results

We first produced basic numerical analysis of the characteristics and distribution of studies included in our review by leveraging the data gathered during the data extraction process. We then deductively organized the literature thematically, grouping emergent concepts under five categories: (a) misogynistic incels, (b) male supremacism, (c) misogynistic extremism and far-right extremism, (d) misogynistic extremism and terrorism, and (e) the black pill ideology.

Results

Sample Characteristics (Discipline and Geographic Scope)

The total number of publications that emerged after the full-text screening process of scholarly peer-reviewed literature

and gray literature was 40. There were 27 peer-reviewed scholarly journal articles included. The remaining 13 publications were gray literature publications and included: 4 government reports, 3 preprints, 1 academic report, 3 think tank perspectives, 1 watch group report, and 1 doctoral dissertation.

The 40 publications in the final sample were published between 2017 and 2023. The publication rate indicates an overall upward trend and is visualized in Figure 2. Among the empirical literature, 21 academic journals were represented. The most frequently represented journals were Terrorism and Political Violence ($n=5$) and Studies in Conflict and Terrorism ($n=3$). The three preprints included were published on two preprint servers, PsyArXiv ($n=2$) and ArXiv ($n=1$).

Clarivate Analytics InCite Journal Citations Reports (JCR) was used to determine the journal categories for peer-reviewed journals. If a journal was not included in JCR, the academic discipline of the first author was instead included. The disciplines for the three preprints were coded according to the academic departmental affiliation of the first author. Preprint disciplines included Computer Science, Psychiatry, and Security/Crime Science. Political Science was by far the most common discipline represented within the data (36.67%). See Table 1 for a visual representation of scholarly journals and preprints by discipline.

Within the peer-reviewed literature, the geographic scope was almost entirely based in High-Income Countries (HICs).
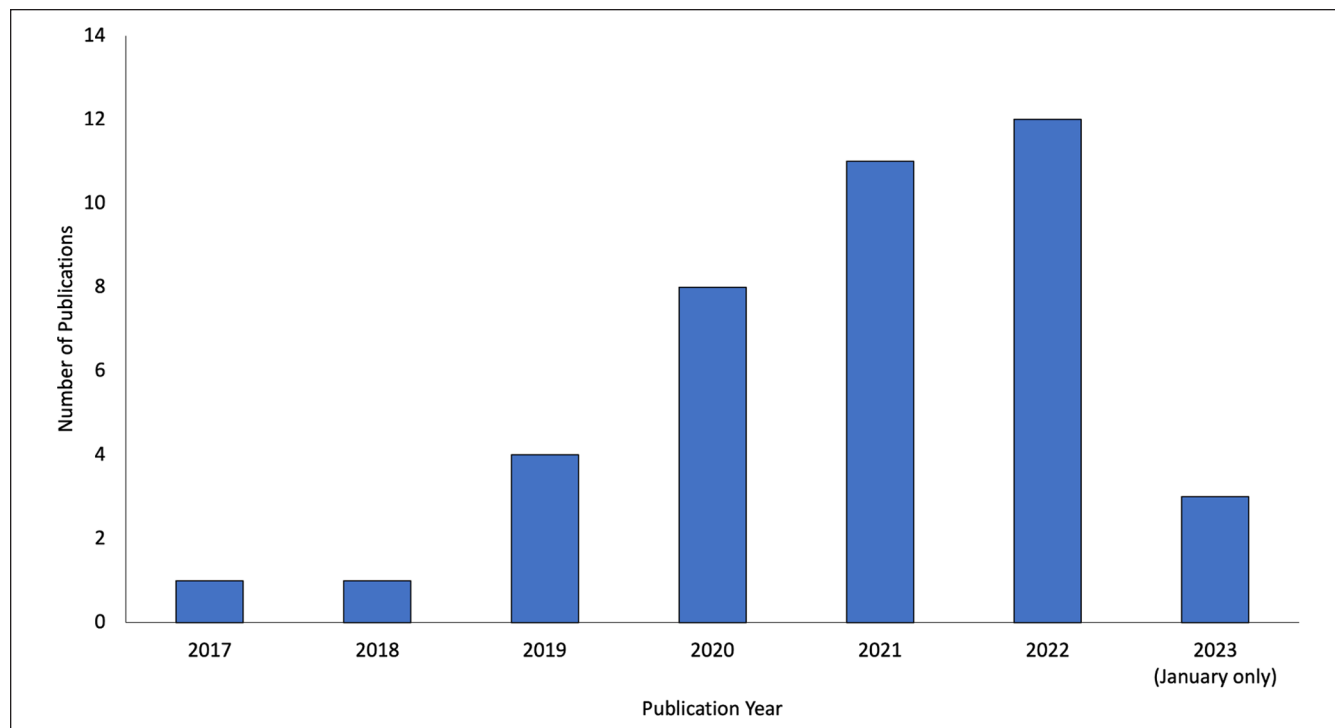
Figure 2. Publications by years.

