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ABSTRACT
Sexually and socially frustrated 'Incels' have committed acts of violent extremism in North America and pose increasing threat to Australia and other industrialised settings. We consider policy responses to a form of misogynist violence that targets men and women indiscriminately. Provocatively, we advocate securitising Incel. We consider how securitisation need not only emerge from supportive framings in the media and public discourse, but can also be an active agent in creating them. We then engage with the appropriate responses. Reviewing the likely successful policy responses indicates the problematic nature of previous securitisation efforts. We argue that the best response is to try to understand and engage the antagonised other prior to radicalisation, and that this can be successfully enacted through 'routine' rather than 'exceptional' types of governance. However, securitisation remains a necessary first step in unlocking the resources and political will for tackling the threat that Incel poses.

Introduction

On 23 April 2018 Alek Minassian posted an announcement on Facebook (Robertson 2018):

> Private (Recruit) Minassian Infantry 00010, wishing to speak to Sgt 4chan please. C23249161. The Incel Rebellion has already begun! We will overthrow all the Chads and Stacys! All hail the Supreme Gentleman Elliot Rodger!

Minassian then drove a van through the Toronto CBD, killing ten people and injuring a further sixteen. Several aspects of this attack suggest it was an act of violent ideological extremism. Along with his militaristic language, Minassian included a dedication to the cause of the 'Incel Rebellion', identified their enemy (Chads and Stacys) and referred to their 'martyr' Elliot Rodger, who killed six and injured fourteen people in a similar attack in California in 2014. Incel has been a contributing factor to 90 fatalities and injuries since Rodger's attack. In using violence to make a political statement, particularly against civilians, Incel attacks seem to be clear examples of violent extremism. However, the political responses to Incel have not matched the way that states have dealt with the threat of

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Islamic extremist violence, indicating that normal democratic politics lacks the mechanisms to deal with misogynistic violence. Accordingly, in this paper we argue 1) that Incel is violent extremism; 2) that states should securitise misogynistic violence in order to allocate necessary resources for prevention of further Incel attacks; and 3), that lessons from attempts to securitise other forms of violent extremism should inform policies to respond to Incel. Importantly, we are not making the argument in this paper that all violent extremism is rooted in misogyny (Johnston and True 2019; Diaz and Valji 2019; McCulloch et al. 2019; Marganski 2019), although we do discuss this claim in passing.

First, a note on our use of 'securitisation'. This concept refers to the state's initiation of exceptional, sovereign interventions to protect its ongoing existence (or that of its citizens). While the notion of securitising is clearly problematic, securitisation performs three important functions in securing an adequate policy response to the threat of Incel. Firstly, securitisation elevates the threat above 'gender wars', where divisive debate can defray real political action. Secondly, securitisation ensures adequate priority and resourcing for responding to the Incel threat. Finally, understanding Incel as a security threat provides access to a pre-existing set of policies utilised in numerous jurisdictions to tackle other threats to public security. Not all of these policies have been successful – and indeed some have been downright problematic – but we can learn from them. We ultimately argue for policies that do not rely upon the 'exceptional' uses of state power that are usually characteristic of securitisation. Nevertheless, without the crucial step of securitising Incel, political interventions against misogynistic violence will be next to impossible, due to the dominant depiction of misogynistic violence as a private issue and the related inability of democratic system to adequately legislate against this threat. The emergence of Incel as a form of violent extremism provides an opportunity to address misogynistic violence as a public threat. Accordingly, we participate in the construction of an 'issue culture' (Abraham 2011); seeking to provide an interpretative framework for the recent spate of misogynist violent attacks to drive state action.

Introducing Incel

'Incel', originally conceived by a woman who wanted to foster a community for lonely people, means 'involuntary celibate' (Kassam 2018). However, 'Incel' has since been appropriated by a community of heterosexual men who blame other men and women for their lack of sexual activity. An Incel is a man 'who is not in a relationship nor has had sex in a significant amount of time, despite numerous attempts' (SergeantIncel 2017b). His chief attribute is 'having no possibility of finding a partner to get validation, love, or acceptance from, due to unnattractiveness [sic], insecurities, or mental illness' (2017a). The Incel community has emerged as part of the broader Manosphere, which inventor of the term, Ian Ironwood (2013, forward), describes as 'the nascent and evolving collection of blogs discussing topics of masculine interests and men's' [sic] issues', reflecting a desire to understand 'what it means to be a male in the twenty-first century, particularly in the face of a culture irrevocably changed by feminism'. Ironwood lists numerous groups as part of the Manosphere:

- Men's Rights Activists (MRAs) are concerned about men's civil rights.
- Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW) forego marriage to focus on self-improvement.

