CHARLES UNIVERSITY

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Institute of Political Studies

Department of Security Studies

Master's Thesis

2024   **Barbora Švábová**

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Misogyny as a Key Driver for Right-Wing Extremists: Is It All About Hate for Women?

Master's Thesis

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Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on 31.7.2024   Barbora Švábová

References

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Abstract

This thesis examines the role of misogyny as a significant motivating factor for right-wing extremism, with empirical evidence based on the attacks in Hanau and Halle, Germany. The study employs psychological research to identify the key mechanisms of collective narcissism, revenge motivation, and hypermasculinity that indicate the likelihood of violent extremism. A thematic and comparative analysis of events of attacks, manifestos and secondary sources confirms that misogynistic beliefs lie at the root of these attacks and account for as much as xenophobic or racist ideologies, thereby exacerbating the propensity for violent extremism.

This research emphasises the necessity of integrating a gender perspective into policies designed to prevent and counter violent extremism, in order to address the underlying causes of such violence. The paper presents empirical evidence and theoretical insights into the pivotal role of misogyny in the radicalisation process, as well as recommendations for more efficacious counter-extremism strategies. By examining these case studies, the research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics driving right-wing extremist violence and highlights the importance of addressing misogyny in academic discourse and policy making.

Abstrakt

Diplomová práce zkoumá roli misogynie jako významného faktoru pravicového extremismu, kterou zakládá na empirických datech ze dvou případových studiích pravicových útoků v německých městech Hanau a Halle. Studie využívá psychologický výzkum k identifikaci klíčových mechanismů kolektivního narcismu, motivace k pomstě a hypermaskulinity, které indikují pravděpodobnost násilného extremismu. Tematická a komparativní analýza útoků, manifest a sekundárních zdrojů potvrzuje, že misogynní přesvědčení leží u kořenů těchto útoků a má stejný podíl jako xenofobní nebo rasistické ideologie, čímž prohlubuje sklon k násilnému extremismu.

Výzkum diplomové práce zdůrazňuje nutnost začlenit genderové hledisko do politik určených k prevenci a potírání násilného extremismu, tak, aby se řešily základní příčiny tohoto násilí. Práce předkládá empirické důkazy a teoretické poznatky o klíčové úloze misogynie v procesu radikalizace, jakož i doporučení pro účinnější strategie boje proti extremismu. Zkoumáním těchto případových studií výzkum přispívá k diferencovanějšímu pochopení dynamiky, která je hnací silou pravicově extremistického násilí, a zdůrazňuje význam zkoumání misogynie v akademickém diskurzu a při tvorbě politik.

Keywords

Right-wing Extremism, Misogyny, Hypermasculinity, Collective Narcissism, Revenge Motivation, Violent Extremism, Radicalization, Gender

Klíčová slova

Ultrapravicový extremismus, Misogynie, Hypermaskulinita, Kolektivní narcismus, Motivace k pomstě, Násilný extremismus, Radikalizace, Gender

Title

Misogyny as a Key Driver for Right-Wing Extremists: Is It All About Hate for Women?

Název práce

Misogynie jako klíčový faktor ultrapravicového extremismu: Je to všechno o nenávisti k ženám?

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Introduction

In recent years, the global political landscape has been marked by a resurgence of right-wing extremism, often accompanied by xenophobia, nationalism, and authoritarianism. The rise of leaders with authoritarian tendencies and the increasing polarisation of societies have contributed to an environment where extremist ideologies can flourish. The attack on the U.S. Capitol in early 2021, ongoing violence against marginalised communities, and efforts to undermine democratic institutions exemplify this troubling trend (Gentry, 2022), not only in the US. In recent times, Europe has been increasingly confronted with the significant strengthening of the extreme right, which has been successfully incorporated into European governments. Within this context, misogyny has emerged as a substantial yet underexplored dimension of right-wing extremism. Defined as a hatred or disdain for women, misogyny intersects with other forms of bigotry, amplifying the potential for radicalization and violence (Manne, 2017). The proverbial *"crisis of masculinity"* seems to be a global issue, to which several men's rights movements, largely affiliated with or directly part of right-wing movements, are responding in varying degrees. These movements make a number of xenophobic, hateful or conspiratorial claims, including a variety of segregationist views, particularly of an anti-immigration nature (Woodward et al., 2020). *"The New Global Far-right"* flipped over into a diverse spectrum of beliefs and approaches, encompassing a range of ideologies from men's and fathers' rights forums to calls for the legalisation of rape or the publication of terrorist manifestos and and manuals for the manufacture of weapons (Agius et at.,

2020).

The rising tide of right-wing extremism poses significant threats to societal stability and democratic values globally and in many ways dictates mainstream political discourse. The Hanau and Halle attacks in Germany highlight a disturbing intersection between violent extremism and deep-seated misogyny. These incidents not only underscore the perpetrators' xenophobic and Islamophobic motivations but also reveal profound misogynistic attitudes that fueled their actions (BBC News, 2020; Holmes & Oltermann, 2019; Connolly, 2020).

Therefore, it is imperative to comprehend how misogyny operates within the framework of right-wing extremism if we are to develop comprehensive strategies to counteract such violent ideologies. For it is misogyny, in its capacity as a critical gateway to broader extremist ideologies, that provides the foundation for various forms of hatred and violence (Díaz & Valji, 2019). Gentry (2022) delineates a chronological trajectory from "common-couple violence" to "patriarchal terrorism" to "misogynistic terrorism," elucidating the manner in which domestic violence can evolve into broader societal and political violence. In the initial stages, misogynistic attitudes manifest as domestic violence, characterised by control and abuse within intimate relationships. As these attitudes become more entrenched, they escalate into what is known as "patriarchal terrorism". This form of terrorism targets not just individual women but also the broader concept of female autonomy and equality. Ultimately, this trajectory culminates in "misogynistic terrorism", where violence is ideologically driven and intersects with other forms of extremism. It is therefore of

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the utmost importance to comprehend the multifaceted nature of violence against women as a political phenomenon and to begin addressing it in a manner that reflects this understanding (Woodward et al., 2020).

This thesis addresses a significant gap in the existing research literature by examining misogyny as a key driver of right-wing extremism. While existing studies have often focused on xenophobia and nationalism, there has been less attention paid to the specific contribution of misogynistic beliefs to extremist violence (Gentry, 2022). The principal research issue identified is the lack of a comprehensive understanding of misogyny as a driving force behind right-wing extremism. The objective of this research is to investigate the complex interplay between gender dynamics and extremist ideologies, as evidenced by the Hanau and Halle attacks. The impetus for addressing this issue stems from the necessity to address this research gap and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the multifaceted nature of extremism. By adopting a perspective that foregrounds gender dynamics, this thesis seeks to reveal how misogynistic beliefs not only perpetuate violence against women but also serve to bolster extremist ideologies and actions. This contribution to existing research is vital for the development of more effective counter-extremism strategies that address the root causes of violence and hatred (Woodward et al., 2020; Johnson, 2024; Agius et al., 2020).

This thesis is predicated on the primary research question: ***"Does misogyny represent a significant motivating factor for right-wing extremists, as evidenced by the Hanau and Halle attacks?"***. The secondary research question is: ***"Should***

gender perspectives be incorporated into P/CVE policies to enhance their efficacy, and if so, which gender perspectives should be included?".

Furthermore, this research will examine the hypothesis that **misogyny, when combined with other factors such as hypermasculinity and collective narcissism, significantly increases the propensity for violent extremism.** The objective of this thesis is to provide empirical evidence and theoretical insights that highlight the pivotal role of misogyny in the radicalisation process through thematic and comparative analysis. Structure is as follows: Within the theoretical framework, the literature review describes existing research on the interplay between right-wing extremism and misogyny and addresses the nature on violence against women. The conceptual framework continues to describe psychological research linking misogynistic attitudes leading to violent behaviour. This framework is primarily based on the research findings of Rottweiler, Clemmow, and Gill (2021; 2024), which serve as the foundation for the subsequent thematic analysis. The methodology section delineates the qualitative approach and thematic analysis employed for data collection and analysis, based on the methodologies proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Swain (2018). The section of empirical findings encompasses analysis of the empirical data, which are presented in the form of detailed case studies of attacks in Hanau and Halle. These findings are supported by a comparative analysis. The objective of this thesis is to enhance scholarly comprehension of the mechanisms underlying extremist violence and to provide insights for the mitigation of right-wing extremism through a gender-sensitive approach.

1. Theoretical Framework

In this thesis, I adopt a theoretical framework that is primarily based in describing and linking far-right violence and misogyny. In the literature review section, I describe the role that hatred of women plays within far-right extremism and demonstrate how its role is fundamentally neglected in most political documents. The scarcity of research on this topic, coupled with the disproportionate attention accorded to it, can be attributed to the fact that even in the present era, violence against women is not regarded as a matter of political consequence. This aspect of the topic is addressed in the following sections of the literature review, where evidence is presented to demonstrate that violence against women is a political issue and that it is already embedded in a limited area of security studies. It is crucial to understand this systematic pattern of violence in order to fully comprehend the conceptual framework of this thesis, from which the themes for subsequent thematic analysis will emerge. This thesis' conceptual framework is based on the complex psychological research conducted on extremism and misogyny, the findings of which are also presented in this chapter.

1.1. Literature Review: Understanding Political Violence and the Interplay Between Misogyny and Right-Wing Extremism

The interrelationship between misogyny and right-wing extremism represents a pivotal domain of scholarly enquiry that, regrettably, continues to receive inadequate attention. Violence against women is often perceived as a personal or private issue

rather than a political act. This perception stems from deep-seated societal norms that normalise and trivialise gender-based violence. Academic scholars like Kate Manne (2017) defines misogyny as a political phenomenon aimed to enforce women's subordination and uphold male dominance, embedding such violence within the fabric of societal structures. Despite its prevalence and impact, violence against women is frequently dismissed as non-political, obscuring its role in maintaining patriarchal power dynamics.

The failure to recognise violence against women as a political issue allows misogyny to be overlooked as a fundamental element of ultra-right movements in the sense of not merely a concomitant occurrence but as one of its primary roots if the phenomenon under discussion. A review of the stated objectives of ultra-right or right-wing groups reveals a consistent emphasis on the preservation of traditional social structures, white male supremacy, and control over the status of women and their bodies (Millender, 2023). This perspective identifies misogyny as a fundamental aspect of right-wing extremism, positing that the subjugation of women is instrumental to the maintenance of a traditional order and patriarchal social structure. Gentry (2022) offers a similar perspective, proposing that misogynistic terrorism has consistently existed but has frequently been eclipsed by more overt forms of political violence, such as racism and anti-Semitism. This oversight serves to reinforce the notion that such violence is incidental rather than systematic and politically motivated. Similarly, DeCook and Kelly (2021) emphasises the threat posed by male supremacist violence, which is typically viewed as isolated incidents rather

than as part of a coherent political ideology aimed at preserving male dominance. Bates (2020) and Kimmel (2018) provide further documentation of the rise of misogynistic groups and their integration into broader extremist movements. The critique further argues that the failure to recognise violence against women as a political act is a significant shortcoming. The argument put forth is that such violence is strategically employed to intimidate and control women, thereby sustaining patriarchal power structures and therefore, inherently political.

Johnston and True (2019) demonstrate that misogyny is a stronger predictor of violent extremism than factors such as religiosity, education, age, or geographic region. The study, conducted in four countries, demonstrates that misogyny is a pervasive aspect of the identity and ideology of contemporary violent extremist groups, playing a pivotal role in the radicalisation process. This is consistent with the findings of Rottweiler, Clemmow, and Gill (2024), who emphasise the considerable rise in violent extremism when misogynistic beliefs intersect with hypermasculinity and collective narcissism. Lewis (2019) aligns with the argument put forth by Díaz and Valji (2019) that anti-feminism or misogyny serves as a gateway driver for most far-right ideologies and extremist violence. This is often preceded by other forms of hatred, including racism, xenophobia and homophobia. This hierarchical progression in misogyny is reinforced by authors as Gentry (2022), who emphasises that what initially manifests as domestic violence can subsequently evolve into broader societal and political violence, thereby underscoring the vital necessity of addressing misogynistic attitudes at all stages.

Leidig (2021) provides further support for this argument by demonstrating how online spaces normalise anti-female sentiment, thereby acting as a stepping stone to far-right extremism. The Southern Poverty Law Center (2021) has documented a considerable number of instances in which misogynistic rhetoric plays a pivotal role in the ideology of far-right groups. This is exemplified by the dissemination of the *"great replacement theory,"* which intertwines racial purity with the subjugation of women, reflecting broader anxieties about demographic changes and gender roles. Further elaboration on the transnational nature of these narratives is provided by other authors (True et al., 2018), noting that misogynistic ideologies spread through online channels, reinforcing extremist beliefs across different cultural contexts. The attacks in Hanau and Halle demonstrate the intertwining of misogynistic attitudes with other extremist ideologies. The perpetrator in Hanau published a manifesto comprising racist and misogynistic content, expressing regret at his lack of a romantic relationship and attributing his perceived grievances to women and migrants (BBC News, 2020b). Similarly, the perpetrator in Halle articulated feelings of frustration over his inability to form a romantic relationship, attributing this to the presence of migrants and women's choices (Holmes & Oltermann, 2019). These cases demonstrate how misogyny provides motivation for individual attackers and serves as a unifying theme for broader extremist movements.