Table 1. Journal and Preprint Disciplines.

Discipline (N = 30)	N (%)	Publication Types
Communication	1 (3.33)	Journal article
Computer science	1 (3.33)	Preprint
Counterterrorism	1 (3.33)	Journal article
Criminology	2 (6.67)	Journal article
Family studies	1 (3.33)	Journal article
Hate studies	1 (3.33)	Journal article
Law	1 (3.33)	Journal article
Linguistics	2 (6.67)	Journal article
Peace and security	1 (3.33)	Journal article
Political science	11 (36.67)	Journal article
Psychiatry	3 (10)	Journal article, preprint
Security and crime science	1 (3.33)	Preprint
Social sciences, Interdisciplinary	1 (3.33)	Journal article
Social work	1 (3.33)	Journal article
Sociology	2 (6.67)	Journal article

The countries with the most representation were the United States ($n = 10$) and the United Kingdom ($n = 6$). There were only two non-Anglophone countries included in the overall sample, Germany and Turkey. The gray literature was slightly more diverse in geographic scope, mainly due to the inclusion of three publications by various offices of the United Nations, which represented international collaborations between researchers. However, publications based in the United States were predominant in the gray literature, representing 53.8% of gray literature publications. Overall, the U.S.-based publications represented 42.5% of the sample.

Study Design and Methodologies

Among the 27 scholarly articles included in the sample, 10 (37.03%) did not present original empirical research and could instead be classified as theoretical or conceptual papers. Among the remaining papers, 13 (38.19%) used a qualitative design, 2 (7.4%) used a quantitative design, and 2 (7.4%) used a mixed methods approach. Content analyses were the most popular forms of qualitative design, and one-quarter of the qualitative papers (22.22%) involved analyzing posts, comments, imagery, and other activities on online forums. Other qualitative approaches included digital ethnography, interviews, open-source data analysis, critical narrative analysis, and case studies. See Table 2 for a summary of methods used.

Definitions of Misogynistic Extremism

As previously described, publications were included in the review if they included direct or proximal uses of the term "misogynistic extremism." Explicit definitions of misogynistic extremism were sparse within the sample, and it was not explicitly defined within any of the scholarly articles in this analysis. The most formal definitions appear within the

Table 2. Methods Used: Journal Articles.

Variable (N = 27)	N (%)
Methodology	
Qualitative	13 (51.85)
Quantitative	2 (7.4)
Mixed methods	2 (7.4)
Theoretical	10 (37.04)
Qualitative method (N = 13)	
Content analysis	6 (42.86)
Open-source data analysis	3 (21.23)
Case study	2 (14.28)
Critical narrative analysis	1 (7.14)
Digital ethnography	1 (7.14)
Legal note	1 (7.14)
Quantitative method (N = 2)	
Survey	1 (50)
Computational text analysis	1 (50)
Mixed methods (N = 2)	
Content analysis	2 (100)

Table 3. Most Frequently Described Cases.

Case Name	Case Date	Count in Sample (N = 40)
Isla Vista killings	2014	26 (65%)
Toronto van attack	2018	21 (52.5%)
Hot Yoga Tallahassee shooting	2018	14 (35%)
Umpqua Community College shooting	2015	11 (27.5%)
Collier Township shooting/ Bridgeville LA Fitness shooting	2009	6 (15%)
École Polytechnique de Montreal massacre	1989	6 (15%)
Toronto spa attacks	2020	5 (12.5%)

Table 3 for a summary of the most prevalent cases described throughout the sample.

Thematic Analysis

While formal definitions of misogynistic extremism were minimal, several recurring concepts were present in the data. These concepts have been thematically grouped within five areas: (1) misogynistic incels, (2) male supremacism, (3) misogynistic extremism and far right extremism, (4) misogynistic extremism and terrorism, and (5) the black pill ideology.

Misogynist Incels

The Institute for Research on Male Supremacism (2019) recommends distinguishing between incel identity and misogynist incels, noting that women, men, and nonbinary individuals may identify as incels without holding misogynistic beliefs. The authors support this distinction and would like to note that this conflation is exceedingly common in reports of misogynist incels in the media. Although this distinction was rarely made within the publications in the sample, the most prevalent concept throughout the sample was indeed misogynist incels. As outlined in Table 3, the top three cases (the Isla Vista killings, the Toronto van attack, and the Hot Yoga Tallahassee shooting) discussed throughout the sample all involved misogynist incels. Within the sample, misogynist incels were described in 89% of the peer-reviewed publications and were present in 67% of the gray literature publications. In the publications in this section, misogynistic extremism was conceptualized as being analogous to a misogynistic incel ideology.