- Pick Up Artists (PUAs) engage in 'mating strategies' to pick up women.
- Traditional Christian Conservatives (TradCons) hold conservative views about marriage and family life.
- Wise Old Men (WOM) aid men who are challenged by the rise of feminism.
- Alpha Dads are members of the Manosphere who are fathers.
- The Puerarchy: boys who turn to alcohol and drugs, video games, porn and sex because of a lack of traditional masculine schooling.
- Old Married Guys (OMGs) are members of the Manosphere who are 'happily-married husbands'.

While Ironwood does not list Incels, they share and are informed by many Manosphere beliefs. These include that 'feminine values dominate society, that this fact is suppressed by feminists and "political correctness," and that men must fight back against an overreaching, misandrist culture to protect their very existence' (Marwick and Caplan 2018, 4). Manosphere groups tend to superficially engage with evolutionary psychology and genetic determinism, recycling theories to support claims that women are manipulative, exploitative, 'irrational, hypergamous, hardwired to pair with alpha males, and need to be dominated' (Ging 2017, 12; Griffin 2018). Within this pseudo-biological conceptualisation, Incels self-identify as 'beta men' whose non-hegemonic masculinity limits sexual partners (Nagle 2016, cited in Nicholas and Agius 2018, 52). Manosphere groups also lament women's sexual and economic liberation, expressing nostalgia for an idealised past where men were guaranteed sex via marriage (Ironwood 2013, chap. 5).

Whereas MRAs focus on 'rights,' and PUAs on learning how to approach women, Incels often express *hatred for men and women*. While Incels recognise personal limitations to accessing sex, such as unattractiveness and shyness, they 'simultaneously desire and abhor women for failing to provide them with opportunities' (Katz and Tirone 2015), and abhor the men chosen instead. Incels pejoratively refer to men and women 'who are attractive, socially competent and sexually active' as Chads and Stacys (Robertson 2018) and identify them as a common enemy. Incels hate Chads as 'the only male beneficiaries of the sexual revolution' (Incel Wiki 2018a), and Stacys because they are 'the ultimate embodiment of every wicked, depraved aspect of feminine nature' (Incel Wiki 2018c).

Are Incels violent extremists?

Since the late 2000s the global strategy against 'terrorism' has been extended and refined to include 'violent extremism': the use or support of violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals (Department of Homeland Security 2016; United Nations 2015; Australian Government 2016). While only a tiny minority of Incels have committed public violent acts, they have been associated with an escalating number of violent attacks. Because Incels use violence to pursue ideological and political goals, it seems clear that Incel's violent wing falls under the 'ideological violence' genre of violent extremism. Broadly, Incels believe that they are 'persecuted by the world' (Incel Wiki 2018b); feel 'a profound sense of loss, of displacement, of betrayal, and … anger' (Ironwood 2013, forward), and believe that women's sexual liberation has resulted in desirable women (Stacys) choosing to sleep only with attractive, confident men (Chads). Like other forms of radicalisation, 4chan, Reddit, and other discussion boards provide the space for Incels to gather, share material, and

radicalise. Such spaces are highly populated – The Fifth Estate (2019) found that 'at least 60,000 people are active in the three main public Incel forums online'. While many Incels post violent content without intention to act, there have been multiple instances of Incels committing violent acts against so-called Chads and Stacys as a form of broad social rebellion, which clearly constitutes violent extremism.

Misogynistic violence is of course not new, but Incels differ from typical misogynists because they threaten violence against women *and* men – believing that society as a whole has been corrupted by women's sexual freedom. The clearest articulation of Incel as ideological extremism came from the 141-page manifesto released by Elliot Rodger hours before his mass killing spree in 2014, during which he stabbed his three housemates to death and committed numerous drive-by shootings and attacks with his vehicle before committing suicide. Rodger describes a desire to utilise terror and violence to overthrow the existing social hierarchy (2014, 135):

> Every single time I've seen a guy walk around with his beautiful girlfriend, I've always wanted to kill them both in the most painful way possible. They deserve it. They must be punished. The males deserve to be punished for living a better and more pleasurable life than me, and the females deserve to be punished for giving that pleasurable life to those males instead of me. On the Day of Retribution, I will finally be able to punish them ALL.

The acts that preceded Rodger's writings, and the ways the Incel community has endorsed them, cohere as a political ideology. Researchers have found that Incel-affiliated men are more likely than others to support violence (Scaptura 2019; Baele, Brace, and Coan 2019). In North America, the number of victims of Incel constitutes a security threat akin to that posed by Islamic fundamentalism. Between 2014 and 2018, attacks by Islamic extremists killed somewhere between 74 and 91 people in North America (Wright 2018; National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) 2020a). The range in the figures arises from a lack of certainty about the ideological motivation behind some attacks. In comparison, Incels killed a total of 50 people between 2014 and 2018 in North America and Canada. Although Incels have killed fewer people, they

Table 1. Incel attacks.