It can be reasonably argued that no example is more illustrative of the intrinsic link between misogyny and right-wing extremism than the proverbial manosphere. The concept of the *"manosphere,"* as outlined by DeCook and Kelly (2021), is pivotal

for comprehending the role of misogyny in radicalisation. This loosely connected network of online communities, which includes men's rights activists (MRAs), pickup artists (PUAs), and involuntary celibates (incels), frequently coincides with far-right ideologies and, in particular, white supremacy. The online environment provides a supportive setting for the propagation and reinforcement of these ideologies, which frequently intersect with other forms of extremism, collectively creating a beneficial atmosphere for extremist beliefs to flourish. In this regard, Kimmel (2017) posits that the manosphere is fuelled by a crisis of masculinity, which is itself exacerbated by economic and social insecurities such as high unemployment rates, low levels of education or the decline of traditional working-class professions. Men who feel disenfranchised and emasculated seek validation and support in these online spaces, finding solace in the shared grievances against women and feminist movements. The various subgroups within the manosphere, such as incels and pickup artists, promote extreme misogyny and frequently advocate for or engage in violence against women (Bates, 2020; McCain Institute, 2021; ALD, 2018). These groups espouse a view of women as objects to be dominated and controlled, and their interactions within the manosphere serve to reinforce and escalate these harmful beliefs. The manosphere environment fosters a culture of resentment and hostility towards women, which can and does result in real-world violence (Jasser et al, 2020). Furthermore, the expansion of the manosphere into previously unconsidered groups is a cause for significant concern. The manosphere, which was previously an exclusively right-wing, Christian and male-only space, is now populated by so-called "Femacels" – female

incels (as identified by the McCain Institute in 2021) or "Mincels", i.e. Muslim incels who are creating their own manospheric space, the so-called Alt-Wallah (Brzuszkiewic, 2023; Ghumkhor, Mir 2022; Rehan, 2022)[1]. From how it appears, no trenches are deep enough to prevent the desire to control and hate women from overcoming them.

1. 1. 1. The Chronological Trajectory of Violence

The underlying issue that has resulted in a lack of attention being given to misogyny in counter policies can be attributed to the persistent belief that violence against women is not a political phenomenon. This is a fundamental misconception that needs to be corrected, and this is best done by showing the chronological trajectory of violence, which can start at a small level in the form of harassment but can also develop into full-blown hatred leading to mass violence.

Gentry (2022) outlines a chronological trajectory of violence that extends from "common-couple violence" to "patriarchal terrorism" to "misogynistic terrorism," illustrating how domestic violence can evolve into broader societal and political violence. This progression is crucial for understanding how deeply ingrained misogynistic attitudes can escalate into extreme forms of violence and intersect with broader extremist ideologies. Initially, misogynistic attitudes often manifest as domestic violence, termed "common-couple violence" (Gentry, 2022; Bates, 2020).

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[1] It would be a mistake to include women or Muslims in the category of "Incel," despite the fact that some groups other than men may self-identify as such. The term "incel" is used to refer to a group of men who have explicitly identified themselves as being opposed to women, the LGBTQ+ community, and other religions (McCain Institute, 2021).

This form of violence is characterised by patterns of control and abuse within intimate relationships, where the aggressor's behaviour is motivated by a desire to exert dominance and control over their partner. Johnson (2006) identifies this type of violence as common within intimate partnerships and driven by traditional gender roles and expectations. Misogynistic beliefs underpin this behaviour, reflecting a broader societal norm that devalues women and legitimises male authority and control (Gentry, 2020). As these misogynistic attitudes become more entrenched and politicised, they can escalate into what Gentry (2022) refers to as "patriarchal terrorism." At this stage, the violence extends beyond individual relationships and targets the broader concept of female autonomy and equality. Patriarchal terrorism involves more organised and ideologically driven acts of violence, aiming to maintain patriarchal control over societal structures. Hunnicutt (2009) describes this form of violence as systematic and driven by extreme hostility towards feminist movements and any perceived threats to traditional gender hierarchies. Ultimately, this trajectory culminates in "misogynistic terrorism," where the violence is ideologically driven and aimed at a wider societal level. Misogynistic terrorism often intersects with other forms of extremism, such as racial or religious bigotry, creating a more comprehensive and dangerous form of terrorism (Bates, 2020; Mane, 2018). Gentry (2022) notes that this form of violence is characterised by attacks that specifically target women or are motivated by a hatred of women, aiming to instil fear and reinforce patriarchal dominance on a societal scale.

The progression from domestic violence to broader forms of terrorism

underscores the deep connection between misogyny and violent extremism. Misogynistic beliefs do not exist in isolation but are often intertwined with other extremist ideologies, including xenophobia, nationalism, and religious extremism. This intersection amplifies the potential for radicalization and violence. According to Rottweiler, Clemmow, and Gill (2024), the psychological mechanisms linking misogyny to violent extremism include revenge motivation, hypermasculinity, and collective narcissism. These mechanisms are critical for understanding how misogynistic attitudes can drive individuals towards extremist actions. For example, the sense of entitlement and perceived victimhood among misogynistic individuals can lead to a desire for revenge against women, whom they see as responsible for their grievances. This motivation for revenge can manifest in support for or participation in violent extremist actions, particularly those targeting women or ideologies perceived to support women's rights.

Furthermore, the concept of hypermasculinity, as discussed by Kimmel (2018), involves the exaggeration of stereotypical male behaviours such as aggression and dominance. Hypermasculinity is often promoted within extremist movements as a means of asserting power and control, particularly over women. This exaggerated form of masculinity reinforces misogynistic beliefs and justifies violent actions as a legitimate means of maintaining male dominance.

Collective narcissism, which involves an inflated sense of importance and superiority of one's group, also plays a significant role. Misogynistic individuals with high levels of collective narcissism view the advancement of women's rights and

feminist ideologies as direct threats to their group's status and privileges. This perception leads to hostile reactions and justifications for violent retaliation against those who are seen as undermining their group's dominance (Rottweiler, Clemmow, and Gill, 2024).

1. 1. 2. Connection to Mass and School Shootings

A review of the literature reveals that the linkage of misogyny with right-wing extremism is a topic that has been largely overlooked by official policy makers. It is primarily addressed by female authors from the academic community, who are trying to finally give this topic enough attention. A part of the topic that has begun to receive greater attention within policy writing circles concerned with violent extremism is the examination of the link between anti-women attitudes and the psychology of mass shooters and school shootings.

A study by Johnston (2024) on 59 school shooters between 1966 and 2018 revealed that 70% of perpetrators exhibited acts of violence towards women prior to or during the attack. In this context, the author also refers to the concept of "hegemonic masculinity," which she associates with acts of mass violence. The normalisation of violence is justified by the perpetrators' assertion of their right to dominance. Consequently, the author suggests that addressing smaller acts of violence and harassment against women, challenging harmful gender norms, and fostering violence-free school environments are essential for preventing future shootings.

Also other authors describe that there is a notable overlap between misogyny and extremist ideologies in the profiles of mass shooters, who frequently express a sense of aggrieved entitlement and victimhood. These individuals often ascribe personal failures and societal changes perceived as threatening to traditional male dominance to women (Kimmel, 2018; Lewis, 2019). As demonstrated by Everytown Research (2022), there is a discernible correlation between misogyny and gun violence, with numerous mass shooters exhibiting histories of domestic violence and misogynistic beliefs in the US.

Those who perpetrate mass shootings motivated by misogyny and right-wing extremism tend to view violence as a legitimate means of restoring their perceived status and exacting revenge on those they blame for their grievances. This pattern is evident in the manifestos and social media activity of numerous perpetrators, who explicitly link their misogynistic beliefs to broader extremist ideologies (DeCook and Kelly, 2021). As highlighted in the Everytown Research report (2022), the availability of firearms serves to enhance the lethality of such attacks, given that firearms are perceived as empowering instruments by those who feel disenfranchised.

Wells (2023) observes that extreme misogyny represents a common thread across various forms of terrorism and violent extremism. He highlights how online communities within the manosphere serve to foster these ideologies and encourage acts of violence. The convergence of misogyny with other extremist ideologies, including neo-Nazism and white supremacy, gives rise to a potent and perilous combination of beliefs that can incite individuals to engage in violent actions (Lowy

Institute, 2023). Additionally, other research has established a correlation between white supremacist groups and acts of mass violence. In 2020, for instance, 67% of all terrorist attacks or their accessories in the United States were perpetrated by these groups (Beckett, 2020).

Kimmel (2018) posits that perpetrators of mass shootings often evince a sense of aggrieved entitlement, feeling that they are owed certain privileges and status, particularly in relation to women. The unmet entitlement can result in the development of extreme anger and a desire for retribution. Lewis (2019) further examines how these individuals perceive societal changes, such as the advancement of women's rights and increased immigration, as direct threats to their traditional male dominance. Such perceived threats may serve as a catalyst for violent actions, which are undertaken with the aim of reasserting a sense of lost status.

The process of radicalisation online plays a significant role in the reinforcement of misogynistic and extremist beliefs. DeCook and Kelly (2021) highlight the role of online communities, such as the manosphere, as echo chambers that serve to validate and amplify the grievances of their members. Such online spaces provide a conducive environment for the propagation of extremist ideologies and incite violent reactions to perceived injustices. Furthermore, Everytown Research (2022) highlights that the convergence of misogyny and far-right extremism in online domains, such as the manosphere, serves as a conducive environment for radicalisation. These communities frequently glorify past attackers and encourage the dissemination of violent fantasies, thereby constituting a significant public safety

threat. Similarly, Downen (2023) concludes how these online environments facilitate the dissemination of "right-wing death squad" ideologies, thereby further linking misogyny with far-right violence.

1. 1. 3. Implications and Conclusion

The implications of these findings are significant for the development of effective counter-extremism strategies. Johnston and True (2019) propose the incorporation of misogyny evaluations into the risk assessment tools utilised in the context of violent extremism and counterterrorism programs. By acknowledging misogyny as a pivotal element in the radicalisation process, policymakers and practitioners can devise more precise interventions that address the underlying causes of extremist violence. The UNDP report (2022) highlights the necessity for integrated approaches that address the socio-economic and cultural factors contributing to misogyny and extremism, with particular emphasis on the role of community-based interventions and policy reforms. The OSCE (2023) report similarly emphasises the significance of adopting gender-sensitive approaches in order to prevent violent extremism. It advocates for the empowerment of women as a principal strategy for mitigating the risk of radicalisation.

In a recent publication, Bloom and Anastasio (2023) draw attention to the role of *"weaponized misogyny"* in the recruitment strategies of extremist groups. They highlight how these groups exploit gender grievances to attract and radicalise new

members[2]. It is argued that an understanding of this dynamic is crucial for the development of effective counter-radicalisation policies. The Monash University report (True et al., 2018) provides further evidence to support this argument, demonstrating that the empowerment of women and the addressing of gender inequalities can significantly reduce the appeal of extremist ideologies.

In conclusion, the existing literature demonstrates the intrinsic connection between misogyny and right-wing extremism. Misogynistic attitudes are a fundamental aspect of extremist ideologies and play a pivotal role in the radicalisation process and might also play a decisive role when an individual chooses to act violently. The conjunction of misogyny with other forms of bigotry provides a comprehensive framework for the conceptualisation and mitigation of violent extremism. Although there are already calls for gender mainstreaming in counter-radicalisation manuals, they are not numerous enough and not sufficiently taken into account.

In the next section of this chapter, I will develop the themes outlined in the literature search and deepen understanding of the links between hatred of women and violent extremism. The next subchapter includes the specific psychological mechanisms that play a crucial role within misogyny and right-wing extremism and that can lead extremists to violent action.

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[2] The same approach can be seen within Islamist radical groups, which exploit the promise of patriarchal order and offer women ("wifes") as barter goods if new recruits join their movement (McCain Institute, 2021).

1. 2. Conceptual Framework

In order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the intersection between misogyny, violent behaviour and far-right extremism, this study will draw upon two studies conducted by Rottweiler, Clemmow and Gill in 2021 and 2024. These studies provide a robust framework for understanding the psychological mechanisms that link misogynistic attitudes, interpersonal violence, and violent extremism. Furthermore, they examine the mechanisms of men's violent behaviour and their susceptibility to violent extremism, thus linking misogynistic attitudes to violent extremism.