Repeatedly, authors described misogynistic incels as adhering to an "extremist" mindset or belief system (the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), 2018; S. J. Baele et al., 2021; Hoffman et al., 2020; Jaki et al., 2019; O'Donnell & Shor, 2022; O'Malley et al., 2020; Roser et al., 2023; Rottweiler et al., 2021; Speckhard et al., 2021; Thorburn

included gray literature. The United States Secret Service (2022) report defines misogynistic extremism as a "gender-based ideology" and equates misogynistic extremism with male supremacy. One of the preprints describes misogynistic extremism as being "rooted in differences in sexual proprietariness, exacerbated by female choice, and facilitated by modern technologies enabling coalition formation among low-status men who fail to gain sexual access" (Lindner, 2022). Perliger et al. (2023) describe male supremacist communities (e.g., misogynist incels, Men's Rights Activists (MRA), and far-right Chauvinists) who work to "legitimise violence and measures of coercion against women and manifest an intense hostility towards symbols of women's empowerment and equality, feminist institutions, and other social constructs that its members feel are threatening to masculinity" (p. 9). They argue that "taken together" these groups "share an outlook of extreme misogyny." A common theme across these three definitions is an ideology of male supremacy. The authors wish to reiterate the lack of a common definition across the literature in terms of misogynistic extremism. Because of the absence of any consistent formal definition, understanding common themes represented in the literature becomes even more critical in conceptualizing misogynistic extremism.

Salient Cases

Another approach to understanding the current conceptualization of our topic of interest was to identify the most frequently described "cases" authors discussed in the context of misogynistic extremism. As these cases were tracked, several appeared to be durable and recurrent throughout the sample, such as the 2014 Isla Vista killings (described 26 times) and the Toronto van attack (described 21 times). See

et al., 2022; Van Brunt et al., 2021; Windisch, 2021). S. J. Baele et al. (2021) for example, argue that within the manosphere, misogynist incels occupy "a very specific, extreme position in this ideological landscape" (p. 1668). Similarly, Thorburn et al. (2022) state that while they share many of the same attitudes and beliefs of other members of the antifeminist misogynistic online subculture of the manosphere, misogynist incels are "arguably more extremist" (p. 1). Misogynistic incels ascribe to a rigid social hierarchy, based in an ideology of male supremacy. They adhere to what Connell and Messerschimdt (2005) describe as "hegemonic masculinity" a concept which represents patterns of gendered social practice that allow "men's dominance over women to continue" (p. 832). In misogynistic incel parlance, outgroups are categorized as alpha males ("Chads") and attractive females ("Stacys") at the top of the hierarchy, followed by moderately attractive individuals ("betas" or "normies"), and incels at the bottom. Among misogynist incels, only men are considered part of the in-group and efforts are made to actively exclude women, often through dehumanizing language. The "radical dualism" (Strozier et al., 2010) resulting from the rigid taxonomy of misogynistic incel thinking may create support for violence.

While misogynist incels were frequently discussed, other groups rooted in an ideology of male supremacy, such as MRA, Red Pillers, Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW), and Pick Up Artists, were far less prevalent in the data. Most often, these groups were briefly defined and then described within the general context of the online "Manosphere." After misogynist incels, MRA were the most mentioned group with an ideology informed by male supremacy, being present in 18% of publications. For example, Perliger et al. (2023) describes the extremist rhetoric of influential MRA figure Paul Elam, whereas Guy (2020) discusses the 2020 attack on the family of U.S. District Judge Esther Salas by a New Jersey-based MRA. S. Baele et al. (2023) describe MRA and Pick Up Artists as belonging to "more mainstream networked misogyny," which in recent years have given way to "more extremist" communities such as misogynist incels and MGTOW members (p. 3). The authors would like to highlight the gap in research as related to misogynistic extremism and groups other than misogynistic incels, such as MRA, MGTOW, and Red Pillers. Upon inspection of the salient cases (Table 3) that emerged throughout the literature, we suspect this disparity is because incidents of violence committed by misogynistic incels are more frequently associated with fatalities. However, groups other than misogynist incels not only promote violence against women, trans men, and nonbinary people but have also committed acts of violence against these groups.