Year	Perpetrator	Deaths	Injured
2009	George Sodini[a]	3	9
2014	Elliot Rodger[b]	7	13
2015	Christopher Harper-Mercer[c]	10	7
2017	William Atchison[d]	2	0
2018	Nikolas Cruz[e]	17	17
2018	Alek Minassian[f]	10	16
2018	Scott Beierle[g]	3	5
2018	Brandon Andrew Clarke[h]	1	0
2019	Alexander Stavropoulos[i]	0	2
		53	69

[a]Tatton (2009) and Woolf (2014)
[b]National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) (2020b) and National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) (2020c)
[c]National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) (2020d)
[d]Zadrozny and Collins (2017)
[e]Shukman (2018) and Fleshler and Valys (2018)
[f]Brockbank (2019)
[g]National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) (2020e)
[h]E. Scott (2019)
[i]White (2020)

are clearly a rising threat. There was also a foiled incel attack in 2019, when Christopher Cleary, a virgin with a history of threatening women, posted on Facebook about committing a mass shooting and 'killing as many girls as I see' (MacBride 2019). He was taken into custody (Table 1).

In Canada, experts interviewed by The Fifth Estate (2019) found that 120 incidences of extremist violence over the past 30 years had been committed by alt-right extremists. In comparison, only seven were committed by 'Islamist-inspired extremists'. It is highly probable that Incel has been a radicalising factor in cases where it has not been recognised; a review of mass killings over the last decade to look for Incel sympathies could easily yield more attributable deaths.

Securitisation and construction of an 'issue culture'

The securitisation of Incel offers some important tools for policy makers to reframe gender-based violence. Securitisation refers to the act, carried out by a speaker in a position of authority, of labelling something a security threat to a referent object. When this statement is accepted by the audience, securitisation has occurred. The securitised object is considered outside the realm of 'normal politics', opening up its governance to a realm of otherwise unavailable possibilities, including emergency action and 'breaking free of rules'. Securitisation is a problematic 'emergency politics' that should be unnecessary in a heathy democratic system (White 2015). Further, for traditionalists, securitisation involves the use of force (Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde 1998, 1). We do not advocate exceptional force against Incels, but nevertheless consider the 'speech act' of securitisation necessary to drive meaningful state action. We are struck by the inadequate responses to the threat posed by Incel and believe this may point to a broader failing of the democratic system. In arguing for the securitisation of Incel, then, we seek authorities' public proclamation that Incels are a security threat, which will unlock access to resources and mechanisms of governance that would otherwise be unavailable.

Without the elevation of Incel as a security threat, there is the risk that democratic governments, civil societies and public commentators fall back on conservative cultural attitudes applied to other misogynist crimes. Public efforts to address these crimes tends to be derailed by the notion that they constitute a 'private issue' and are therefore not the subject of political debate (Rich 1979). For instance, in 2015 Jill Meagher was raped and murdered when she was walking home in Melbourne. A Catholic priest told a hundred primary school children that if she was 'more "faith filled" she would have been home and "not walking down Sydney Road at 3am"' (Hitchick 2015). In 2018, Eurydice Dixon was stalked, raped, and murdered walking home in Melbourne. A police Superintendent advised women to 'have situational awareness', carry their phones and call police if they are concerned (Davey 2018). In making these proclamations, opinion leaders and people in power categorise these attacks as a private concern (to do with one's behaviour) as opposed to a public threat.

This case of Eurydice Dixon's rape and murder provides an example of why the Australian democratic system has failed to address the threat of misogynist violence through traditional means. Following the Superintendent's misguided statement, there was widespread condemnation of patriarchy as the *real* problem (Paris 2018; Noonan 2018). This then triggered conservative commentators such as Andrew Bolt to follow the 'anti-feminist' playbook by asserting that men are harmed by violence at rates similar to

women, and that men are actually victimised by approaches that depict them as the problem (Bolt 2018; Dragiewicz 2011). Andrew Nolch, who vandalised Dixon's memorial with a '2.5 m by five-metre ejaculating penis', claimed that he did so partly because he doesn't like feminists (Mills and Emery 2018). The Australian parliament then tried to pass legislation to relax bans on importing weapons so that individuals (women) could better defend themselves. When Senator Sarah Hanson Young suggested this was not effective policy making as it made women (and not society) 'responsible' for preventing gendered violence, Senator David Leyenhjelm responded that 'she should stop shagging men' (BBC News 2018) in a series of vicious personal attacks on her character. This example demonstrates how the issue of a public threat (gendered violence) is rendered a private issue (it is not gendered, it is your own responsibility) and undermined by ad hominem attacks and a metonymic fallacy that suggests that since the actions of the whole are fine, we need not worry about the extremism of the few.[1] The result was that parliament effectively did nothing, hamstrung by public divisiveness and political inertia which undermined the ability to address the actual public threat.