By employing detailed psychometric analyses, these researchers have identified several key psychological mechanisms, including revenge motivation, hypermasculinity, and collective narcissism, which are essential for understanding the motives behind the expression of physical violence within violent extremism. This theoretical foundation is essential for examining how gender dynamics contribute to extremist violence and for developing targeted counter-extremism strategies. In addition to the aforementioned key mechanisms, research has reported additional indicators that I have categorised under three main mechanism groups for better understanding and in accordance with the findings of other authors. There indicators will be further utilised for thematic analysis.

1.2.1. Collective Narcissism

The term "collective narcissism" is used to describe a psychological phenomenon and conceptualised as frustrated group-based entitlement. It has been defined as *"a belief that one's own group (the ingroup) is exceptional and entitled to special recognition and*

privileged treatment, but it is not sufficiently recognized by others" (Golec de Zavala & Lantos, 2020). This concept is of great importance for the comprehension of the motivations underlying certain extremist behaviours. Authors here emphasise that collective narcissism is typified by an intense emotional investment in the perceived greatness of one's group and a corresponding hostility towards perceived threats. This exaggerated perception of in-group superiority frequently results in defensive aggression when the group's status is confronted or when it is perceived to be in danger. In the studies (Rottweiler et al., 2021 and 2024), authors identified that individuals exhibiting high levels of collective narcissism demonstrate heightened sensitivity to perceived slights or threats directed towards their group. Such sensitivity may result in the manifestation of aggressive behaviours, which are employed as a means of defending the group's honour and status.

The studies indicate that collective narcissism is a significant predictor of violent extremist attitudes, particularly when it is combined with misogynistic beliefs. The researchers posit that individuals who perceive their group as exceptional and entitled to special recognition are more likely to engage in violent actions to protect their group's dominance (Johnston, 2024). The main characteristics are as follows: firstly, that individuals believe that their group is special and superior to others; secondly, that they feel that their group is inherently deserving of special privileges and recognition; and thirdly, that any perceived threat to the status or privileges of the group is met with considerable hostility and aggression.

1.2.1.1. Entitlement claims

Entitlement, as a subset of collective narcissism, is characterised by the expectation of receiving preferential treatment and the belief that one is inherently deserving of certain privileges (Golec de Zavala & Lantos, 2020). This sense of entitlement can serve as a potent motivator for extremist conduct, particularly when individuals perceive that their social or cultural dominance is being undermined. Rottweiler, Clemmow, and Gill (2021 and 2024) posit that entitlement frequently gives rise to violent conduct when such expectations are not fulfilled. In their research, the authors found that individuals who exhibit strong feelings of entitlement are more likely to justify aggressive actions as a means of reclaiming their perceived rightful status. This is particularly evident in the context of misogyny, whereby men may feel entitled to exert control over women and react violently when their dominance is challenged. This sense of entitlement is not merely an individual sentiment; rather, it is frequently situated within a broader sociocultural context that upholds male dominance and subjugates women (Manne, 2020).

1.2.1.2. Perceived group threats

The perception of threats to the collective is another crucial element of collective narcissism. This entails the conviction that external groups (e.g., immigrants, women, or minority groups) present a substantial threat to the status and privileges of the in-group. Rottweiler, Clemmow, and Gill (2021 and 2024) highlight that these perceived threats can result in elevated levels of fear and hostility, prompting

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individuals to adopt extreme measures to safeguard their group and frequently triggering defensive aggression.

The research discovered that individuals who perceive a high level of threat to their group are more likely to express support for or engage in violent extremism (Wozniak et al., 2021). This is due to the fact that the perceived threat activates defensive mechanisms that are aimed at preserving the superiority and privileges of the group in question (Golec de Zavala & Lantos, 2020). To illustrate, men who perceive a loss of social and political dominance as a result of the growing influence of women may respond with hostility and violence in order to reassert their position of superiority. This dynamic is frequently exploited by extremist movements that portray social progress and equality as existential threats to the status of their in-group.

1.2.1.3. Behaviour reinforcement and Peer validation

The reinforcement of misogynistic and extremist attitudes within group settings is contingent upon two critical mechanisms: behaviour reinforcement and peer validation. These dynamics play a significant role in the radicalisation process, as individuals receive continuous affirmation from their peers for their beliefs and actions, which serves to strengthen their commitment to these ideologies. The principal forms of reinforcement are positive reinforcement and social validation, which have become particularly accessible within the online environment (Tietjen & Tirkkonen, 2023).

Positive reinforcement occurs when group members receive approval and admiration from their peers for exhibiting misogynistic and extremist behaviours. Such approval may manifest in a number of ways, including verbal commendation, social media likes and shares, or recognition within the group. Rottweiler, Clemmow, and Gill (2021 and 2024) highlight that this positive reinforcement not only serves to reinforce existing beliefs but also encourages individuals to intensify their behaviours in order to gain further validation. The process of social validation entails the experience of feeling validated and supported in one's beliefs and actions. In extremist groups, members seek to establish a sense of belonging and identity by sharing and reinforcing each other's misogynistic and extremist views (Rottweiler & Gill, 2021). This process creates a feedback loop whereby the acceptance and support from peers serve to justify and reinforce the individual's beliefs and actions. This communal reinforcement serves to strengthen their commitment to the group's ideology and increases their willingness to engage in extreme actions.

The phenomenon of an echo chamber within extremist groups serves to intensify the beliefs of members and propel them towards increasingly extreme actions. The constant reinforcement of misogynistic and extremist ideas within the group environment limits exposure to counter-narratives and alternative viewpoints (Leone & Parrott, 2018). This isolation from dissenting opinions, combined with peer validation, accelerates the radicalisation process. As a result, individuals become more entrenched in their beliefs and are more likely to act on them violently as they seek to prove their commitment and gain further acceptance from the group.

1.2.2. Revenge Motivation

The concept of revenge motivation has been identified by Rottweiler, Clemmow, and Gill (2024) as a significant psychological mechanism. Those who espouse misogynistic beliefs frequently exhibit a profound longing for retribution against women, whom they perceive as the source of their personal and societal grievances. This motivation for revenge can manifest in support for or participation in violent extremist actions, particularly those targeting women or ideologies perceived to support women's rights. Revenge motivation is driven by feelings of injustice and a perceived need to retaliate against those perceived as a threat to one's status and privileges. Gentry (2022) posits that this desire for revenge as a driving force behind misogynistic terrorism, whereby violence is employed as a means of punishing and controlling women. This perspective is supported by Johnston and True (2019), who posit that misogynistic individuals frequently perceive violence as a justified response to the perceived encroachment of women on male-dominated spaces.

1.2.2.1. Victimhood

The concept of victimhood can be defined as the perception of being treated unfairly or oppressed by others, which often gives rise to a deep-seated desire for retribution. In the context of misogyny and violent extremism, individuals who perceive themselves as victims of societal changes that promote gender equality often direct their grievances towards violent actions. As authors (Rottweiler, Clemmow & Gill, 2024) found out, these individuals perceive themselves as victims of a system that

they believe favours women at the expense of men. This perception of victimisation can result in an intensified sense of anger and a compulsion to seek retribution against those perceived to be responsible for their suffering.

The research indicates that men who espouse a victimhood mentality are more likely to justify violent actions as a means of reclaiming their perceived rightful status (Zimmerman, 2022). This mentality is frequently reinforced by extremist ideologies that portray societal progress and gender equality as threats to traditional male dominance (Manne, 2018). The authors posit that addressing this sense of victimhood is pivotal for mitigating the risk of violent extremism. Those who espouse misogynistic views and possess a pronounced sense of victimhood frequently perceive their actions as a necessary means of defending against the perceived encroachment of women and other marginalised groups (Rottweiler, Clemmow, & Gill, 2021).

1.2.2.2. Societal isolation and Alienation

The experience of societal isolation and alienation has been identified as a significant contributing factor to the development of revenge motivation. Those who feel disconnected from society and marginalised by mainstream social and political developments are more susceptible to extremist ideologies (Maxwell et al., 2020). We can observe that societal isolation may result from a range of factors, including economic hardship, social exclusion, and the erosion of traditional gender roles (Lewis, 2019).

The studies (Rottweiler et al., 2021 and 2024) indicate that individuals who are isolated often seek out communities that align with their beliefs and values, including those found in the manosphere and other extremist online spaces. Such communities offer a sense of belonging and validation, which serves to reinforce the grievances and desire for revenge held by their members. The intensification of their sense of alienation from society at large serves to exacerbate their hostility towards those they perceive as their enemies, including women and minority groups (Wozniak et al., 2021). There is a strong emphasis in the literature that this isolation provides a conducive environment for radicalisation, as individuals become increasingly entrenched in their beliefs and more willing to act violently to address their perceived grievances. Furthermore, feelings of powerlessness and frustration are intensified by societal isolation, which can then drive individuals to adopt extreme measures in order to assert their identity and beliefs. The absence of social support and the existence of echo chambers that endorse their extremist perspectives can prompt these individuals to perceive violence as a legitimate and indispensable response to their sense of alienation (Rottweiler et al., 2021 and 2024).

1.2.3. Hypermasculinity

The concept of hypermasculinity represents a significant link between misogyny and the phenomenon of violent extremism. It entails the intensification of conventionally masculine behaviours, including aggression, dominance and disdain for anything perceived as feminine or also "weak". This exaggerated form of masculinity serves to

reinforce misogynistic beliefs and justify violent actions as a means of maintaining male dominance (Manne, 2018). As observed by Rottweiler et al. (2024), hypermasculinity is frequently advanced within extremist movements as a means of asserting power and control, particularly over women. Such promotion is evident in the glorification of aggression and violence, which are regarded as indispensable for the protection of traditional gender roles and societal structures. Within these groups, hypermasculinity is not merely an ideal; it is a behavioural expectation that members must adhere to in order to gain acceptance and status within their in-group.

As Kimmel (2018) asserts, hypermasculinity constitutes a pivotal element of extremist ideologies, wherein violence is glorified as a means of asserting male authority and resisting perceived threats to male supremacy. This viewpoint is supported by Lewis (2019), who posits that the propagation of hypermasculine ideals within extremist organisations serves to normalise and legitimise violent conduct. The expectation of violence as a demonstration of manhood gives rise to a culture in which aggression is a primary means of resolving conflicts and asserting dominance (Johnston, 2024).

1.2.3.1. Affective responses and Cognitive distortions

Individuals who espouse misogynistic beliefs and attitudes often evince strong negative emotional responses, such as anger and hatred towards their out-group. Such affective responses can readily be directed towards violent behaviour, particularly when such emotions are validated and amplified by extremist groups. The

intensity of these negative emotions can prompt individuals to engage in violent acts as a means of expressing and alleviating their anger and hatred. Rottweiler, Clemmow, and Gill (2024) highlight the pivotal role of affective responses in transforming misogynistic attitudes into violent actions. This is corroborated by Berkowitz's (1993) frustration-aggression hypothesis, which posits that frustration gives rise to aggressive behaviour, particularly when the source of frustration is perceived as intentional and unjust, which points us back directly towards the concept of victimhood. In the case of individuals exhibiting misogynistic attitudes, their frustration with women and societal changes is channelled into violent extremism as a form of retaliation.

Cognitive distortions are defined as irrational and biassed ways of thinking that perpetuate negative beliefs and attitudes. These distortions play a pivotal role in the genesis and reinforcement of hypermasculinity and affective responses. Rottweiler, Clemmow, and Gill (2024) elucidate the role of cognitive distortions, including overgeneralization, magnification, and black-and-white thinking, in the radicalisation process. To illustrate, overgeneralization may prompt an individual to assume that all women are culpable for their personal shortcomings, whereas magnification amplifies the perceived dangers posed by societal transformations. Such cognitive distortions can intensify feelings of anger and hatred, thereby facilitating the justification of violent actions (Echeburua et al., 2016). It is imperative that cognitive distortions be addressed in order to prevent the escalation of misogynistic attitudes into violent behaviours. The implementation of interventions

that challenge and correct these distorted thought patterns may prove an effective method of reducing the likelihood of individuals resorting to violence as a means of asserting their hypermasculine identity.

2. Methodology

Case Justification. The selection of the Hanau and Halle attacks as case studies is driven by their significance in highlighting the intersection of misogyny and right-wing extremism. The Hanau attack, conducted by Tobias Rathjen in February 2020, resulted in the deaths of nine people and himself, and revealed explicit anti-immigrant and misogynistic sentiments in his manifesto and videos. Rathjen's writings and videos frequently lamented his inability to establish romantic relationships, which he attributed to women rejecting him or that they were too emancipated and therefore did not conform to his ideas of what they should be, thus fostering a deep resentment that aligned with his extremist views. Similarly, the Halle attack, carried out by Stephan Balliet in October 2019, targeted a synagogue and a kebab shop, killing two people, and included misogynistic rhetoric in his livestreamed commentary. Balliet expressed frustration and anger over his perceived sexual and social failures, blaming women for his lack of romantic success, which he saw as a validation for his extremist actions. These cases were chosen due to the availability of direct evidence of the attackers' motivations, including manifestos, videos, and social media posts, which provide rich qualitative primary data for analysis.