Male Supremacism

The concept of male supremacism was present in more than one-third (36%) of peer-reviewed publications in the sample, and in almost two-thirds (64%) of the gray literature publications. In the combined sample, male supremacism was present in 47% of publications. As previously described, the 2020 Secret Service report directly equated misogynistic extremism with the "gender-based ideology" of male supremacism (p. 3). Likewise, C. J. Collins and Clark (2021) describe the Isla Vista killings perpetrator as ascribing to an "extremist ideology of male supremacy" (p. 166). The other publications that referred to male supremacy fell into one of three camps. First, male supremacy was simply described as an ideology that was commonly held by misogynistic extremists (Lindner, 2022; Ware, 2021). Ware (2021), for example, states that the manosphere consists of "various often-violently misogynistic extremist movements, all advocating varying degrees of male supremacism" (p. 13). One component that is missing from some discussions of male supremacism in the context of misogynistic extremism is that it is an ideology rooted in a belief of superiority that calls for the subjugation of not only women but also trans men and nonbinary individuals.

Second, articles discussed male supremacism as an ideological basis for terrorist acts (Andrews, 2020; C. J. Collins & Clark, 2021; Lindner, 2022; O'Donnell & Shor, 2022; Roose et al., 2020). Roose et al. (2020) argue that "male supremacist groups" such as misogynist incels may be "considered a new ideologically motivated form of violent extremism" (p. 4).

Third, authors highlight the need to analyze acts of misogynistic violence within the broader structural context of male supremacy and cisheteropatriarchy (Andrews, 2020; DeCook & Kelly, 2022; DiBranco, 2020; Roose et al., 2020). These authors express concern that attempts to broadly label acts of misogynistic violence as "incel violence" may paper over differences in how misogyny, racism, and male supremacy distinctly shape violent attacks (DeCook & Kelly, 2022). Rather than focusing solely on the individual pathologies of misogynistic incels, male supremacism and patriarchy must be considered as long-standing structural systems, which perpetuate violent extremism and find new form in the misogynist incel subculture. By not considering male supremacism as an underlying system of control and oppression, scholars and analysts not only risk miscategorizing attacks but may also neglect "misogyny as a precursor to extremist violence" and naturalize "the 'everyday terrorism' of interpersonal violence" (DeCook & Kelly, 2022, p. 2) that many women must endure.

Misogynistic Extremism and Far-Right Extremism

A majority of analyses of misogynistic extremism pointed to connections with far-right extremism, a theme present in 60% of the peer-reviewed literature and 54% of the gray literature. The publications in this section highlighted some commonly shared beliefs and attitudes between misogynistic extremists and far-right extremists, specifically those with

ideologies rooted in white supremacy (O'Donnell & Shor, 2022; Thorburn et al., 2022; Ware, 2021). Only one study described misogynistic extremism in the context of Islamic extremism (Kardaş & Yesiltaş, 2017). Far more often, authors describe misogynistic incels as sharing a "synergetic bond" (ADL, 2018, p. 4) or being "tied" to the far right (Ware, 2021). Regehr (2022) argues that misogynist incels and members of the far right share a libertarian, neoliberal worldview, whereas Wilson (2020) highlights the "synergistic" connection between misogyny and notions of white genocide and replacement. Authors further note that far-right extremists who ascribe to a white supremacist worldview endorse rigid gender hierarchies and support social systems patterned in the concept of hegemonic masculinity. White supremacism was described in 71% of the peer-reviewed literature and 36% of the gray literature, indicating that misogynistic extremism was likely to be conceptualized within the context of a white supremacist belief system. DeCook and Kelly (2022) posit that the appearance-based hierarchies, which misogynistic incels ascribe to are "deeply informed by racial and social conditions," which determine beauty standards, and that these standards are often the result of "white supremacist beliefs" (p. 8).

The overlapping online spaces occupied by members of the far right and proponents of misogynistic extremism was considered. Several authors highlighted that misogynistic incels who have committed acts of violence frequented not only misogynistic incel online spaces but also far-right online spaces and sites, such as 4 chan and 8 kun (Habib et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2022; S. J. Baele et a1., 2021; Hoffman et al., 2020; Wilson, 2020). Ware (2021) states that the "rapprochement between incels and the white supremacist movement has been strategically and deliberately pursued by the far-right through overlapping forums" (p. 12) and that misogynistic online spaces can create a gateway to far-right online spaces. DiBranco (2020) suggests exercising caution when applying the gateway analogy, arguing that misogyny and male supremacism represent a motivating ideology in and of itself. Finally, several publications highlight the idea that misogyny and patriarchy are deeply embedded within many far-right communities and long predate the emergence of groups associated with the manosphere, such as misogynist incels (DeCook & Kelly, 2022; Gentry, 2022; Wilson, 2020). These studies emphasize that the relationship between white supremacy and misogynist incel ideology is likely recursive—one begets the other.