Faced with Incel, which targets *men and women indiscriminately* with violence inspired by misogynist ideology, we have an opportunity to advance an understanding of gendered violence as a security threat which is more difficult to minimise or depict as 'business as usual'. Accordingly, we posit that while women have *always* faced the security threat of indiscriminate violence from perpetrators inspired by misogyny, the *expansion* of the threat of misogynist violence to the remainder of the population provides opportunities to reshape public discourse around gendered violence. In doing so, we are adopting a 'trojan horse' approach, whereby the clear threat of Incel as a manifest example of violent extremism provides access to the policy tools to *deal with gendered violence more generally*.

Moreover, such gendered violence still constitutes a threat to the entire public, as evidence from the developing world suggests that support for violence against women is a key indicator of support for violent extremism in general (Johnston and True 2019, 1). Numerous researchers have pointed out that most male mass murders in Western countries in recent years have a history of violence against women (Marganski 2019; Diaz and Valji 2019; McCulloch et al. 2019). We argue, therefore, that misogynistic violence presents exactly the sort of public threat that requires exceptional political intervention. Accordingly, we pursue the first step of securitisation – labelling Incel as a security threat – with the aim to 'guide public opinion' (Rothschild 1995, 58). Here, we draw on the work of Abraham (2011), who applied Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) concept of 'issue cultures' to securitisation. Generating an 'issue culture' that interprets Incel as a security threat would lift gendered violence 'out of the realm' of gender politics, and 'into that of security' (Scott 2017, 136).

Since securitisation maintains that security responses should be elevated above political debate, we must consider potential critiques. Buzan, Wæver and De Wilde are clear that securitisation was not something they regarded as beneficial (1998, 29), because ultimately democratic interactions were preferable to elevated, sovereign actions that precluded robust politics. Securitisation is a strategic effort to remove something from contestation to limit normal democratic deliberation. We recognise that there is no true escape from politics; however, we argue that normal democratic interaction cannot deal adequately with the threat of Incel. Because Incel can be understood to be a violent extremist organisation, securitising Incel would create an 'issue culture' that would see comments such as

those of Bolt and Leyenhjelm condemned for promoting violent extremism. In short, securitising Incel would highlight that misogyny is a threat to public safety and delegitimise the misogynistic foundation of Incel ideology.

Some scholars have specifically critiqued the securitisation of violence against women. Meger (2016, 156) points out that doing so does not address the root causes of such violence, and suggests that sexual violence is exceptional or rare. However, we argue that securitisation of Incel will unlock the resources to *address the roots of the violence*, on the basis *that such violence is in fact not rare*. Hirschauer, examining the securitisation of wartime rape in Bosnia and Rwanda, mentions problems regarding positionality and partiality; controversy around who can choose what is securitised; a lack of data which leads to misinterpretation and ambiguity; a lack of prosecution, and mainstreaming gender (2014, 198–215). However, she notes that while imperfect, securitisation of rape has helped progress 'universal judicial accountability and moral repositioning' (2014, 237). Hirschauer also states that this was only successful with constant securitisation afterwards (2014, 189), as well as the initiation of 'institutionalised securitisation', whereby securitisation became self-reliant, no longer needing 'constant reiteration of the security speech act' (2014, 193). Our aims in securitising Incel are to achieve both of these outcomes.

What, then, does it mean to securitise Incel? The first step is to label it as violent extremism and present it as an existential threat to the state. We believe this is possible and justifiable because of the destruction of the contemporary state and social order outlined in Rodgers' manifesto, and because he and subsequent perpetrators have attacked an abstract and general category of potential victims. While Incels purport to seek vengeance on Chads and Stacys, it is clear that they see their fellow citizens – and the states in which they live – as the enemy. This construction of abstract, widespread, general victimhood allows us to articulate the public threat that Incel poses. Additionally, we believe that securitising Incel will help limit violence against women and extremist violence in general. Since these issues are clearly not being adequately dealt with at present, securitisation can unlock the tools to address that violence.