Methodological Approach. This thesis employs thematic analysis as the primary methodological approach to explore the interrelationship between misogyny and right-wing extremism, particularly in the context of the Hanau and Halle attacks. Thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), is well-suited for this research due to its flexibility and capacity to identify, analyse, and report patterns

within qualitative data. This method allows for a comprehensive examination of complex and multifaceted phenomena, aligning well with the research aims.

The research design integrates deductive approaches to thematic analysis. The deductive approach applies existing theoretical frameworks to guide the analysis. This attitude ensures a robust and nuanced understanding of the data and is particularly appropriate given the underexplored nature of the research problem.

Data. Empirical data collection for this study involves analysing primary sources, including manifestos and statements made by the Hanau and Halle attackers, as well as secondary sources such as existing literature, media reports, and official documents related to the attacks. This multi-source approach enhances the validity and reliability of the findings through data triangulation.

Analysis. The analysis follows the six-phase framework for thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which includes familiarisation with the data, generating initial data, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. The thematic analysis is guided by the theoretical framework of psychological mechanisms identified in Rottweiler, Clemmow, and Gill research (2021 and 2024), such as revenge motivation, hypermasculinity, collective narcissism, cognitive distortions, affective responses, social isolation, behavioural reinforcement and peer validation, perceived group threats, entitlement, and victimhood. By analysing the Hanau and Halle attackers through these themes, this thesis aims to uncover how misogynistic attitudes contribute to radicalization and violent extremism, emphasising the importance of addressing misogyny in

counter-extremism strategies. In order to enhance the understanding of the subject matter, the findings of the analysis will be subjected to a comparative analysis. Ensuring the validity and reliability of the findings involves triangulating multiple data sources and maintaining reflexivity throughout the research to acknowledge and minimise potential biases. Ethical considerations will be addressed and sensitive data will be handled with care. Through this methodological approach, the thesis aims to generate rich and nuanced insights into the dynamics driving misogynistic violence within extremist contexts, contributing to advancing scholarly understanding and informing future research and intervention efforts.

2.1. Integration into Thematic Analysis

The integration of the thematic analysis in this thesis is structured around three main themes derived from the foundational research of Rottweiler, Clemmow, and Gill. These themes are Collective Narcissism, Revenge Motivation, and Hypermasculinity. These themes provide a comprehensive framework for the analysis of the Hanau and Halle attacks, facilitating a nuanced understanding of the dynamics that drive extremist violence and emphasising the role of misogynistic attitudes in radicalisation processes. By examining these case studies through this lens, the thesis aims to make a significant contribution to both academic discourse and practical policy interventions.

The concept of collective narcissism encompasses a number of subthemes, including behavioural reinforcement and peer validation, as well as entitlement

claims and perceived group threats. The reinforcement of aggressive behaviours through social validation within extremist communities is a key aspect of the behavioural reinforcement and peer validation phenomenon. Entitlement claims refer to the conviction that one is entitled to specific privileges or treatment, frequently manifesting as expressions of superiority and demands for respect. The perception of external groups as a threat to one's own group can result in a defensive and often aggressive response, a phenomenon known as "perceived group threats." These subthemes illustrate how collective narcissism motivates individuals to justify violent actions as a means of maintaining or restoring perceived lost status.

The subthemes of Victimhood and Societal Isolation and Alienation comprise the category of Revenge Motivation. The perception of being treated unfairly or oppressed can lead to a deep-seated desire for retribution, which is encapsulated by the concept of victimhood. The term "societal isolation and alienation" is used to describe a sense of disconnection from society, which can intensify grievances and radicalisation. These psychological mechanisms elucidate the manner in which individuals direct their frustrations towards violent extremism as a form of retaliation against perceived injustices.

Affective responses and cognitive distortions constitute the affective and cognitive subtheme of hypermasculinity. Affective responses encompass intense negative emotions such as anger and hatred, which are manifested in violent conduct. Cognitive distortions are defined as irrational thought patterns that serve to perpetuate extremist beliefs and justify violence. The aforementioned subthemes

demonstrate how hypermasculinity serves to reinforce misogynistic beliefs while simultaneously normalising and legitimising violent actions. By focusing on these themes and subthemes, the thesis will provide a detailed and nuanced analysis of the Hanau and Halle attacks. This approach not only highlights the role of misogynistic attitudes in radicalisation but also underscores the importance of addressing these psychological mechanisms in counter-extremism strategies. The findings from this thematic analysis will inform both academic research and practical interventions, contributing to a deeper understanding of the dynamics driving misogynistic violence within extremist contexts.
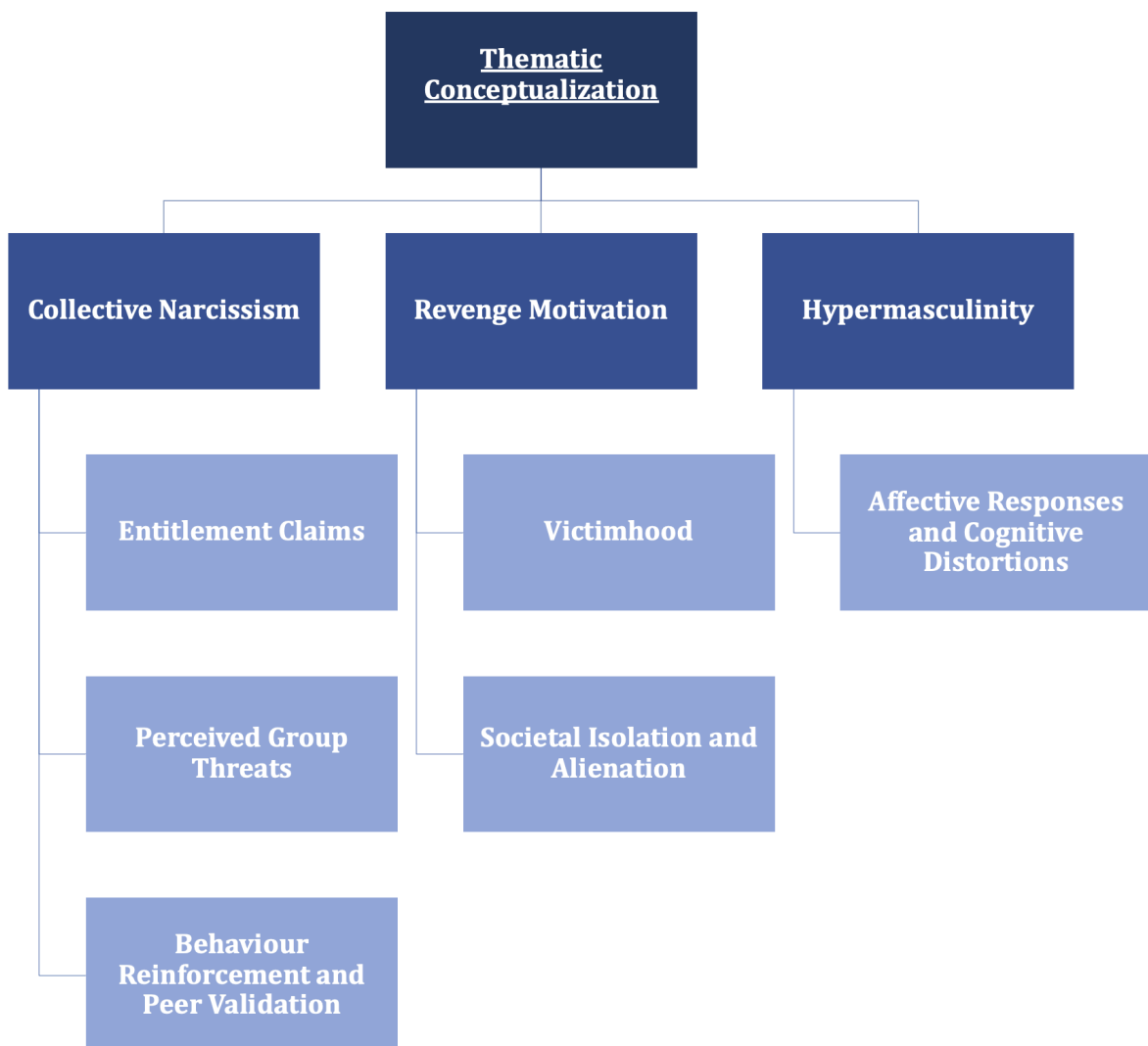
3. Empirical Findings

This section is divided into two parts, each of which is conceived in the logic of the conceptual frame. The two sections analyse the case studies previously mentioned, namely the attacks that occurred in the German cities of Halle in 2019 and Hanau in 2020. These attacks exemplify the phenomenon of far-right violent extremism and are characterised by the use of hateful xenophobic, racist and ethnocentric rationalisations, along with misogynistic rhetoric. The introductory sections provide a concise overview of the events surrounding the attacks, accompanied by a synopsis of the available timelines and background of attackers lifes. In the analytical section, I employ my conceptual framework and its associated themes and sub-themes to examine the manifesto and social media activities of the two attackers, along with supplementary data from secondary sources, including newspaper articles and posts published about the attacks. My primary focus is on categories based on the themes derived from my conceptual framework, but I also seek to identify other themes that emerge from the data and may not align with the defined framework.

3.1. The Halle Attack

On 9 October 2019, Stephan Balliet, a 27-year-old German far-right extremist, perpetrated a meticulously orchestrated assault targeting the Jewish community in the German city of Halle. An understanding of Balliet's background is essential for contextualising his radicalisation and subsequent actions. He resided in Benndorf, Saxony-Anhalt, in a reclusive manner with his mother. His formative years were

characterised by social isolation and a notable difficulty in forming relationships. Balliet had undergone six months of basic military training with the Bundeswehr, a brief period of study at the university level in the field of chemical engineering, and had experienced health problems requiring multiple surgical procedures. By the time of the attack, he was unemployed and spent the majority of his time online, engaged with extremist content (Dearden, 2019; Janes, 2019).

Balliet's radicalisation primarily occurred online, where he was active on various extremist forums and platforms. He self-identified as a "weeb," indicating an obsession with Japanese culture, and an "anon," reflecting his involvement with image boards like 4chan and 8chan, which are known for their far-right content (Broderick, 2019; Cleary, 2019). His manifesto, written in English and Japanese, called for the killing of Jews, non-white individuals, communists, and those he defined as "traitors." This call to action echoed themes present in the rhetoric of other far-right attackers, such as the perpetrator of the Christchurch shooting. The document outlined the details of his plans and preparations, including the homemade weapons and explosives he used in the attack (Holmes & Oltermann, 2019; Dearden, 2019).

The attack occurred on Yom Kippur, the holiest day in Judaism, which serves to further emphasise the premeditated nature of Balliet's actions, given that he was aware that the synagogue would be well attended. At approximately 11:57 a.m., Balliet initiated a live stream of the attack on Twitch. This method, designed to gain notoriety and disseminate his extremist message, reflected the tactics employed by other far-right terrorists who utilised live-streaming to maximise the impact of their

attacks (Times of Israel, 2019a; Owen, 2019). At approximately 12:01 p.m., Balliet arrived at the synagogue in Halle, armed with homemade firearms and explosives. Despite firing shots at the lock and detonating explosives, he was unable to breach the synagogue's substantial, fortified doors, which provided protection for approximately 51 congregants observing the ceremony (France 24, 2020). Facing the inability to gain access to the synagogue, Balliet proceeded to shoot and kill Jana Lange, a passer-by in the vicinity of the synagogue. This act constituted the initial fatality resulting from his subsequent rampage (The Jerusalem Post, 2019).

Seeking further targets, Balliet proceeded to a nearby kebab shop, which was known to be a popular establishment among the immigrant community. At approximately 12:11 PM, he detonated an explosive device within the premises before entering and opening fire, resulting in the death of Kevin Schwarze, a customer within the shop. This act reflected his broader xenophobic and racist motives, as documented in the CTC Sentinel (Koehler, 2019). Subsequently, Balliet attempted to evade capture by fleeing the scene, whereupon he engaged in a gunfight with police officers who had responded to the attack. Despite the deployment of law enforcement personnel, he was able to evade capture and flee the scene, thereby initiating a manhunt (Times of Israel, 2019b).

Balliet's flight continued for a number of hours. He was ultimately apprehended at four in the afternoon in the village of Widdersdorf, situated approximately 15 kilometres northeast of Halle. During his escape, Balliet attempted to hijack a taxi and confronted several bystanders, thereby further demonstrating his

readiness for violence (Dearden, 2019).