Misogynistic Extremism and Terrorism

Terrorism within the context of misogynistic extremism was a frequently explored topic in the data, appearing in 80% of the peer-reviewed literature and 79% of the gray literature. Often discussions of terrorism involved specific acts of misogynistic violence that have been labeled as acts of terror (Gentry, 2022; Roose et al., 2020; Tomkinson et al., 2020;

Ware, 2021; Wilson, 2020) or simply the misogynistic features of many terrorist organizations (United Nations Security General, 2020). The 2020 Toronto machete attack, in which a misogynist incel killed a woman and injured two others, was the most frequently cited example of an act of misogynist violence that was officially labeled an act of terrorism.

Terrorist studies scholars being reluctant to label acts of misogynistic violence as terrorism was common throughout the sample. The debate surrounding the application of the terrorist label to those who engage in acts of misogynistic violence appears to hinge upon how scholars conceptualize political motivation. In this sense, Gentry (2022) argues that terrorist studies experts have typically resisted "seeing misogyny as an important ideological, political force" (p. 210). Several authors point to a tendency of these scholars to ascribe acts of misogynistic violence to individual pathologies and mental illness (DeCook & Kelly, 2022; Gentry, 2022; Guy, 2020) rather than political ideologies. As a result, the scholarship recognizes that existing concepts of what constitutes political violence may be gender biased (Windisch, 2021) and results in terrorism labels being unevenly applied (O'Donnell & Shor, 2022).

Similarly, the public implications of labeling acts of misogynist violence as terrorist acts was discussed. Several researchers argue that labeling these violent acts as terrorism would bring welcome awareness to the issue at hand (Lindner, 2022; Roose et al., 2020; Tomkinson et al., 2020; Windisch, 2021). Moreover, by redefining misogyny and male supremacism as an underlying ideology for terrorist violence, more attention could be directed to gender-based political violence as a whole. However, others question the benefits of labeling misogynistic violence as terrorism. Some scholars express concern that acts of misogynistic violence that do not rise to the level of being "extreme enough" to be classified as terrorism would work to further exacerbate the everyday forms of violence experienced by women, girls, and gender nonbinary individuals. DeCook and Kelly argue (2022) that attempting to categorize violent acts that are motivated by misogyny as "incel terrorism" may "cloud the political dimensions of such violence and impede the recognition of gender as a salient political issue in its own right" (p. 7). It would therefore be beneficial for future researchers to clarify how they relate misogynistic extremism to the broader constellation of patriarchal behaviors and relations that continue to exert considerable influence on daily life.

The Black Pill Ideology

Although less prevalent than the four concepts explored thus far, the black pill ideology emerged as the final concept that was recurrent throughout the data and was discussed in 25% of the publications in the sample. The "pill" philosophy, which is derived from the 1999 film *The Matrix*, is "central to the politics of the manosphere" (Ging, 2019, p. 640). Although consuming the red pill signals an awakening to the

inherent inferiority and depravity of women, the black pill extends this philosophy, representing a form of nihilistic resignation on the part of misogynistic incels.

S. J. Baele et al. (2021) posit that the pill philosophy reflects "a rigid and impermeable categorical structure" that is a "key feature of extremist worldviews" (p. 1675). Echoing and extending this point, Ware (2021) argues that the immutability of the black pill ideology increases its propensity for retributive violence. Regehr (2022) states that the black pill ideology serves two essential functions within misogynist incel communities. First, it works to deify acts of violence that are carried out in the name of misogynistic inceldom and contributes to the martyrization and canonization of individuals who commit these acts of violence. Second, it normalizes "extreme misogyny" within "the rich tapestry of Incel culture" (p. 147) and thus helps to shift the Overton window on the radical concepts that circulate there. O'Donnell and Shor (2022) report that following the Toronto van attack, commenters on a misogynistic incel forum expressed hope that the attack would further promote the black pill ideology among the public.

Other authors recommend exercising caution when considering the significance of the black pill within misogynist incel communities. DeCook and Kelly (2022) argue that the black pill philosophy is neither unique to misogynist incels (it is present, e.g., within both white supremacist communities and conspiracy theorist communities) nor does it represent a particularly novel ideology. It is instead a new metaphor that reflects well-established misogynistic and patriarchal beliefs. We would argue that another area of research which merits further inquiry is the role of the "scientific" black pill in the development of misogynistic extremist worldviews. For example, Dixit's (2022) study of the use of "scientification" to formulate narrative strategies of white supremacism among white nationalists may provide a useful framework for the misuse of scientific research among male supremacists. The critical findings of this review can be found in Table 4.