Responses to violent extremism – what not to do

If Incel is a clear example of violent extremism, and states have already moved to combat such extremism, how could states move against Incel? Securitisation of Islamic extremism has facilitated inappropriate measures such as indefinite detention, torture, and invasion of sovereign countries. Such extreme activity can exacerbate the notions of vulnerability and persecution, leading to further violence (Horgan 2008, 84–85). Hence, we argue that successfully addressing the threat of Incel will require the implementation of security measures through public policy itself, in the realm of 'normal politics'. Attempts to utilise domestic policy as a tool for intervention into possible radicalisation have already taken place in the fight against religious extremism (Australian Government 2016, 1). While this pivot to domestic policy was apparently based upon strong principles of social inclusion, intervention has tended to be employed only for particular state-supported concerns. Often, the very act of securitising has been enabled by social prejudices, and policy responses have employed heavy-handed methods.

One of the most concerning problems is the creation of a 'suspect community'. Patnazis and Pemberton (2009, 649) define a 'suspect' community as:

a sub-group of the population that is singled out for state attention as being 'problematic'. Specifically in terms of policing, individuals may be targeted, not necessarily as a result of suspected wrong doing but simply because of their presumed membership to that sub-group.

At the root of this problem is the category error whereby the possibility of 'violent extremism' is understood to be an attribute of another category – membership of a 'suspect community', which contains many individuals who will never be violent. Traditional policy responses have assumed that extremism emerges from different religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and people belonging to these categories are rendered as 'suspect communities'. Ironically, the end result of securitising Islam has heightened social alienation and radicalisation (Aziz 2017; Awan 2012; Qurashi 2018), not helped by the 'resource envy' that can arise in communities who miss out on receiving funds that can be used for more positive community cohesion work (Thomas 2017). Thus, the crude securitisation of a group such as 'the Manosphere' could exacerbate members' feelings of persecution and alienation, feeding into #notallmen policy derailments and radicalising more members.

Another generally recognised flaw in states' securitisation responses is 'mission creep' – extending securitisation to almost any possible threat to the state, including general protests and direct political action (Monaghan and Welby 2012; Harbisher 2015). Harbisher points out that this security apparatus is used in the UK to prosecute animal rights, environmental, and anti-capitalist activism (2015, 480–485). Following this kind of over-reach, the justifiability of such measures has been questioned wherever the policies have been implemented, with allegations that they merely seek to further state goals and restrict free speech and citizens' rights. Our aspirations for the securitisation of Incel might, at first glance, appear yet another example of this undesirable mission creep. We argue that addressing Incel could lead to positive flow on effects in regard to broader gendered violence and violent extremism, and seek to achieve maximal results with non-intrusive policy approaches so as to avoid over-reaching and de-legitimising the securitisation program.

Successfully responding to misogynist violent extremism

Having established that a coherent policy response to Incel needs to avoid triggering backfire effects, our next task is to lay out strategies for combatting the threat of Incel. We recognise that it is tempting – and in some ways logical – for policymakers to construct suspect communities, because all perpetrators of a particular brand of ideological violence may share categorical attributes. However, while it is easy to trace effects back to causes in retrospect, it is almost impossible to *predict* effects from particular causes when dealing with something as complicated as motivations for violence (Cassam 2018, 204). How do we target the behaviours that might lead to radicalisation without potentially radicalising a larger group of people? We need to start by seeking to understand the precursors and seek to mitigate them, without creating a sense of persecution or victimhood among men or the manosphere. Doing this, we argue, relies heavily on changing public discourse around gendered violence.

Evaluating polarisation and radicalisation theories, Lub (2013) demonstrates that it is difficult to determine whether the causal assumptions of policymakers are accurate, and

whether the interventions they underpin prove effective. While he concludes that 'none of the investigated policy approaches is supported by strong scientific foundation', we note that such evidentiary binds are ubiquitous in attempts to craft policy responses to complex problems (Parkhurst 2017). Hence, we are particularly drawn to what Harris-Hogan, Barelle, and Zammit (2016, 8) call a Primary, Secondary, Tertiary (PST) or 'Public Health' approach to categorising interventions in violent extremism, since it advocates employing a range of strategies concurrently. The PST model allows for states to 'identify combinations of solutions that work for different groups in different contexts,' and envisages all levels working together (2016, 8). It highlights the importance of intervening in radicalisation well before individuals reach the 'tertiary' stage, just about to undertake an attack. Most importantly, approaching gendered violence as a public health issue situates possible perpetrators of violence as allies of the state system, and undermines the feeling of persecution and isolation that might exacerbate extremist behaviour (Aziz 2017, 276–277; Zammit 2015). Accordingly, we focus upon 'primary' interventions as being of the greatest social benefit, also identifying particular 'secondary' interventions that can address the problem upstream as part of standard social policy.