A subsequent discovery of Balliet's manifesto revealed the presence of deeply-held antisemitic and xenophobic ideologies. He explicitly expressed the intention to "kill as many Jews" and attributed various societal ills to them as well as calling them "the evil of the world" (Ayyadi, 2019). His written work, characterised by an embrace of conspiracy theories and the use of rhetoric aligned with neo-Nazism, reflected the motivations and methods espoused by other far-right extremists globally (DW, 2020). Furthermore, the manifesto detailed the improvised weaponry he had constructed, offering a chilling insight into his premeditated intentions to incite further acts of terrorism.

One of the most noteworthy aspects of Balliet's attack was the utilisation of a "gamified" approach to terrorism. The term "gamification of terror" refers to the incorporation of elements from gaming culture into terrorist activities. Balliet's live-stream on Twitch and his references to achieving "high scores" based on the number of victims he could kill serve as clear examples of this trend. His manifesto included references to gaming-like "achievements" for the number of victims killed, which illustrated his perception of the attack as a game (Owen, 2019; Broderick, 2019). This approach represents a broader pattern observed in other far-right attacks, whereby perpetrators utilise the aesthetics and language of gaming to frame their violence as part of a larger, almost entertainment-like context (Koehler, 2019).

The Halle attack serves to illustrate the lethal potential of far-right extremism fuelled by antisemitism and misogyny. Balliet's actions serve to underscore the

potentially lethal nexus between personal grievances and extremist ideologies. His utilisation of live-streaming was designed to amplify the impact of the attack, transforming violence into a spectacle with the intention of inciting further hatred and violence among viewers (Dolsten, 2019; Broderick, 2019).

3.1.1. Collective narcissism

Stephan Balliet's manifesto and actions during the Halle attack provide a clear illustration of how collective narcissism serves as a catalyst for extremist violence. Balliet's perception of his in-group's superiority and the existential threats he believed it faced led him to justify and commit acts of violence. This analysis explores the role of collective narcissism in Balliet's case, examining the factors of entitlement, perceived group threats, and the reinforcement of behaviour and peer validation.

3.1.1.1. Entitlement claims

Stephan Balliet's manifesto evinces a profound sense of entitlement that is rooted in a collective narcissism. He held the conviction that his racial and cultural group was inherently superior and entitled to special recognition and privileges. Balliet's writings reflect a conviction that the dominance of his group was being unjustly undermined by immigrants and societal changes that promote diversity, inclusion and egalitarian gendered perspective. This perceived loss of status and power was a significant motivating factor behind his violent actions. Balliet frequently expressed disquiet at the presence of immigrants and the perceived decline of traditional German values, which he regarded as a direct attack on his group's rightful place in

society (Balliet, 2019a; 2019b; 2019c). This sense of entitlement is not only a personal sentiment but also reflects broader socio-cultural dynamics that uphold male and racial dominance, as discussed by Manne (2020).

3.1.1.2. Perceived group threats

The perception of threats to the in-group is a central theme in Balliet's manifesto. He perceived immigrants, particularly those of non-European descent, as posing an existential threat to the cultural and racial purity of Germany. This belief is consistent with the "Great Replacement" conspiracy theory, which posits that European populations are being systematically replaced by immigrants. Balliet's selection of targets, namely a synagogue and a kebab shop frequented by immigrants, illustrates his perception of these groups as a direct threat to the survival and purity of his in-group (Koehler, 2019; The Jerusalem Post, 2019). His writings explicitly establish a link between these perceived threats and his justification for violence, portraying his actions as a necessary defence of his group. This is consistent with the findings of Rottweiler, Clemmow, and Gill (2021, 2024) that perceived threats to a group can lead to an increase in hostility and the development of violent extremism.

Moreover, his misogynistic attitudes are inextricably linked to these perceived threats in the sense of purity of race. Balliet perceived women as part of the broader societal changes that threatened his group's dominance, attributing various societal problems to them and portraying them as part of the conspiracy against his in-group. At the beginning of his attack, he was heard saying: „Feminism is the cause of

declining birth rates in the West", and directly connected it to the issue of mass migration and how women betray their race (Ayyadi, 2019). This misogyny is integrated into his overall worldview, wherein gender and racial hierarchies are maintained through violence and intimidation (Gentry, 2022).

3.1.1.3. Behaviour reinforcement and Peer validation

The radicalisation process of Stephan Balliet was significantly shaped by his engagement with online extremist communities, where his beliefs and planned actions were consistently reinforced and validated. Online platforms such as 4chan and 8chan, which are known for their far-right content, provided Balliet with a space in which to express his extremist views and receive approval from individuals who shared similar beliefs (Owen, 2019). The feedback loop created by these communities – where members constantly reinforce each other's beliefs and actions – served to intensify Balliet's commitment to his cause. This is evidenced by his decision to live-stream the attack on Twitch (Dolsten, 2019; Broderick, 2019), thereby seeking validation and response from a broader audience and mirroring the actions of other far-right terrorists (France 24, 2020; Koehler, 2019). The positive reinforcement he received from his peers not only consolidated his extremist beliefs but also emboldened him to carry out the attack in a manner designed to gain maximum attention and approval. In both his manifesto and his live streams and social media posts, Balliet employed the use of English exclusively, which also serves to illustrate his aspiration for validation and integration into the far-right subculture to the

greatest extent possible (Ayyadi, 2019).

3.1.2. Revenge motivation

Stephan Balliet's manifesto and subsequent actions suggest a profound and long-standing desire for retribution against those he perceived as threats to his societal and personal status. Manifesto reveals his conviction that Jews and immigrants were the root cause of his and society's problems, justifying his attack as a form of retribution against these groups. He specifically attributed the influx of immigrants to the Jewish community to the dilution of the white population and the promotion of gender equality to the undermining of traditional gender roles (Ayyadi, 2019; Kohler, 2019). Balliet held the view that feminism was responsible for a decline in birth rates, which he saw as a justification for mass immigration. This phenomenon, he believed, was orchestrated by Jews with the intention of undermining Western society (Connolly, 2020). This is consistent with Gentry's (2022) assertion that such acts of violence are frequently perceived by perpetrators as a means of restoring a perceived lost status.

3.1.2.1. Victimhood

A key theme in Balliet's writings and behaviour is his sense of victimhood. He perceived himself as a victim of societal changes that favoured immigrants and minorities at the expense of native Germans. This mentality is common among individuals who justify violent actions as a means of reclaiming their perceived rightful status (Rottweiler, Clemmow, & Gill, 2024). In his manifesto (2019a), Balliet

articulates the conviction that he was a member of a marginalised group of white men whose societal dominance was being eroded by the growing influence of immigrants and Jews. He attributed issues to these groups, viewing them as scapegoats for his personal failures and broader societal changes (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 2019). Additionally, Balliet's writings reveal a misogynistic perspective, characterised by a hatred of women and a belief that their rejection of traditional gender roles and embrace of feminism are contributing factors to a major societal and demographic decline. This sense of victimhood, coupled with his inability to integrate into society and his personal grievances, served to fuel his motivation for violent retribution. As emphasised by researchers such as Zimmerman (2022) and Manne (2018), this mentality is frequently reinforced by extremist ideologies that portray societal progress and gender equality as threats to traditional male dominance.

3.1.2.2. Societal isolation and Alienation

A review of Balliet's background and lifestyle prior to the attack reveals a significant degree of societal isolation and alienation. After his parents got divorced, he led a reclusive life with his mother, had limited social interactions, and spent a considerable amount of time online, engaging with extremist content (The Times of Israel, 2019b). Such isolation is a critical factor contributing to the development of extremist ideologies, as isolated individuals often seek validation and a sense of belonging in online communities that align with their grievances (Maxwell et al., 2020; Rottweiler et al., 2021). Balliet's engagement with online forums such as 4chan and 8chan

furnished him with a conduit through which to reinforce his beliefs and receive validation from like-minded individuals. This environment served to intensify his sense of alienation from mainstream society and exacerbate his hostility towards those he blamed for his perceived marginalisation, including women and minorities (Owen, 2019; Koehler, 2019). A review of his manifesto and online interactions reveals a pattern of seeking affirmation for his misogynistic and anti-Semitic beliefs, which served to further solidify his resolve to commit acts of violence.

3.1.3. Hypermasculinity

Balliet's manifesto and behaviour during the attack serve to illustrate his dedication to the ideals of hypermasculinity. He presented himself as a defender of traditional male dominance, West values and perceiving societal changes such as feminism and the increasing influence of women as direct threats to his status and identity. This is consistent with the assertion of Rottweiler et al. (2024) that hypermasculinity is frequently promoted within extremist movements as a means of asserting power and control, particularly over women. Balliet's rhetoric frequently glorified violence as a necessary means of protecting traditional gender roles and societal structures. A recurrent theme in his manifesto was his disdain for women and minorities, whom he blamed for societal problems and perceived emasculation (Koehler, 2019; Dearden, 2019).

3.1.3.1. Affective responses and Cognitive distortions

Balliet's writings and actions evidenced a proclivity for strong negative emotional responses, including anger and hatred towards women. These affective responses were readily channelled into violent behaviour, particularly as they were validated and amplified by the online extremist communities with which he engaged. Rottweiler, Clemmow and Gill (2024) highlight the pivotal role of such affective responses in transforming misogynistic attitudes into violent actions. This is corroborated by Berkowitz's (1993) frustration-aggression hypothesis, which posits that frustration leads to aggressive behaviour when it is perceived as intentional and unjust. Balliet's frustration with societal changes, including the advancement of gender equality, was expressed through a form of violent extremism as a means of alleviating his anger and hatred (Owen, 2019; Janes, 2019).

A clear indication of his profound hatred can be observed in the immediate onset of a rage following Balliet's inability to breach the synagogue door. In addition to self-referring on live streams as a "loser," a "total failure," and an "idiot," he then proceeded to fire at a 40-year-old woman who was walking by, killing her instantly. He subsequently discharged another volley of bullets into her dead body and shouted "pig" at her (The Times of Israel, 2019b). The first victim can be compared to the second, a 20-year-old man from a kebab stand who was German and not the migrant the Balliet had assumed. In a statement made in court, Balliet expressed remorse for his action, stating that he had never intended to kill any white individuals. Nevertheless, he never expressed remorse for the murder of his first victim, despite

the fact that she was also a "white German" but a woman (Chazan, 2020). Therefore, women were not regarded as belonging to the same category as the death of a white man, and a German at that, in terms of the necessity for regret. This privileged attitude towards women, whom he blamed for the decay of society, was highly sexualised and objectified (Dearden, 2019). Balliet's manifesto reveals an obsession with sexualised anime and so-called "Cat-girls". He goes on to offer a "Fox-girl" or normal "waifu" to anyone who would kill at least one Jew. This rhetoric is consistent with his approach to women as objects to increase fertility and objects to satisfy male needs (Broderick, 2019).

Cognitive distortions, defined as irrational and biassed ways of thinking, also played a role in Balliet's radicalisation. These distortions, including overgeneralization, magnification and black-and-white thinking, served to perpetuate his hypermasculine and extremist beliefs. For example, Balliet attributed his own failures and perceived societal issues to Jews and immigrants, magnified the perceived threats they posed, and adopted an all-or-nothing mentality regarding the necessity of violent action to address these threats (Rottweiler et al., 2024). Subsequently, Balliet underwent a psychological examination during the trial, which revealed the presence of a complex personality disorder accompanied by autistic symptoms. His IQ was found to be average, and he exhibited symptoms of loneliness and a sense of self-worthlessness. Balliet himself has denied the existence of any psychological problems (Al Jazeera, 2020).

3.2. The Hanau Attack

On 19 February 2020, Tobias Rathjen, a 43-year-old German far-right extremist, perpetrated a meticulously planned terrorist attack in Hanau, Germany, targeting two shisha bars. An understanding of Rathjen's background and personal history is crucial for comprehending the motivations behind his violent actions and the factors that may have contributed to them. Rathjen was born in 1977 and resided in Hanau with his parents, maintaining a reclusive lifestyle. He held a university degree in business administration and had worked as a banker, yet he continued to experience social isolation and mental health issues (Karnitschnig, 2020; ADL, 2020). Rathjen's relationship with his family, particularly his mother, was characterised by a complex and troubled dynamic. He lived with his parents and, following the attack, proceeded to kill his 72-year-old mother before taking his own life. This matricide, in conjunction with his other actions, served to underscore the existence of significant underlying psychological issues (Daily Sabah, 2021).

The attack, driven by racist and xenophobic motives, resulted in the deaths of nine individuals and served to illustrate the intersection of far-right extremism, conspiracy theories and personal grievances. The sequence of events commenced at approximately 10:00 PM when Rathjen initiated fire at the Midnight Shisha Bar, situated in the centre of Hanau. He entered the bar and proceeded to shoot multiple people, resulting in immediate fatalities. Subsequently, he proceeded to the Arena Bar & Café in the Kesselstadt district, where he continued his shooting spree, murdering additional victims (Crawford & Keen, 2020; BBC, 2020b; ADL, 2020).