Policy and Practice Recommendations

Several policy and practice recommendations have emerged within the scholarship. These policies are primarily intended to deter potential violence resulting from adherence to a misogynistic extremist worldview. A recurring policy recommendation within the data was to a build a better understanding among law enforcement, counter-terrorist, and anti-extremist organizations about the generalized nature of misogyny across society (ADL, 2018; Agius et al., 2022; Guy, 2020; Hoffman et al., 2020; Johnston & True, 2019; Phelan et al., 2022; Rottweiler et al., 2021; Windisch, 2021). Rather than attribute the shift to the emergence of a "new" subculture (i.e., misogynist incels), authors broadly recommend that programs designed to counter and prevent violent extremism should recognize the history and enduring influence of misogyny and male supremacism as a motivating

Table 4. Critical Findings.

Critical Findings of Reviewed Literature
Research related to misogynistic extremism is predominantly qualitative in nature and has grown in recent years.
Explicit definitions of misogynistic extremism remain sparse and appear only in gray literature sources.
Misogynistic extremism is most frequently conceptualized within the context of misogynistic incels.
The overlap between far-right extremist communities and communities that ascribe to male supremacist ideologies is acknowledged, but descriptions of the mechanism linking these communities varies (i.e., gateway between vs. intrinsic to).
Male supremacy is cited as the underlying ideology influencing misogynistic extremist worldviews.

factor for contemporary extremist violence (DeCook & Kelly, 2022; Gentry, 2022). Risk assessment tools, for example, should consider gender norms including attitudes toward hostile misogyny and perceptions of violence against women (Johnston & True, 2019; Phelan et al., 2022). As a broader policy concern, these authors also call for increased funding and training to enhance these organization's ability to address incidents of misogynistic violence.

The research indicates that policymakers should work closely with the technology sector to address issues surrounding online hate and abuse (DeCook & Kelly, 2022; Díaz & Valji, 2019; Guy, 2020; Ware, 2021). Beyond confronting extremist rhetoric and violent threats on online message boards and forums such as those present within the manosphere, this work may involve collaborating more directly with social media companies to enforce policies related to online harassment. Beyond clear and transparent terms of service, enforcing community guidelines that prohibit misogynistic propaganda and threats of violence is recommended. Guy (2020) notes that legal reform to address modern online harms such as cyber stalking and image-based sexual abuse is necessary. This may entail changing burdens of proof, eliminating statutes of limitation, and redefining what constitutes legal violations.

Authors acknowledge the complicated issues surrounding monitoring online behaviors that promote misogynistic violence. Banning online communities and users from mainstream platforms may simply encourage these groups and individuals to move to less visible spaces (Jaki et al., 2019). Regehr (2022) argues for "classification" of online spaces rather than regulation or censorship, with the understanding that misogynist violence should be classified in the same manner as other forms of violent extremism. O'Malley et al. (2020) suggest that it may be helpful to present "broad-spectrum messaging campaigns to those audiences most likely to seek out or engage with extremist movements" (p. 21) to address the underlying belief systems that encourage misogynistic thinking. These campaigns should occur in online spaces where these individuals already reside and are most comfortable and their content should focus on dispelling

justifications for violence (Speckhard et al., 2021). They also note that beyond online spaces already occupied by individuals "at risk" for radicalization, education for all young people on gender equality is critical and should include topics such as critical media engagement and consumption. DeCook and Kelly (2022) call for early interventions such as "comprehensive sexual education focused on consent" and introducing young people to theories and feminist thought that "challenge dominant views of masculinity" (p. 14). The ADL (2018) suggests including gender-based content in anti-bias education and within educational discussions of civil rights. Measures against harassment and abuse should extend beyond online spaces to include the workplace, street, and home. The authors posit that policymakers must operate from an understanding that male supremacism is a deeply embedded sociostructural issue and that any policies which seek to address the phenomenon of misogynistic extremism must acknowledge this fact. Table 5 summarizes the study's implications for policy and future research.

Discussion

Key Findings

This scoping review of 40 publications has revealed that formal definitions of misogynistic extremism are exiguous. Three gray literature publications offered definitions, and one of these simply equated misogynistic extremism with male supremacism (U.S. Secret Service, 2022). The geographic scope of the sample was almost entirely limited to HICs among the peer-reviewed literature, though there was slightly more geographic representation within the gray literature. Study designs were predominantly qualitative in nature, and content analyses were the most frequently used methodology.