Primary programs aim to intervene in the development of extremist violence through setting social norms and encouraging social cohesion. They aim to develop community awareness and solidarity at the population level. It is important to remember that Incels, like other members of the Manosphere and far right, feel 'disaffected, disillusioned, disheartened', 'entitled and victimized, embattled and enraged' (Kimmel 2019, 236). If we address misogynistic behaviour as a community problem that has negative effects upon everyone, we avoid stigmatising particular groups and communities, and rather focus upon problematic behaviour and attitudes at a population level. Indeed, as Silke points out, while terrorists' activities are not normal, they 'are normal people' (1998, 59–62 & 67). Primary programs can develop shared norms that condemn misogynistic attitudes. These new norms then make it more difficult for groups such as Incel to thrive.

There are a number of options to intervene at the 'primary level,' backed up by research, which could be employed as soon as Incel is recognised as a security threat. The most important is to foster intervention in the conduct of public political discourse. Comments such as Bolt and Leyenhjelm's, which publicly affirm a feeling of 'victimhood' or persecution among men, not only undermine any political action on gendered violence, they actually encourage those who feel 'persecuted' towards violence (Horgan 2008, 84–85). Public commentators and politicians who dismiss or rationalise violent extremism should be understood as a threat to national security and treated as such, with widespread condemnation and a careful, collective and powerful explanation of the dangers of their position. As Horgan notes, 'the objective [of these explanations] should be to publicise the negative consequences of terrorism, challenge its legitimacy through the appropriate channels, and encourage a displacement of activity that would otherwise result in greater involvement' (Horgan 2008, 92). To avoid the impression of overreach, the policing of public debate about gendered violence should not happen initially through gag orders, but rather through the collective and deliberative condemnation of those who provide succour to violent extremists. Through the creation of an 'issue culture' around gendered violence, we can reduce the possibility that people such as Leyenhjelm and Bolt continue to recklessly endanger the community.

The next, related, step would be to promote the voices and positions of women in areas of politics and the public sphere. Research suggests that involving women in policy, community leadership and politics mitigates the threat of violent extremism in general (True and Eddyono 2017). The fact that women are under-represented in politics, security organisations and public commentary certainly contributes to the lack of strong social norms around discussing gendered violence, as well as to the inability of the democratic system to act upon this. Accordingly, governments need to address gender imbalance in parliament and consider the ways in which the formation and composition of the public sphere further marginalises women's perspectives. Affirmative action to elevate and promote these voices would help construct healthier norms around gendered violence.

The further education of community workers, police, politicians and teachers to engage with misogyny's threat to public security would simultaneously solve some of the pitfalls of contemporary responses to gender-based violence more broadly. For example, such workers would be educated about the dangers of 'victim blaming', which normalises the perspective that such violence has a sense to it, rather than attributing all blame to the perpetrators of violence. Establishing such norms through dialogue and education would undermine the threat posed by Incel.

Again, existing programs could be modified towards these ends. For example, in the realm of changing social norms, Victoria's 'Respect Women: Call it Out' campaign uses online videos to educate people on how to intervene in 'disrespectful and sexist behaviour, a known driver of violence against women'. Further programs could explicitly use opinion leaders – including those capable of commanding respect from the Manosphere – as agents of behaviour change, in line with research showing that success in instilling new norms is often determined by our identification with the messenger (Mols et al. 2015). Bjørgo notes that, among other factors, 'negative social sanctions' and feeling that 'things are going too far' can push members of terrorist organisations away from their groups (2009, 36–37). Accordingly, such measures could encourage this movement. Primary interventions that operate on changing norms have the added advantage that they can reach, however obtusely, all members of a society, even those who anonymously harbour misogynistic views.

Correctly orienting possible primary interventions also requires us to carefully consider the perceived injustices that drive Incel attacks – an approach advocated by the 'UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism' (United Nations 2015, 1–2). For Incels, perceived injustices relate to a relative lack of sexual and social opportunity. Whilst objectionable entitlement underpins this perception, recognising it helps us diagnose individuals' radicalisation as stemming from alienation rather than simply their categorisation as 'male' or 'MRA'. More importantly, identifying the drivers of radicalisation reminds us that violent extremists actually belong to broader communities with capacity to influence their behaviour. Policy approaches that seek to understand and include alienated groups have been best practice in primary intervention for some time (Thomas 2017; Durodie 2016, 25). Individuals want 'to feel that they belong, that they matter', and this needs to be 'possible from within the system, not in opposition to it' (Kimmel 2019, 236). Thomas (2017) describes how the first incarnation of Britain's Prevent Strategy employed a community development approach, funding local governments who could channel money into Muslim community groups. Similarly, Davies suggests that programs for active citizenship, or activism for social justice, could be an effective way 'to build habits of engagement', allowing people to

see themselves 'not just as a member of society', but 'as an actor in shaping what goes on' (2016, 14). Indeed, a primary program to combat the rise of violent extremism ought to include seeking to tackle social isolation for all individuals.

