DIVERTING HATE

LITERATURE REVIEW · FALL 2026

THE FIRST GRIEVANCE

Misogyny, the Manosphere, and the Road to Extremism

A literature review synthesizing the micro, meso, and macro dynamics of the misogyny-to-extremism pipeline.

OUR MISSION

To build the digital infrastructure to disrupt hate before it takes root.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

High-profile acts of violence have made clear that online misogyny can escalate from rhetoric to mass violence. This review synthesizes recent scholarship on the so-called "misogyny-to-extremism pipeline" and argues that it is better understood not as a one-way conveyor belt but as an **emergent, multi-level ecosystem** — a web of interacting influences across individual psychology, group dynamics, and platform architecture.

Misogyny functions within this ecosystem as both **gateway and glue**: often the first grievance that draws men into radical spaces, and a theme that connects white supremacist, nationalist, and authoritarian projects under a shared commitment to restoring hierarchy. We organize the evidence into five findings.

1 **Misogyny is a gateway and a bridge.**
Male-supremacist grievance draws men in and then connects to racist, antisemitic, and anti-democratic ideologies through a shared logic of hierarchy and backlash.

2 **Radicalization is staged, not sudden.**
"Redpilling" is a gradual accumulation of exposures — normalization, acclimation, dehumanization — that converts shame into grievance and grievance into morally justified hostility.

3 **Community turns pain into identity.**
Echo chambers, status incentives, and parasocial bonds with influencers reward escalating extremity and punish moderation, hardening individual vulnerability into shared ideology.

4 **Platforms accelerate and mainstream it.**
Engagement-driven algorithms amplify exposure to extreme content, while mainstream gender and culture-war narratives legitimize it — a process researchers call "strategic mainstreaming."

5 **There is no single fix.**
Because the problem is systemic, effective response requires coordinated micro, meso, and macro interventions — not the removal of a few "bad apples."

FROM GRIEVANCE TO VIOLENCE

High-profile acts of violence — including Elliot Rodger's 2014 Isla Vista shooting and Alek Minassian's 2018 Toronto van attack — have made clear that online misogyny can move from rhetoric to mass violence (BBC 2018; 2021; Baele, Brace, and Coan 2019). Beyond demonstrating this risk, these attacks make visible the broader role of online misogynistic mobilization in pathways to extremist violence. Early empirical work has found a consistent pattern: social media users who engage with anti-feminist and male supremacist communities are more likely to drift toward alt-right and ultranationalist content than comparable peers, suggesting that misogynistic worldviews often serve as an early entry point into extremist politics (Mamié, Ribeiro, and West 2021; Weiss, Koban, and Matthes 2024).

This "gateway hypothesis" argues that male supremacist grievances — such as "feminism has ruined society" — create a foundation that later expands into racist, antisemitic, or anti-democratic ideologies. Accordingly, misogyny is often described as a gateway into extremism, a factor that can speed radicalization, and a marker that may signal elevated risk for progression toward violent extremism. Some scholars go further: Perliger et al. echo an argument first articulated by DiBranco that "misogyny / male supremacism should be recognized as a motivating ideology in and of itself — not just a 'gateway' into the far-right" (Perliger, Stevens, and Leidig 2023).

> *"Movement toward extremism is better understood not as a single inevitable sequence, but as an emergent ecosystem — a web of interacting influences across individual psychology, group dynamics, and platform architectures."*

Longitudinal research shows that exposure to sexist social media content significantly increases subsequent exposure to far-right material, and that participation in male supremacist forums often precedes engagement with white supremacist or ultra-right groups (Weiss, Koban, and Matthes 2024; Mamié, Ribeiro, and West 2021). At the same time, contemporary scholarship pushes back against any neat conveyor-belt narrative. The notion of a simple, one-directional pipeline has been criticized — often fairly — as overly simplistic and unable to capture the complex, multi-tiered socialization processes that occur in digital environments (Marwick, Clancy, and Furl 2022).

This review therefore adopts a **micro–meso–macro framework** to synthesize the ways these factors interact within what is often called the "misogyny-to-extremism" pipeline. The central claim is that misogyny functions both as a gateway ideology and as connective tissue across ideologies on the far right — and research suggests this pairing is no accident. The process is not entirely explained by individual factors; it is also a product of the exploitation, by both manosphere influencers and more extreme far-right groups, of exaggerated mainstream gender norms.