The attack was premeditated and exhibited a high degree of meticulous planning. In advance of the attack, Rathjen (2020) had published a manifesto on his personal website in which he espoused racist and anti-immigrant views and called for the extermination of individuals from the Middle East, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and North Africa. Furthermore, his writings evidenced the presence of deeply-held conspiracy theories, including claims that he was being surveilled by secret services and that his thoughts were being controlled. Rathjen's manifesto and online presence demonstrated a significant influence from a range of far-right and extremist ideologies, further exacerbated by his personal psychological issues (Meloy, 2021; Crawford & Keen, 2020). Following the attacks at the shisha bars, Rathjen returned to his residence, where he murdered his 72-year-old mother before taking his own life. This final act of violence represented the culmination of a tragic sequence of events that combined public and private acts of terror, driven by a deeply entrenched ideology of hatred and paranoia (Forensic Architecture, 2020; BBC, 2020a).

Rathjen's manifesto and subsequent actions were informed by a combination of traditional far-right, race-based, and anti-immigrant narratives, as well as a range of conspiracy theories (The Soufan Centre, 2019). His case exemplifies the "lone actor" model of terrorism, whereby individuals radicalise in isolation, driven by personal grievances and ideological indoctrination. Moreover, the attack highlights the significance of mental health concerns in the radicalisation process, as Rathjen had a history of psychological difficulties that were intertwined with his extremist beliefs (Crawford & Keen, 2020; Guardian, 2020). The Hanau attack serves to

illustrate the lethal potential of far-right extremism, particularly when combined with mental health issues and conspiracy-driven radicalisation.

3.2.1. Collective narcissism

The manifesto and actions of Tobias Rathjen during the Hanau attack exemplify a profound sense of collective narcissism, characterised by a belief in the inherent superiority of his group and the expectation of special recognition and privileges (Golec de Zavala & Lantos, 2020). Rathjen's writings indicate his frustration with what he perceived as the decline of German cultural dominance due to the presence of immigrants and ethnic minorities. He ascribed societal issues and personal grievances to these groups, reflecting his conviction that native Germans were entitled to reassert their dominant status (Kupper et al., 2023).

As defined by Golec de Zavala & Lantos (2020), collective narcissism involves a heightened emotional investment in the perceived superiority of one's group, coupled with hostility towards perceived threats. This phenomenon frequently manifests in extremist behaviours when individuals perceive a lack of recognition or threat to the status of their group. The actions and writings of Tobias Rathjen reflect a considerable degree of collective narcissism, whereby his grievances against societal changes and perceived threats to his group's dominance fuelled his violent actions. Rathjen's manifesto and subsequent actions demonstrate the intersection of collective narcissism with far-right extremism, particularly in its entanglement with misogyny, racism, and conspiracy theories.

3.2.1.1. Entitlement claims

Rathjen's manifesto and subsequent actions provide a clear example of entitlement claims, which can be defined as a subset of collective narcissism. Rathjen held the conviction that his group, which he identified as the German people, was inherently superior and deserving of special privileges. He perceived the presence of immigrants and other ethnic minorities in Germany as a direct threat to the status quo. In his manifesto, Rathjen advanced the view that Germans were responsible for the creation of the "best and most beautiful" aspects of civilization, while attributing destructive tendencies to other groups (Rathjen, 2020). He considered these groups to be undeserving of the same rights and privileges and felt entitled to expel or eliminate them in order to restore what he perceived as Germany's rightful status.

Rathjen's sense of entitlement also manifested in his views on women. He attributed the decline of traditional gender roles to feminist ideologies, which he perceived as emasculating men and undermining societal structures (Owen, 2019). This perceived loss of male dominance and control served to further fuel his sense of entitlement, thereby leading him to view violent action as a justified means of reclaiming his and his group's perceived rightful status.

3.2.1.2. Perceived group threats

Rathjen in his manifesto articulated a belief that immigrants and ethnic minorities constituted a significant threat to the status and privileges of native Germans. He perceived these groups as instigators of demographic shifts designed to erode the

cultural and racial homogeneity of Germany. Rathjen's manifesto frequently referenced conspiracy theories, claiming that these changes were deliberately engineered by powerful elites, often with anti-Semitic undertones, to undermine the native population (Rathjen, 2020; Meloy, 2021). This perception of threat served to fuel his hostility and motivated his violent actions, as he sought to defend the status and privileges of his group through the eradication of those he blamed for societal decline (Crawford & Keen, 2020).

Rathjen attributed the influx of immigrants to the dilution of the white population and the rise of feminism, which he perceived as undermining traditional gender roles and emasculating men (Ayyadi, 2019; Crawford & Keen, 2019). This is consistent with Gentry's (2022) assertion that such acts of violence are frequently perceived by perpetrators as a means of restoring a perceived lost status.

3.2.1.3. Behaviour reinforcement and Peer validation

Rathjen's radicalisation was reinforced by the validation he received from online communities that shared and amplified his extremist beliefs. He regularly engaged with far-right forums where his views were not only validated but also encouraged. These communities provided positive reinforcement for his beliefs and actions, thereby creating an echo chamber that served to intensify his commitment to extremist ideologies. The uninterrupted corroboration from his associates served to justify and consolidate his convictions, thereby reinforcing his resolve to perpetrate violent actions (Kauhan, 2023). This phenomenon of peer validation and behaviour reinforcement is of critical importance in understanding how individuals like Rathjen

become entrenched in extremist ideologies and motivated to act violently (Kupper et al., 2023).

3.2.2. Revenge motivation

The manifesto written by Tobias Rathjen and his subsequent actions during the Hanau attack provide a compelling illustration of the role of revenge motivation, particularly within the context of far-right extremism. Rathjen's written works and video content demonstrate a profound aspiration for retribution against entities he perceived as accountable for his personal and societal grievances. He explicitly attributed a range of societal issues, including crime and the perceived decline of German cultural dominance, to immigrants and ethnic minorities (Crawford & Keen, 2020). Rathjen's manifesto reflects his conviction that immigrants were responsible for the decline of Germany, which resonates with the conspiracy theory of the "Great Replacement" (Kupper et al., 2023).

3.2.2.1. Victimhood

Rathjen's manifesto articulated a pervasive sense of victimhood, portraying himself and native Germans as victims of a broader conspiracy orchestrated by immigrants, ethnic minorities, and feminist movements. He held the view that these groups were acting in a manner that was detrimental to German society and his own personal status. Rathjen articulated frustration over his inability to form a romantic partnership for the last 18 years (Jasser et al., 2020) and attributed this to societal changes that have empowered women. He perceived these changes as emasculating

men and undermining traditional gender roles (Rathjen, 2020). This is consistent with the findings of Rottweiler, Clemmow, and Gill (2024), who identify victimhood as a significant factor driving misogynistic terrorism. Rathjen perceived himself as a victim of societal changes that promoted gender equality and diversity. His attack can be understood as a violent attempt to reclaim his perceived lost status.

Furthermore, Rathjen's writings indicate his perception that the German government and society as a whole prioritise the interests of immigrants and ethnic minorities over those of native Germans, which serves to intensify his sense of victimhood. He believed that his grievances were ignored and that he was treated unfairly, which fuelled his desire for violent retribution (Crawford & Keen, 2020; The Guardian, 2020). This is consistent with the findings of Johnston and True (2019), who observed that individuals with a pronounced sense of victimhood often justify violent actions as a means of defending against perceived encroachments by women and minorities.

3.2.2.2. Societal isolation and Alienation

Rathjen's feelings of societal isolation and alienation were of considerable consequence in the process of his radicalisation. He held the conviction that he was the subject of constant surveillance by clandestine services, which he alleged were exerting control over his thoughts and actions. This paranoia and sense of isolation are evident in his manifesto, in which he describes feeling disconnected from mainstream society and betrayed by the German government (Kupper et al., 2023).

Engaging with far-right online communities provided Rathjen with a sense of belonging and validation for his extremist beliefs. Such communities served to reinforce his grievances and validate his perceptions of societal threats, thereby exacerbating his feelings of alienation. The reinforcement of his radicalisation within these communities, as a result of the echo chamber effect, provided him with support and encouragement for his violent ideas (Meloy, 2022). This phenomenon is of great importance in understanding how societal isolation can lead individuals to embrace extremist ideologies and engage in violent actions.

Furthermore, Rathjen's writings indicate his perception that societal shifts were undermining traditional gender roles, which he attributed to his feelings of isolation. He attributed the promotion of gender equality by feminist movements to an assault on male dominance. This perception of societal changes as threats to his identity and status served to further fuel his desire for revenge against those he held responsible (Rathjen, 2020).

3.2.3. Hypermasculinity

The manifesto written by Tobias Rathjen and his subsequent actions during the Hanau attack provide a clear example of hypermasculinity. This is characterised by exaggerated masculine traits, including aggression, dominance and a disdain for anything perceived as feminine. Rathjen's writings demonstrate his conviction in traditional notions of male superiority and his disapproval of societal changes that promote gender equality. This exaggerated form of masculinity served to justify his

violent actions as a means of maintaining male dominance (Manne, 2018).

Rathjen's manifesto (2020) frequently makes reference to his frustration with the changing roles of men and women in society. He expressed disquiet at the perceived decline of traditional gender roles and directed his ire towards feminist movements, which he held responsible for emasculating men and undermining societal stability. This is consistent with the findings of Rottweiler, Clemmow, and Gill (2024), who have demonstrated that hypermasculinity is frequently promoted within extremist movements as a means of asserting power and control, particularly over women. Rathjen's conviction in the efficacy of aggressive and violent measures to safeguard traditional gender roles is pervasive throughout his written works (Kupper et al., 2023).

3.2.3.1. Affective responses and Cognitive distortions

Rathjen's hypermasculinity was accompanied by a plethora of negative emotional responses, including anger and hatred towards women and minority groups (Jasser et al., 2020). Such affective responses were manifested in violent behaviour, particularly when validated and amplified by extremist communities. Rathjen's writings illustrate a profound unease with regard to societal developments that advanced gender equality and diversity. He perceived these changes as direct challenges to his masculine identity (Rathjen, 2020).

Moreover, Rathjen's manifesto evinces notable cognitive distortions, including overgeneralization, magnification, and dichotomous thinking. He frequently engaged

in overgeneralization, attributing societal problems and personal grievances to entire groups, such as immigrants and feminists. Rathjen amplified the perceived threats posed by these groups, portraying them as existential dangers to German society and his own status (Crawford & Keen, 2020). These cognitive distortions served to intensify his feelings of anger and hatred, thereby facilitating the justification of his violent actions as necessary and justified (Echeburua et al., 2016). The conviction that a conspiracy is at work is an example of the cognitive distortions that underpin Rathjen's beliefs. He alleged that clandestine organisations and intelligence agencies were monitoring and controlling his thoughts, which served to exacerbate his sense of victimhood and paranoia. This conviction of being under constant observation contributed to his sentiments of social isolation and reinforced his hypermasculine desire to exert control and dominance through violence (Meloy, 2022).

Rathjen's cognitive distortions also manifested in his views on women. He held the conviction that women, imbued with the tenets of feminist ideology, were encroaching upon the conventional male roles and thereby jeopardising the stability of the social order. His manifesto articulated a sentiment of anger and resentment towards women, whom he perceived to have rejected him and contributed to the decline of traditional gender norms. This frustration was further compounded by his inability to form romantic relationships, which he attributed to societal changes that promoted gender equality. Rathjen's distorted thinking led him to view violence as a legitimate means of reasserting male dominance and retaliating against those he perceived as responsible for his grievances. His beliefs align with those of the incel

movement, as evidenced by his writings, in which he laments the lack of suitable women who meet his standards, further intensifying his anger and justification for violence (Jasser et al., 2020).

4. Comparative Analysis

The comparative analysis of the Hanau and Halle attacks reveals that misogyny plays a significant role in motivating right-wing extremists. The cases of Hanau and Halle illustrate how misogynistic beliefs, when coupled with elements such as hypermasculinity and collective narcissism, markedly elevate the likelihood of violent action. The actions and writings of Rathjen and Balliet reflect a profound sense of entitlement, perceived group threats, and a motivation for revenge, all of which are framed within a hypermasculine worldview. Furthermore, their pronounced affective responses and cognitive distortions served to facilitate their violent actions, thereby underscoring the necessity for comprehensive counter-extremism strategies that address these intertwined factors. By examining these case studies through the lens of comparative analysis, this chapter tries to expand understanding of the dynamics driving misogynistic violence within far-right extremist contexts.

4.1. Collective narcissism

A comparative analysis of the Hanau and Halle attacks reveals that both Tobias Rathjen and Stephan Balliet were driven by a profound sense of collective narcissism, a belief in the inherent superiority of their group, and the expectation of special recognition and privileges. This concept was evident in their writings and actions, reflecting a significant emotional investment in the perceived greatness of their in-group and a corresponding hostility towards perceived threats.