Within the sample, misogynistic extremism was routinely associated with misogynist incels. The reviewed research posits that the misogynist incel worldview makes them particularly prone to extremist thinking and behavior (Thorburn et al., 2022), including the existence of rigid group boundaries, an oppressive social hierarchy, and a crisis narrative (S. J. Baele et al., 2021). Other groups rooted in an ideology of male supremacy were discussed disproportionately less than misogynist incels.

The potential overlap with or connection between far-right extremism and misogynistic extremism was a recurrent theme throughout the literature. A salient feature of these discussions was that misogyny has a well-established history within many far-right extremist communities (Gentry, 2022). Several authors argued that male supremacy should be viewed as a motivating factor for violence in its own right, rather than simply a gateway to other forms of extremism (DeCook & Kelly, 2022; DiBranco, 2020). Notably, although male supremacy appeared as a topic within the data, it was far less prevalent than discussions of far-right extremism or terrorism. Finally, a quarter of publications explored the

black pill ideology within the context of misogynistic extremism. The nihilistic nature of this philosophy was cited as a potentially unique factor in motivating misogynistic violence.

Conclusions

The review highlights the discourse surrounding not only what misogynistic extremism means, but also how it should be classified and ultimately addressed through policy interventions. Within the sample, researchers argued that violence carried out by misogynist incels should be classified in the same manner as other forms of violent misogyny and extremism (Regehr, 2022) and that violence stemming from misogynist communities rooted in an ideology of male supremacy may resemble other ideologically motivated extremist groups (S. J. Baele et al, 2021). The scholarship reviewed posits that not labeling acts of violence based on an ideology of male supremacy as acts of misogynistic extremism reflects a gender bias in law enforcement and terrorism/security studies more generally. Guy (2020) notes, for example, that while "the FBI tracks extremism from alt-right to animal rights groups, as of 2019-many years after the rise of Incel violence-the agency still has no official records on misogynistic extremism" (p. 631). Agius et al. (2022) argue that Countering and Preventing Violent Extremism (C/PVE) strategies that attempt to address the male supremacist logic that makes violence permissible tend to focus on the acts of violence themselves, rather than the ideology motivating the acts.

It may be worth asking, however, what the ultimate benefit is to labeling some forms of misogyny as "extreme" and others as "non-extreme." Establishing these distinctions may encourage acquiescence of some "lesser" forms of misogyny. As Sugiura (2021) argues:

> Separating "extreme" versions of an ideology from more "mundane" ones creates an artificial dichotomy between the deviant fringe and the mainstream ideologies that, in actuality, are based on the same assumptions. The extreme/non-extreme distinction is deceptive, since it obscures systems of oppression and "everyday" misogyny. . . that have become socially sanctioned and normalized. (p. 154)

Likewise, Millet and Swiffen (2021) state that attempts to widen the definition of terrorism to include white supremacist and misogynistic violence may "provide cover for everyday forms of racial and sexist oppression" (p. 365). Not classifying recent misogynistic acts of violence rooted in an ideology of male supremacism (i.e., the Isla Vista killings, the Tallahassee Hot Yoga killings, and the Atlanta Spa killings), which have resulted in multiple deaths as "extremist" may fail to paint an accurate picture of extremist activities in the United States. On the other hand, constructing an "extreme" and "non-extreme" dichotomy of misogyny may have harmful consequences.

Table 5. Policy and Future Research Implications.

Focus	Implications
Policy	• Implement early educational interventions for young people on topics related to consent, gender equality, and critical media consumption. • Encourage legal and policy mechanisms to ensure gender equality. Promote legislative and educational initiatives that work to dismantle male supremacist power structures. • Work collaboratively with the technology sector to counter online misogyny while building legal protections against online gender-based online crimes. • Countering and Preventing Violent Extremism (C/PVE) organizations and agencies should officially track acts of violence rooted in an ideology male supremacy. • C/PVE experts should receive training on the nature of misogyny and its potential to contribute to violent acts.
Future research	• Consider quantitative approaches to understanding patterns of misogynistic extremist communication and behavior. • Conduct network analyses to better understand the mechanism that facilitates overlap between far-right and misogynistic extremist communities. • Investigate misogynistic extremism as a phenomenon beyond the realm of misogynistic incels, including among other groups that operate primarily within and outside the "manosphere." • Explore the effectiveness of messaging campaigns within online misogynistic extremist spaces. • Investigate the various enabling factors, structural conditions, and individual incentives among misogynistic actors who advocate for acts of violence, and further explore the political motivations of misogynistic extremist actors. • Address the intersection of male supremacist thinking with other forms of bias, prejudice, and hatred.