These norms provide cultural reinforcement for dangerous conspiracy theories which, taken to their logical conclusion, would strip women of their agency, marginalize "out-groups," and justify acts of violence and hate to counter the perceived marginalization of men in Western society. Hostility to women not only conditions vulnerable individuals to hierarchical reasoning and moral distancing; it also provides a shared ideological frame that links disparate extremist communities through narratives of hierarchy, grievance, and backlash against equality.

MICRO

Individual vulnerability, crises of masculinity, and the quest for significance.

MESO

Communities and influencer networks that convert grievance into identity.

MACRO

Platform architectures and cultural currents that amplify and legitimize.

→ **Misogyny is not only an on-ramp to the far right — it is the connective tissue that holds its parts together.**

RESEARCH QUESTION & METHODOLOGY

HOW WE READ THE FIELD

RESEARCH QUESTION

How do interactions across the radicalization ecosystem — at the individual, community, and platform levels — shape the escalation of misogynistic worldviews into far-right radicalization, and how do radicalization models and pipeline frameworks each help explain that system?

The review used a structured keyword search strategy to identify recent scholarly work on the misogyny-to-extremism pipeline. Searches spanned scholarly databases and library discovery tools using terms associated with the manosphere and related radicalization dynamics — including *manosphere, hate pipeline, radicalization, radicalization pipeline, gender extremism, misogyny,* and *misogynistic extremism*, along with closely related variants. The primary inclusion window emphasized 2020 to present, while a limited set of foundational sources was retained where directly relevant.

From this corpus we identified a core evidence base — the sources that most directly addressed how misogynistic online engagement can escalate into far-right radicalization. On that basis, we constructed a conceptual framework interpreting the pipeline as an ecosystem shaped by vulnerabilities, social reinforcement, and platform infrastructures.

745

scholarly items screened — articles, books, chapters, reports & theses

→

108

core sources forming the evidence base for this synthesis

THE MANOSPHERE AS INFRASTRUCTURE

The "manosphere" refers to a loose but highly networked set of online male supremacist communities — including incels (involuntary celibates), Men's Rights Activists, Men Going Their Own Way, pick-up-artist circles, and related forums. These communities are unified by hostility to feminism and a narrative of male victimhood. They frame men as the real losers of contemporary gender politics and depict women and feminists as the architects of male decline.

A central organizing myth is the "Red Pill," borrowed from *The Matrix*. Taking the Red Pill is presented as an awakening to the supposed truth that society is secretly "gynocentric" or misandrist. Once "redpilled," men are encouraged to see romantic failure, economic struggle, and status loss not as the product of personal circumstances or structural forces, but as evidence that feminism has rigged the system against them. Personal insecurity is reframed as righteous grievance (Munn 2019; Marwick and Furl 2025).

This narrative does two things. First, it converts private frustrations into a simple ideological story: male suffering is women's fault. Second, it aligns male supremacist ideology with the broader authoritarian and far-right family of ideas. Both male and white supremacists insist on strict hierarchies, celebrate "traditional" gender and racial orders, and treat egalitarian change as a civilizational threat (Kennedy-Kollar 2024; Ging 2019).

→ **The manosphere is not a cluster of fringe forums. It is ideological infrastructure.**

That overlap makes it easy to move from gender-based resentment to racial and political hatred. Empirical work shows that hostile sexism is strongly correlated with — and often precedes — other forms of prejudice, a pattern sometimes described as a *secondary transfer effect* (Zick et al. 2008). In short, the manosphere is not merely a cluster of fringe forums. It operates as an ideological engine that intensifies male grievances, naturalizes male dominance, and primes adherents to embrace broader reactionary worldviews.

Gateways, Pipelines & Ecosystems

Before examining how these pathways form, it is worth establishing what "extremism" means. J.M. Berger rejects definitions tethered to religion, violence, or mere deviation from societal norms — the latter would exclude self-evident cases such as institutionalized slavery or Nazi Germany. In their place he offers a structural definition grounded in group identity and prescribed action (Berger 2018).