Entitlement claims. Rathjen's sense of entitlement was inextricably linked to his conviction in the superiority of native Germans. He regarded immigrants and ethnic minorities as undeserving of the same rights and privileges and perceived their presence in Germany as a direct threat to the dominance of his group. Rathjen's manifesto articulated his conviction that Germans were responsible for the best aspects of civilization, while immigrants and minorities were depicted as agents of decay and destruction. This sense of entitlement was not solely racial in nature; it was also gendered. Rathjen expressed disdain for feminist ideologies that he believed undermined traditional male authority and societal stability.

Similarly, Balliet's written works and actions reflected a pronounced sense of entitlement, which was grounded in the conviction in the superiority of the Aryan race. He perceived Jews and other minorities as posing an existential threat to the societal order and believed that violent action was necessary to preserve Aryan dominance. Furthermore, Balliet's assertions of entitlement were also gendered. He attributed the decline of traditional gender roles to feminist movements and held the view that women were complicit in the erosion of male supremacy.

However, there were a few notable differences between the two perpetrators. On the one hand, Rathjen's collective narcissism was tightly linked to his sense of entitlement and the perceived decline of German cultural dominance but his manifesto also placed very considerable emphasis on conspiracies about mind control and surveillance, which he believed were orchestrated by powerful elites to undermine his group's status. Balliet's collective narcissism was far more narrowly

focused on racial purity and the preservation of Aryan dominance and therefore he perceived Jews as the principal instigators of societal transformations that posed a threat to the status of his group. This was evidenced by his direct assault on a synagogue during Yom Kippur. In contrast to Rathjen, Balliet did not exhibit the same degree of concern regarding mind control; instead, he directed a greater portion of his attention towards the traditional anti-Semitic conspiracy theories.

Perceived groups' threats. Both Rathjen and Balliet perceived significant threats to their in-groups, which they believed justified their violent actions. Rathjen's manifesto was replete with references to conspiracies involving immigrants, ethnic minorities and feminists, whom he believed were deliberately undermining German culture and society. He perceived these groups as orchestrating demographic shifts designed to dilute the native German population and destroy its cultural heritage. This perception of threat constituted a significant motivating factor in his decision to launch an attack, as he sought to defend the status of his group through the use of violence. At the same, Balliet's perception of group threats was pronounced. He held the conviction that Jews were the primary instigators of societal changes that posed a threat to Aryan dominance.

Balliet's manifesto and subsequent actions demonstrated his conviction that Jews were responsible for orchestrating mass immigration and promoting feminist ideologies with the intention of weakening traditional societal structures. This perception of threat was the motivating factor behind his violent actions, as he sought to eradicate those he held responsible for societal decline.

Behaviour reinforcement and Peer validation. The radicalisation of both Rathjen and Balliet was reinforced by their engagement with online communities that shared and amplified their extremist beliefs. Rathjen frequently engaged with far-right forums, where his views were validated and encouraged. Such online communities provided positive reinforcement for his beliefs and actions, thereby creating an echo chamber that served to intensify his commitment to extremist ideologies. The uninterrupted corroboration from his associates served to reinforce his sense of entitlement and perception of group threats, ultimately motivating him to perpetrate his attack. Also Balliet's radicalisation was reinforced by his online interactions. He engaged with extremist forums where his beliefs were not only validated but also celebrated. Such online communities provided Balliet with a platform for receiving positive reinforcement and social validation for his extremist views, thereby further entrenching his commitment to violence. The peer validation he received from these communities played a pivotal role in his radicalisation, as it reinforced his perception of threats and justified his violent actions.

It can be surmised from their actions that Balliet's desire for recognition and the validation from his group was significantly more pronounced than Rathjen's. Balliet's actions demonstrated a clear intention to gain recognition and to advance his group's interests. Even during the attack, he was actively engaging with the audience, offering apologies for the lack of casualties and seeking to escape later so that he could repeat his actions. This intention was corroborated by the discovery of other weapons on his person. In contrast, Rathjen devised his attack in a markedly more

"intimate" manner, albeit with a more destructive outcome. He ultimately took his own life, and it was not evident that he had any further intentions to continue.

4.2. Revenge motivation.

Revenge motivation was a key driver in both the Hanau and Halle attacks, reflecting how perceived grievances and personal vendettas can escalate into violent extremism. This theme encompasses a desire for retribution against perceived enemies, often within a broader ideological context and hatred for women.

Victimhood. Rathjen's and Balliet's sense of victimhood played a central role in their radicalisation. Rathjen's manifesto is full of narratives about how he and native Germans were victims of a grand conspiracy orchestrated by immigrants, ethnic minorities and feminist movements. He portrayed himself as the defender of his people who had been wronged by these groups. This sense of victimhood extended into his personal life, where he blamed his lack of romantic success on societal changes that empowered women and emasculated men. Rathjen's writings suggest that he saw himself as a victim of these societal changes, which he believed marginalised traditional male roles and privileged women and minorities at the expense of men like himself, and it was from this perspective that his conviction to avenge them stemmed.

Balliet's sense of victimhood was similarly pronounced. He saw Jews and immigrants as a direct threat to his identity and social status. His manifesto expressed the belief that Jews were orchestrating mass immigration to undermine Aryan purity

and societal stability. Unlike Rathjen, Balliet's grievances were more explicitly linked to anti-Semitic conspiracy theories that portrayed Jews as the primary architects of societal decline. Balliet's victimhood also extended to his personal grievances, particularly his inability to form romantic relationships. He blamed these failures on societal changes driven by feminist ideologies, which he believed had disrupted traditional gender roles and marginalised men.

While both attackers were driven by revenge motivations rooted in perceived victimhood and societal isolation, there were notable differences in their focus and the specific grievances they articulated. Rathjen's sense of victimhood was heavily influenced by conspiracies about mind control and surveillance, which added a layer of paranoia to his motivations. He saw his actions as a means of fighting back against a wider conspiracy targeting him and his people. Balliet's victimhood was more narrowly focused on traditional anti-Semitic narratives and the perceived threat of Jews and immigrants to Aryan purity and societal stability.

Societal isolation and Alienation. Both Rathjen and Balliet experienced profound societal isolation and alienation, which fuelled their radicalisation and reinforced their desire for revenge. Rathjen's manifesto reveals a deep sense of alienation, driven by his belief in conspiracies of mind control and surveillance. He perceived himself to be under constant surveillance by secret services who he believed were manipulating his thoughts and actions. This paranoia intensified his feelings of isolation and led him to see his violent actions as a means of regaining his autonomy and status. Rathjen's societal isolation was exacerbated by his inability to

connect with others, particularly women, which he attributed to societal changes that promoted gender equality.

Balliet also experienced significant social isolation, which was evident in his online activities and the content of his manifesto. He engaged with far-right online communities that validated his extremist beliefs and provided him with a sense of belonging that he lacked in the wider society. These online spaces reinforced his grievances and increased his sense of alienation from mainstream society. Balliet's social isolation was intertwined with his hypermasculine beliefs and frustrations with changing gender roles. He saw feminist movements as a direct threat to his identity and status as a man, and this perception fuelled his hatred of women and feminists. His inability to form romantic relationships further exacerbated his feelings of alienation and led him to blame societal changes for his personal failures.

On the one hand, Rathjen's paranoia about surveillance and mind control significantly intensified his feelings of alienation, making him feel disconnected and persecuted by powerful elites. Balliet, on the other hand, found a sense of community and validation in far-right online forums, which reinforced his extremist beliefs and provided a supportive environment for his radicalisation. Both attackers' frustrations with changing gender roles and their failures in forming romantic relationships played a crucial role in their motivations, highlighting the intersection of personal grievances with broader ideological narratives.

4.3. Hypermasculinity.

Hypermasculinity is a prominent theme in both the Hanau and Halle attacks, illustrating how exaggerated masculine traits, including aggression, dominance and contempt for anything perceived as feminine, contribute to violent extremism and especially drive the violent action. The writings and actions of the attackers reveal a deep-seated adherence to traditional gender roles and a profound resistance to societal changes that promote gender equality.

Affective responses. Both Rathjen and Balliet displayed strong negative emotional responses, such as anger and hatred towards women and minority groups, which were integral to their radicalisation. Both's hypermasculinity in their writings and actions was characterised by exaggerated "masculine" traits such as aggression, perceived dominance and deep contempt for anything seen as feminine or "weak".

Rathjen's manifesto reveals his frustration with the perceived emasculation of men and the empowerment of women through feminist movements. He saw these changes as a direct threat to traditional gender roles and male dominance. His writings are filled with vitriol towards women, whom he blamed for societal decay and his personal failures, particularly his inability to form romantic relationships. Similarly, Balliet's writings and actions reflect his anger and resentment at societal changes that challenged traditional gender roles. He expressed contempt for women and feminists, blaming them for the erosion of male dominance and societal stability. His inability to form romantic relationships further fuelled his hatred and led him to see violence as a justified response to these grievances. Both attackers' emotional

responses were amplified by the validation they received from online extremist communities, which reinforced their beliefs and encouraged their violent actions.

Both Rathjen and Balliet demonstrated hypermasculinity through their exaggerated masculine traits and adherence to traditional gender roles. Their writings and actions reveal strong negative affective responses towards women and minority groups, driven by a perceived loss of male dominance and societal changes promoting gender equality. These affective responses were validated and amplified by online extremist communities, which reinforced their beliefs and encouraged their violent actions.

Cognitive distortions. Cognitive distortions such as overgeneralization, magnification and dichotomous thinking were prevalent in Rathjen and Balliet's beliefs and writings. These distortions played a crucial role in justifying their hypermasculine ideals and violent actions. Rathjen's manifesto is full of cognitive distortions. He frequently overgeneralize, attributing societal problems and personal grievances to entire groups such as immigrants, feminists and ethnic minorities. Rathjen magnified the perceived threats posed by these groups, portraying them as existential threats to German society and his own status. His dichotomous thinking, evident in his black and white view of the world, further exacerbated his hostility towards these groups. Rathjen's belief in conspiracies of mind control and surveillance exemplifies his cognitive distortions, as he perceived himself as the victim of a malicious scheme involving both social elites and marginalised groups.

Balliet also exhibited significant cognitive distortions in his manifesto. He

overgeneralised by blaming Jews and feminists for societal decline and his personal failures. Balliet exaggerated the threats posed by these groups, seeing them as orchestrating societal changes aimed at undermining Aryan dominance and traditional gender roles. His dichotomous thinking was evident in his clear delineation of enemies and allies, with no room for nuance or complexity. Balliet's fixation on traditional anti-Semitic narratives and his belief in the need for violence to defend traditional gender roles further illustrate his cognitive distortions.

On the one hand, Rathjen's hypermasculinity was intertwined with his paranoia about mind control and surveillance, which reinforced his feelings of victimhood and isolation. He saw social changes as part of a wider conspiracy to emasculate men and control their thoughts, which further fuelled his anger and hatred towards women and feminists. Balliet, on the other hand, was more focused on racial purity and the preservation of Aryan dominance. While he also blamed feminists for societal changes, his main concern was the role of Jews in these changes. His attack on the synagogue on Yom Kippur was a clear manifestation of his belief in the need to defend traditional gender roles and racial purity by violent means.

Both attackers exhibited cognitive distortions that justified their hypermasculine ideals and violent actions. Rathjen's belief in conspiracies of mind control and surveillance exemplified his cognitive distortions and led him to perceive himself as the victim of a malevolent plot. Balliet's fixation on traditional anti-Semitic narratives and his clear delineation of enemies and allies further illustrate his cognitive distortions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis has explored the intricate relationship between misogyny and right-wing extremism through the analysis of the Hanau and Halle attacks. **The primary research question addressed was whether misogyny represents a significant motivating factor for right-wing extremists, as evidenced by these attacks.** The empirical findings from the case studies of Stephan Balliet and Tobias Rathjen provide compelling evidence that misogyny plays a critical role in the radicalization and violent actions of right-wing extremists. Both attackers exhibited a profound hatred for women, which was intertwined with their racist and xenophobic beliefs. It is evident that misogyny constituted a significant factor, alongside the two aforementioned categories. **Their manifestos and actions revealed how deeply entrenched misogynistic attitudes can serve as a gateway to broader extremist ideologies and most importantly, functions here not as a concomitant of right-wing extremism but as its direct generator**. Through the thematic analysis, it became evident that collective narcissism, revenge motivation, and hypermasculinity were significant psychological mechanisms driving the actions of both perpetrators. In both cases, the attackers perceived themselves and their in-groups as superior and entitled to special recognition and privileges. They viewed immigrants, Jews, and women as existential threats to their status and responded with violence to defend their perceived rightful place in society.

Collective narcissism was manifested in the attackers' entitlement claims, perceived group threats, and the reinforcement of behaviour through peer validation.