Other methods have included upskilling community service personnel such as psychologists, social workers, health care professionals and teachers to spot the kinds of behaviours and ideologies that could generate radicalisation, and intervening through the dissemination of counter-narratives (Harris-Hogan, Barelle, and Zammit 2016, 12; Aziz 2017). This approach has drawn criticism for its neoliberal 'responsibilisation' of communities (Thomas 2017), its co-opting of professions committed to emancipatory and caring values (McKendrick and Finch 2017), or, in the context of education, creating a surveillant atmosphere that restricts students' ability to discuss ideas (O'Donnell 2016, 61) and failing to ensure that staff are adequately educated on how to identify radicalisation (Heath-Kelly, Amoore, and Raley 2017, 39; Heath-Kelly and Strausz 2019, 90). Critics have also queried the effectiveness of such primary programs because – being aimed at broad populations – it is difficult to develop a metric to measure their success (Harris-Hogan, Barelle, and Zammit 2016, 18–19). However, others have noted that in securitising Islamic violent extremism, more progressive leaders have simultaneously sought to tackle more widespread societal problems that could drive radicalisation (Aziz 2017, 277–278). By pursuing such primary strategies, the government can avoid creating a suspect community, and even if success by the original measure of reducing violent attacks is difficult to quantify, such interventions may lead to substantial social gains.

The secondary level of intervention – intervening at the point of individual radicalisation – is generally understood to be most effective in changing individual behaviour (Aziz 2017; Harris-Hogan, Barelle, and Zammit 2016). It involves identifying individuals and intervening with support programs to re-orient their behaviour and expectations. As such, successful secondary programs require careful identification of individuals in order to mitigate the risk of creating a suspect community. Because of this risk, we argue for primary interventions addressing misogynistic attitudes in the community as a key first step. However, other conditions add to the likelihood that someone may become a misogynistic violent extremist, and the more that social and community workers can become aware of the 'red flags' indicating isolation and potential for misogynist violent extremism, the more effectively secondary measures can be employed.

While it may be 'naïve and dangerous' Schmid (2014, 20) to separate non-violent and violent extremists, articulating the indicators of an increased propensity toward violence mitigates against mission creep and the creation of suspect communities. Knight, Woodward, and Lancaster (2017, 240) list indicators as including exposure to extreme violence; being a victim of bullying; a deliberate disconnection from others; low self-esteem; underachievement; feeling a personal responsibility to act; functioning in a low-security environment; and travelling for or engaging in extremist training and events. In addition, Becker (2019) lists being a young male, having a criminal record that includes violence, an identified psychological disorder, a developed set of radical beliefs, gang membership, being Islamist or in the far right, and, marginally, being a student or being part of an extremist group. There are also misogynistic tendencies in alt/far-right and white supremacist groups (Nicholas and Agius 2018, 36; Kimmel 2013, 231–232), misogynist attitudes are a clear indicator of being more likely to engage in violence (Johnston and True 2019). Social psychology research indicates further signifiers of risk: high levels of social isolation, lack
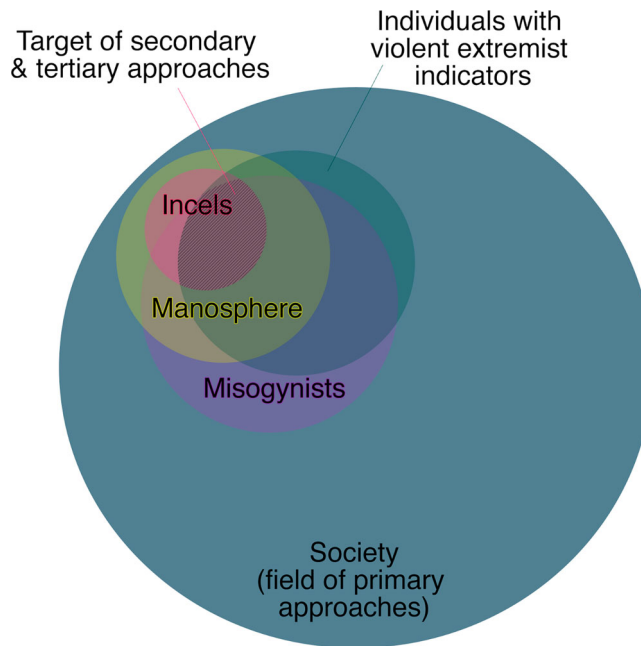
Figure 1. Incels and group membership.

of positive relationships with women, and peer interactions that condone or reinforce misogynistic attitudes (Vaes, Paladino, and Puvia 2011; Vinar 2018; Mikorski and Szymanski 2017). Again, having these indicators does not determine violent extremism, but their co-existence indicates increased risk of radicalisation. We illustrate this relationship in the diagram below (Figure 1). A systematic analysis of such factors would construct a specific target profile for secondary intervention that could be assessed without creating broader suspect communities.