> *"Extremism refers to the belief that an in-group's success or survival can never be separated from the need for hostile action against an out-group. The hostile action must be part of the in-group's definition of success."*
>
> J.M. BERGER · EXTREMISM (2018)

This definition is urgent because of the documented mainstreaming of manosphere ideology. What was once contained on subversive boards like 4chan has become a saturation of extremist misogynistic ideas into mainstream youth culture via TikTok and YouTube — a phenomenon researchers term "Incel 2.0" (Czerwinsky 2023; Regehr et al. 2024). Content is delivered in "bite-sized, digestible, and entertaining chunks" that let new audiences "micro-dose" misogyny, and it spreads "not by choice, but by algorithm": recommendation systems routinely route users from innocuous searches like "gym" or "gaming" into manosphere content within minutes (Regehr et al. 2024; Thomas and Balint 2026).

A definition anchored to deviation from norms cannot hold when the norms themselves have shifted. Berger's structural definition does not face this problem. Whether these ideas are held by 2% or 52% of the population, the relevant question is unchanged: does the in-group define its success as inseparable from hostile action against an out-group? This is precisely why misogyny functions so readily as a bridge — once the in-group / out-group logic is operational and hostile action is normalized as morally necessary, the same architecture can be reloaded with new targets (Perliger, Stevens, and Leidig 2023).

Researchers use "gateway communities" and "pipelines" to describe how people move from mainstream attitudes to extreme ideologies. The manosphere is one of the most studied gateways. Yet recent literature argues "pipeline" is at best a partial metaphor: it implies a fixed, one-directional sequence, whereas in practice movement is a dense, flexible web. Misogynist ideology acts less like an on-ramp and more like a **hub** — a shared frame connecting different extremist spaces and letting individuals move laterally as well as vertically in intensity (Marwick, Clancy, and Furl 2022; James 2025).

→ **Think hub, not pipeline: misogyny is the shared frame that lets men move laterally between extremist spaces, not just upward in intensity.**

THEORETICAL LENSES

SIX MODELS OF RADICALIZATION

Several established models clarify why misogynistic grievance is so often the organizing element of extremist trajectories — and why this ecosystem is so effective at converting grievance into commitment and, in some cases, violence.

Moghaddam · Staircase to Terrorism (2005). A narrowing staircase: a broad ground floor of the frustrated and unjustly treated, with some ascending through moral disengagement, enemy identification, and the acceptance of violence.

McCauley & Moskalenko · Pyramid Model (2017). A broad base of sympathizers, a smaller set of active supporters, and a tiny apex prepared to act. Thousands post in anger; only a few ever plan attacks.

Borum · Grievance Progression (2011). A cognitive slide from "something is wrong" to "it's not fair" to "it's your fault" to "you are evil and deserve harm."

Beelmann · Social-Developmental Model (2020). Childhood adversity and social-skill deficits interact with later exposure to hate ideologies — explaining why only some vulnerable men are drawn in.

Kruglanski · Quest for Significance (2014). People radicalize after a loss of meaning or status, then adopt an ideology that restores significance by naming a culprit and offering a morally framed solution.

Kimmel · Aggrieved Entitlement (2013). Men who feel entitled to status become explosively angry when it fails to materialize — the affective core of incel and MRA discourse.

Together, these lenses frame misogynistic radicalization as a staged, socially embedded process: people move gradually through identifiable cognitive, emotional, and social steps.