At a minimum, there is a need to recognize the full spectrum of ideologies that encompass not just the manosphere, but all arenas that advocate for a social order based on male supremacy. Although misogynist incels are frequently associated with research on misogynistic extremism, other groups that ascribe to male supremacist ideologies, such as MRA, Red/Black Pillers, and MGTOW, receive significantly less attention. Additionally, much of the current literature on countering and preventing misogynistic extremism is focused on individual efforts at deradicalization and operates under the assumption that an inceldom was the radicalizing force among misogynist incels who engage in violence. To state that misogynist incels have become radicalized through the extremist indoctrination of the "incel movement" may miss the broader picture. As DeCook and Kelly (2022) note, misogynist incels are a product of toxic and hegemonic masculinity, not something that exists apart from it, and only by directly challenging broad systems of oppression such as white supremacy and cisheteropatriarchy can misogynistic violence be effectively addressed.

Among some media outlets and even academic publications, there has also been a tendency to conflate acts of violence rooted in male supremacism with misogynist incels when the perpetrator did not identify as a misogynist incel (DeCook & Kelly, 2022). These mis-categorizations risk further diluting our understanding of the ideological underpinnings of these attacks. Misogynist incels are not a monolith in terms of racial identity, age, socioeconomic background, or geographic location, and as such, may have varying objectives, aims, and motivations. As Ging (2019) notes, within the manosphere, "ostensibly contradictory masculine formulations. . . can coalesce around any number of contentious issues or flash point events when the common goal is to defeat feminism" (p. 653).

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

We recognize limitations to our study sample. First, only including English language publications is a limitation of the study. Imposing an English language limitation within evidence syntheses can enhance the potential for a Western bias within study outcomes (Konno et al., 2020). Second, over half of the publications (57.5%) in the sample consisted of theoretical peer-reviewed papers or gray literature publications. Although these publications certainly contribute to our overall ability to conceptualize and define misogynistic extremism, empirical research on the topic remains sparse. Third, the data in this sample revealed that misogynistic extremism research is overwhelmingly conceptualized in the context of just one group rooted in an ideology of male supremacy—misogynist incels. It may therefore lack insight into the role other groups can play in this phenomenon, including female supported misogyny (Perliger et al., 2023).

The review highlighted several areas which are opportune for further research. Methodologically, misogynistic extremist research is largely qualitative. In the future, quantitative or mixed methods approaches may be useful in broadening the research perspectives on this topic (Mamié et al., 2021). The qualitative research thus far has been largely text based, primarily in the form of content analyses of Internet forums

and message boards. As S. J. Baele et al. (2021) note, images are "significant vectors of meaning" (p. 1686) and many sites within the manosphere are rife with image-based messages in the forms of memes and gifs. As online content related to the topic of misogynistic extremism proliferates, adopting Natural Language Processing techniques, along with the use of hate speech detection tools (e.g., HateXplain) and customized web crawlers may be beneficial (Chen et al., 2022; Mathew et al., 2021; Scrivens et al., 2019).

Debate has emerged surrounding the political motivations of misogynistic incels (Zimmerman et al., 2018). Researchers in this review described these motivations as "vague" and "unclear" (S. J. Baele et al., 2021), whereas others argued that misogyny, by its very nature, "is political" (Gentry, 2022). Among misogynistic incels, calls for government mandated monogamy and the restoration of men's "rightful" access to women's bodies constitute political demands (O'Donnell & Shor, 2022), just as advocating for a "Marxist style model of sexual distribution" (Zimmerman, 2022, p. 7) reflects a political ideology. More research is needed to determine the extent and nature of the political motivations of not just misogynist incels, but all individuals who ascribe to an ideology of male supremacism. Additional research should investigate extremist worldviews among other proponents of a male supremacist social order.

As Hoffman et al. (2020) note, feminist scholarship pioneered analysis of the manosphere and is essential to understanding the root causes of misogynistic violence. For example, Daly and Reed's (2022) qualitative thematic analysis of interviews with incels was the first known work to report findings from direct interactions with incels. A critical facet of feminist scholarship in the context of misogynistic extremism is acknowledging the many ways male supremacism, white supremacism, anti-LGBTQ prejudice, and xenophobia intersect. Building on the Black and Indigenous feminist scholarship of the Combahee River Collective (1982), Angela Davis (1983), Lorde (1984), and Kimberle Crenshaw (1991), P. H. Collins (2000) explains that "intersectional paradigms remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, and that oppressions work together in producing injustice" (p. 18). Understanding misogynistic extremist worldviews ultimately requires confronting the structurally engrained systems of oppression, which encourage male supremacist thinking and rhetoric to be pervasive throughout our culture.

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Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

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*References marked with an asterisk indicate studies included in the analysis.

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