Both Balliet and Rathjen believed that their in-groups were superior and deserving of special treatment. They perceived societal changes that promoted diversity and gender equality as direct threats to their group's dominance, leading to their violent responses.

Revenge motivation was another critical factor, with both attackers expressing a deep-seated desire for retribution against those they blamed for their personal and societal grievances. They viewed their violent actions as a means of restoring their perceived lost status and exacting revenge on the groups they held responsible for societal decline. Their sense of victimhood and societal isolation further fueled their motivation for violence.

Hypermasculinity was evident in the exaggerated masculine traits displayed by both attackers, including aggression, dominance, and disdain for anything perceived as feminine. The affective responses indicator in particular proved to be crucial, as it seemed to be a strong accelerator of violent action. Their writings and actions demonstrated a belief in traditional male superiority and a rejection of societal changes that promoted gender equality. Cognitive distortions, such as overgeneralization and magnification, further reinforced their hypermasculine and extremist beliefs, justifying their violent actions.

Additionally, the secondary research question examined whether and which gender perspectives should be incorporated into P/CVE policies to enhance their efficacy. The findings of this thesis highlight the importance of incorporating gender perspectives into P/CVE policies. It is imperative that

policymakers and practitioners acknowledge the influence of misogynistic attitudes in the radicalisation process and implement interventions that challenge and rectify these distorted thought patterns. Consequently, this will reduce the probability of individuals resorting to violence and contribute to the mitigation of right-wing extremism.

In order to enhance the efficacy of P/CVE policies, the following specific proposals are recommended: As with everything, prevention is easier than solving the full problem and therefore it is essential that **educational programmes** are implemented. Education which challenges gender stereotypes and promotes gender equality from an early age should also include discussions on the concept of healthy masculinity and the potential dangers of hypermasculinity (Manne, 2018; Kimmel, 2018). As Lewis (2019) observes, educational interventions are crucial for reshaping attitudes towards gender roles and reducing the social acceptance of misogyny.

Another important part of this approach is **community engagement**. Establishing community programs, which engage men and boys in discussions about gender equality and the damaging effects of misogyny, should seek to promote positive role models and provide support for those struggling with feelings of entitlement and superiority (Johnston, 2024). Community engagement in dialogues about gender can facilitate a cultural shift, as proposed by Gentry (2022).

As visible from case studies in this thesis, **mental health support** is a crucial aspect of addressing the challenges faced by men and boys in today's society. It is imperative to enhance the accessibility of mental health services that address issues

pertaining to masculinity, identity, and societal transformation. Such services should encompass psychotherapy and counselling that prioritise the identification and modification of dysfunctional cognitive patterns and emotional regulation (Rottweiler, Clemmow, & Gill, 2024).

It is also imperative to reinforce **support systems for victims of gender-based violence**, guaranteeing their access to resources and assistance. As has been shown through the chronological trajectory of violence, the origins of problematic behaviour often begin with "small violence" (Johnston, 2024), therefore robust support can effectively mitigate the long-term consequences of such extremist violence and reduce the probability of further radicalisation (Lewis, 2019). Also the development of **strategies for the monitoring of online spaces** where misogynistic and extremist ideologies proliferate is required. It is recommended that interventions be implemented which will counteract these narratives and provide alternative, positive messages (Tietjen & Tirkkonen, 2023).

In summary, this thesis has provided empirical evidence and theoretical insights into the pivotal role of misogyny as a driving force in right-wing extremism. The thematic and comparative analysis of the Hanau and Halle attacks has demonstrated that misogyny, when combined with factors such as hypermasculinity and collective narcissism, significantly increases the propensity for violent extremism. These findings underscore the necessity of addressing misogyny as a fundamental element of right-wing extremism in both research and policy initiatives.

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Summary

Charles University

Faculty of Social Sciences

Institute of Political Studies

Department of Security Studies

Master's Thesis Proposal

**Misogyny as a Key Driver for Right-Wing
Extremists: Is It All About Hate for Women?**

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Study programme: Security Studies

Year of proposal submission: Summer Semester 2024

Motivation

The rising tide of right-wing extremism poses significant threats to societal stability and democratic values globally. Within this context, the Hanau and Halle attacks in Germany highlight a disturbing intersection between violent extremism and deep-seated misogyny. This thesis aims to investigate the integral relationship between misogyny and right-wing extremism, focusing specifically on how misogynistic attitudes contribute to extremist ideologies and actions. The primary research problem identified is the lack of comprehensive understanding of misogyny as a driving force behind right-wing extremism. While existing research has extensively explored factors such as xenophobia, nationalism, and religious extremism, the specific role of misogyny remains underexplored.

The motivation for addressing this problem stems from the need to fill this research gap and to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the multifaceted nature of extremism. By adopting a perspective that foregrounds gender dynamics, this thesis seeks to reveal how misogynistic beliefs not only perpetuate violence against women but also bolster extremist ideologies and actions. This addition to existing research is crucial for developing more effective counter-extremism strategies that address the root causes of violence and hate.

The primary research question guiding this thesis is: "To what extent does misogyny serve as a key driver for right-wing extremists, as exemplified by the Hanau and Halle attacks?" Additionally, this research will examine the hypothesis that misogyny, when combined with other ideological beliefs such as xenophobia and nationalism, significantly increases the propensity for violent extremism. Through thematic and comparative analysis, this thesis aims to provide empirical evidence and theoretical insights that underscore the critical role of misogyny in the radicalization process.

Literature Review

1. **Castillo Diaz, P., & Valji, N., 2019. Symbiosis of Misogyny and Violent Extremism: New Understandings and Policy Implications. Journal of International Affairs, 72(2).**

   This article explores the relationship between misogyny and violent extremism, proposing new understandings and policy recommendations. It also provides a foundational theoretical understanding of the symbiotic relationship between misogyny and extremism.

2. **Rottweiler, B., Clemmow, C., & Gill, P., 2024. A Common Psychology of Male Violence? Assessing the Effects of Misogyny on Intentions to Engage in Violent Extremism, Interpersonal Violence and Support for Violence against Women.**

   Research examines the psychological factors linking misogyny to violent extremism and interpersonal violence and offers a theoretical framework and empirical data essential for analysing the psychological aspects of misogyny in extremism.

3. **Rottweiler, B., Clemmow, C., & Gill, P., 2023. Misogyny, Violent Extremism and Interpersonal Violence: Examining the Mediating and Contingent Effects of Revenge Motivation, Hypermasculinity, Collective Narcissism and Group Threats.**

   Research investigates how misogyny interacts with other psychological factors to influence violent behaviour and provides a detailed theoretical model of the interplay between misogyny and other factors in driving violence.

4. **Purdue, S.A., 2022. Race, Gender and Violence on the Transatlantic Extreme Right, 1969–2009. Cham: Springer Nature.**

This article examines the intersections of race, gender, and violence within the extreme right in a transatlantic context and offers historical and intersectional perspectives, enriching the theoretical framework with a broader socio-political context.

5. **Manne, K., 2018. Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny. New York: Oxford University Press.**

Author here investigates the underlying logic of misogyny and its societal manifestations.Text provides theoretical insights into the pervasive nature of misogyny, essential for understanding its role in extremism.

6. **Manne, K., 2020. Entitled: How Male Privilege Hurts Women. New York: Crown.**

Text discusses the impact of male entitlement on women and society and offers critical insights into the cultural and psychological aspects of misogyny, relevant to extremist motivations.

7. **Bates, L., 2020. Men who hate women: From incels to pickup artists: The truth about extreme misogyny and how it affects us all. Naperville, Illinois: Sourcebooks.**

Author here explores various manifestations of extreme misogyny and its broader social implications and provides empirical examples and analysis of modern misogynistic movements, informing the contemporary context of the theoretical framework.

8. **Gentry, C. E., & Sjoberg, L., 2015. Beyond Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Thinking about Women's Violence in Global Politics. London: Zed Books.**

This book explores the varied roles of women in global political violence, challenging traditional gender stereotypes and enhances the theoretical

discussion on gender dynamics in extremism, relevant for a nuanced understanding of my case studies.

9. **Kimmel, M. S., 2018. Healing from Hate: How Young Men Get Into—and Out of—Violent Extremism. Oakland, California: University of California Press.**

    This text examines the pathways into and out of violent extremism among young men, with a focus on identity and masculinity.It also provides a sociological perspective on the role of gender and identity in radicalization, useful for understanding the perpetrators' motivations.

10. **Blee, K. M., 2002. Inside Organized Racism: Women in the Hate Movement. Berkeley: University of California Press.**

    Author here investigates the participation and roles of women in racist hate movements and provides insights into gender roles within extremist groups, enhancing the understanding of misogyny's impact.

Theoretical Framework

This thesis adopts an integrated theoretical framework to explore the intricate relationship between misogyny and right-wing extremism. Grounded in the research by Rottweiler, Clemmow, and Gill (2024), this framework identifies several key themes that underpin the nexus between misogyny, violent extremism, and interpersonal violence. Their analysis highlights the centrality of hypermasculinity within extremist circles, where rigid gender norms and perceptions of male superiority intersect with ideologies of dominance and control. This theme underscores how extremist movements promote hypermasculine ideals to assert power and authority, particularly over women.

Another critical theme is the sense of entitlement prevalent among individuals

within these circles. Fueled by perceived victimhood and resentment towards threats to traditional gender roles, this entitlement justifies the subjugation and mistreatment of women. Additionally, social isolation and alienation drive individuals towards extremist ideologies. In these echo chambers of radicalization, individuals find validation and belonging, often at the expense of demonising and dehumanising outgroups, including women.

Furthermore, a profound sense of grievance and resentment towards women, rooted in perceptions of their encroachment on male spaces and privileges, fuels a virulent form of misogyny that serves as a rallying cry for violent action against women challenging the status quo.

By critically examining the interplay between misogyny, hypermasculinity, entitlement, social isolation, and grievance, this research aims to elucidate the gendered dimensions of radicalization processes and violent behaviour within extremist movements. This interdisciplinary approach also integrates sociological perspectives from Purdue (2022) and feminist theories by Manne (2018, 2020), situating misogyny within broader social and cultural contexts. This comprehensive theoretical framework underscores the complexity of the issue and highlights the necessity of gender-sensitive approaches in both scholarly inquiry and policy formulation, advocating for addressing misogyny as a driving force behind violent extremism.

Methodology

For my thesis, I will employ thematic analysis as the primary methodological approach to analyse the data. Thematic analysis, as outlined by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006), is particularly suitable for this study as it allows for the exploration of broader concepts and patterns within qualitative data, aligning well with the complex and multifaceted nature of the interrelationship between misogyny and right-wing extremism. Given the comparative nature of my study, thematic analysis offers a flexible framework for examining similarities and differences

between the two cases of the Hanau and Halle attacks. Moreover, thematic analysis facilitates an inductive-deductive research approach, enabling the identification of new themes or categories that may emerge from the data, thereby contributing to the refinement and expansion of the existing theoretical framework. This methodology is especially pertinent for filling the identified gap in current knowledge, as it allows for a comprehensive and nuanced examination of the underlying mechanisms driving misogynistic violence within extremist contexts.

In terms of data collection, both primary and secondary sources will be utilised to gather empirical data. Primary data may include interviews with experts in counter-terrorism, gender studies, and political science, as well as manifestations of the perpetrators of the attacks, such as their writings, videos, and social media posts. Secondary data will encompass existing literature, media reports, and official documents related to the Hanau and Halle attacks. The integration of multiple data sources will provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under investigation, enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings.

The analysis of the empirical data will involve a systematic process of coding, categorising, and interpreting the data to identify overarching themes and patterns. Drawing upon the principles of thematic analysis as detailed by Braun and Clarke (2006), and supported by Jon Swain (2018), I will iteratively review and refine the identified themes, ensuring they accurately capture the complexities of the phenomena under study. Preliminary conceptualization will involve the development of conceptual frameworks or models to organise and interpret the data, facilitating a deeper understanding of the interplay between misogyny, right-wing extremism, and violent behaviour within the context of the Hanau and Halle attacks. Through this methodological approach, I aim to generate rich and nuanced insights that contribute to advancing scholarly understanding of the dynamics driving extremist violence and inform future research and intervention efforts.

Suggested Thesis Structure

1) **Introduction**

2) **Literature Review**
   - **Understanding the Interplay Between Misogyny and Right-Wing Extremism**

3) **Theoretical Framework**
   - **The key themes such as hypermasculinity, entitlement, social isolation, and grievance**

4) **Methodology**
   - **Unpacking Themes Through Thematic Analysis**

5) **Empirical Findings**
   - **The Hanau Attack**
   - **The Halle Attack**
   - **Themes Manifestation**

6) **Discussion of Empirical Findings and Comparative Analysis**

7) **Conclusions**

8) **Primary sources**

9) **Secondary sources**

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