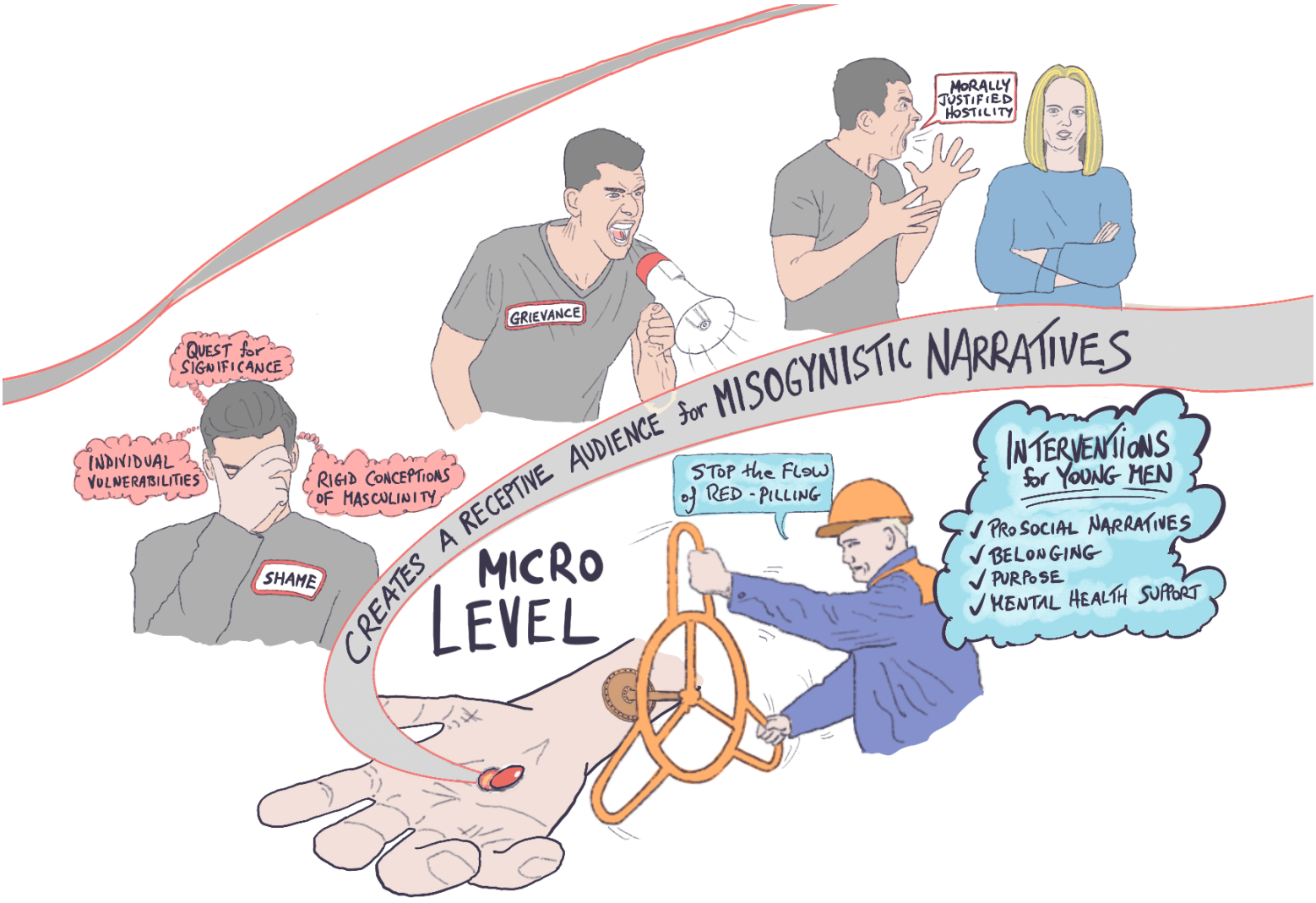
MISOGYNY AS BOND & BRIDGE



LEVEL ONE · THE INDIVIDUAL

01 MICRO LEVEL

Where personal grievance, identity uncertainty, and psychological distress create a receptive audience for misogynistic narratives.



INDIVIDUAL VULNERABILITIES CREATE A RECEPTIVE AUDIENCE FOR MISOGYNISTIC NARRATIVES

SHAME INTO GRIEVANCE

At the micro level, susceptibility to extremist narratives takes shape under conditions of personal and social strain. Many men who gravitate toward misogynistic extremist spaces report persistent loneliness, social exclusion, romantic failure, economic frustration, or mental-health struggles such as depression and anxiety. They often describe a diffuse sense of humiliation and a crisis of masculinity: they no longer feel like they measure up to what they think a man is supposed to be.

Kimmel's notion of *aggrieved entitlement* captures this dynamic (Kimmel 2013). These men believe they are entitled to certain social and sexual standing and feel enraged when it does not materialize. Changing gender norms, precarious labor markets, and shifting cultural expectations all contribute to a sense of lost status. Instead of understanding these experiences as structural or contingent, many interpret them as deeply personal failures and as indictments of their own worth.