Once individuals at risk have been identified, there are a number of recommended support programs to encourage people to de-radicalise. Kimmel advocates projects such as EXIT Sweden, EXIT Deutschland, Life After Hate, and the Quilliam Foundation, which provide facilities to extremists such as neo-Nazis, white nationalists, Islamist jihadists, and others. They include support such as safe houses, job training, tuition, job placements, judgement-free counselling, drug or alcohol abuse programs, leisure activities, youth clubs, and sports clubs (2019, xiii & 237). Crucially, these programs are run by *former members* of such groups. Some successful US examples include the program to 'encourage community generated content which counters violent extremism narratives'. This program was developed in concert with 'tech companies, public service providers and academic providers' (Department of Homeland Security 2016, 12). The possibility of developing such programs with tech companies and academic organisations seems particularly relevant for our purposes considering that these are sites where issues around gendered violence and discrimination are often considered and strategized, and so once again they carry significant gravitas in the attempt to shape norms and language.

Another possibility lies in providing new gender scripts (Marganski 2019, 11). Norway and Denmark's strategies focus on conversational interventions with suspects who may be

undergoing radicalisation, identified on the basis of already participating in problematic behaviours. By talking through the behaviour, talking about the results of repeating it, and modelling the results of more socially acceptable behaviour, 'empowerment conversations' build on constructive, rather than condemning or accusatory, approaches. They have 'achieved a significant degree of success' with right-wing extremists (Harris-Hogan, Barelle, and Zammit 2016, 12). De Zulueta and colleagues have developed a similar program to combat family violence against children, whereby providing alternative pathways of action to potential violent agents has been shown to develop different neural processing patterns and behaviours (Siebert 2017; Bademci, Karadayi, and De Zulueta 2015; De Zulueta 2006). Because personal contacts (and experiences) are so influential in radicalisation, intervening at the level of personal psychology and personal relationships can be incredibly effective. Given that much of the radicalisation of misogynist extremists appears to also extend from an inability to form stable attachments, this line of intervention could bear fruit with Incel.

Tertiary responses, those most commonly associated with 'securitisation', enact a break from conventional tools used to govern populations and implement levels of surveillance, monitoring or control that might be politically unpalatable. In most developed countries, the existing apparatus for monitoring Islamic violent extremism could be utilised to address Incel a tertiary stage, when individuals are about to commit attacks. For instance, the US Department of Homeland Security (2018) describes its 'fusion centers' as:

> uniquely situated to empower front-line law enforcement, public safety, fire service … emergency response, public health, critical infrastructure protection … and private sector security personnel to lawfully gather and share threat-related information.

These organisations *could* use existing surveillance laws and operational guidelines to effectively police misogynistic violence. They could monitor individuals who are engaging in suspect behaviour and/or who have a high-risk profile based upon peer group membership and social psychological indicators. So it is well within the immediate realm of action to use the existing power of the state to respond to an already defined suspect who seems likely to commit an act of violent extremism. However, prevention of radicalisation is more cost-effective and risk-averse than attempting to stop violent extremism at its site. Accordingly, we would suggest that primary and secondary interventions be considered before tertiary measures.

Conclusion

Incel clearly fits the bill of violent extremism. While securitising any form of violent extremism is problematic, securitisation does important discursive work by insulating policy responses from reactionary critiques. Securitising Incel does not just depend on the existence of a supportive 'issue culture', it can also be part of creating that issue culture, by providing an interpretative framework for challenging misogyny and victim-blaming in public discourse. The move to securitise is justified by the broad and indiscriminate threat posed by violent extremists who construct the rest of the public as deserving of death. Responses should then be informed by previous efforts at de-radicalisation. The fact that these strategies can be implemented using existing social and state security systems means that they can be exercised within the realm of routine governance – but

only once securitisation has facilitated the diversion of these resources to this task by quietening the defenders of gendered violence.

We advocate the adoption of a public health approach utilising primary, secondary and tertiary responses. While secondary approaches (de-radicalising particular at-risk individuals) are generally understood to be the most effective form of intervention, we consider primary approaches tackling entire communities to be at least as beneficial in terms of saving lives. After all, if reducing misogyny in our society also results in fewer deaths from stranger-violence and family violence, these ancillary benefits alone make the investment worthwhile.

Note

1. In fact Bolt came to argue that increasing gender equality may actually contribute to violence against women, effectively suggesting that women may be bringing this on themselves by expecting equal rights and freedoms, a position echoed by Fraser Anning a year later when he suggested the mass killing in Christchurch was attributable to New Zealand's relaxed immigration policies.

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Disclosure statement

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