Online manosphere communities exploit this vulnerability by reframing personal pain as collective political grievance. For a young man who feels invisible or rejected, incel and MRA forums say: it is not your fault; women, feminists, and "PC culture" have rigged the game against you. That shift from self-blame to outward blame is crucial — it turns shame into anger and directs that anger at a clearly defined enemy. It is exactly what Kruglanski's quest-for-significance theory predicts (Kruglanski et al. 2014).

→ **Shame is the raw material. The manosphere's core product is turning it outward.**

Redpilling is rarely a single dramatic moment but a slow accumulation of exposures. Research consistently finds "processual redpilling" rather than instant conversion (Marwick and Furl 2025) — one more suggested video, one more thread, one more meme, each slightly more hostile than the last. Luke Munn describes this progression in three stages (Munn 2019):

1 · Normalization. Exposure arrives as humor, irony, or "edgy" jokes. The comedic wrapper — "it's just a joke" — lowers inhibitions and makes engagement feel low-stakes.

2 · Acclimation. Repetition desensitizes. Views that once felt extreme become "just another opinion," especially when they appear constantly and attract positive attention.

3 · Dehumanization. Targets are stripped of humanity ("femoids," "foids," "roasties"). Once a group is no longer seen as fully human, harm against them feels less morally troubling — a strong predictor of endorsing violence (Haslam 2006).

Crucially, radicalization of opinion is far more common than radicalization of action. Thousands may share fantasies of revenge or hateful rhetoric, but only a very small number move to planning or carrying out attacks (McCauley and Moskalenko 2017); opportunity, triggers, and access to weapons shape who crosses that final threshold.

Even so, involvement rarely leaves people unchanged. Many carry a lasting "residue" of misogynistic assumptions after disengaging (Smith, Butler-Warke, and Stevens 2024). These vulnerabilities are not sufficient on their own — but they create a receptive audience for the misogynistic and extremist messages that the meso level is built to deliver.

LEVEL TWO · THE COMMUNITY

02 MESO LEVEL

Where echo chambers, status incentives, and influencer networks turn isolated frustration into shared identity and hardened ideology.



COMMUNITIES AND INFLUENCERS CONVERT GRIEVANCE INTO A HARDENED IDEOLOGICAL IDENTITY

THE SOCIAL MACHINE

On the meso level, radicalization is social. The manosphere is an ecosystem of forums, subreddits, Discord servers, Telegram channels, and comment sections that turn isolated frustration into shared identity and ideology. These spaces function as echo chambers: users mostly encounter like-minded people who reinforce the same grievances, while dissent is absent or ridiculed (Sunstein 2017). A newcomer quickly learns the local lexicon — "Chad," "Stacy," "beta," "femoid" — and sees that rage at women is rewarded far more than doubt or nuance.

This reward structure matters. Users who post more vehement misogynistic or violent content gain status and attention, while those who express moderation are mocked as "bluepilled" or "simps" (Habib, Srinivasan, and Nithyanand 2022). To fit in, members ratchet up the intensity of their rhetoric, and the group's median position drifts toward the extremes — classic group polarization. Research also documents *outbidding* (Coufal and Wedel 2025): factions compete to prove they are the most uncompromising, and as moderates leave, the visible community becomes an increasingly hard-core nucleus.

Language does heavy lifting here. Communities use pseudo-scientific jargon about "hypergamy" and "sexual marketplace value" to present hate as objective knowledge (Ging 2019; Lawson 2023). Jokes about assault are passed off as "just memes," letting participants skirt moderation and claim deniability. Over time the line between "ironic" and sincere speech erodes — users who thought they were playing along report the jokes starting to feel like statements of fact.

→ **Extremity is the status currency, and moderation is what these communities punish.**

The manosphere is not sealed off from the wider extremist ecosystem. Users cross-post, share links, and move between communities, and prior engagement with sexist content predicts later engagement with far-right content (Mamié, Ribeiro, and West 2021). Misogyny often serves as a first organizing grievance later expanded to include immigrants, racial minorities, LGBTQ communities, and democratic institutions — a "strategic pairing," per Perliger, Stevens, and Leidig (2023), that boosts followers and threatens opposing ideologies.

> *"Legitimacy flows through collaboration. Creators host and recommend one another, effectively building a ladder from moderate to extreme content."*
>
> REBECCA LEWIS · ALTERNATIVE INFLUENCE (2018)

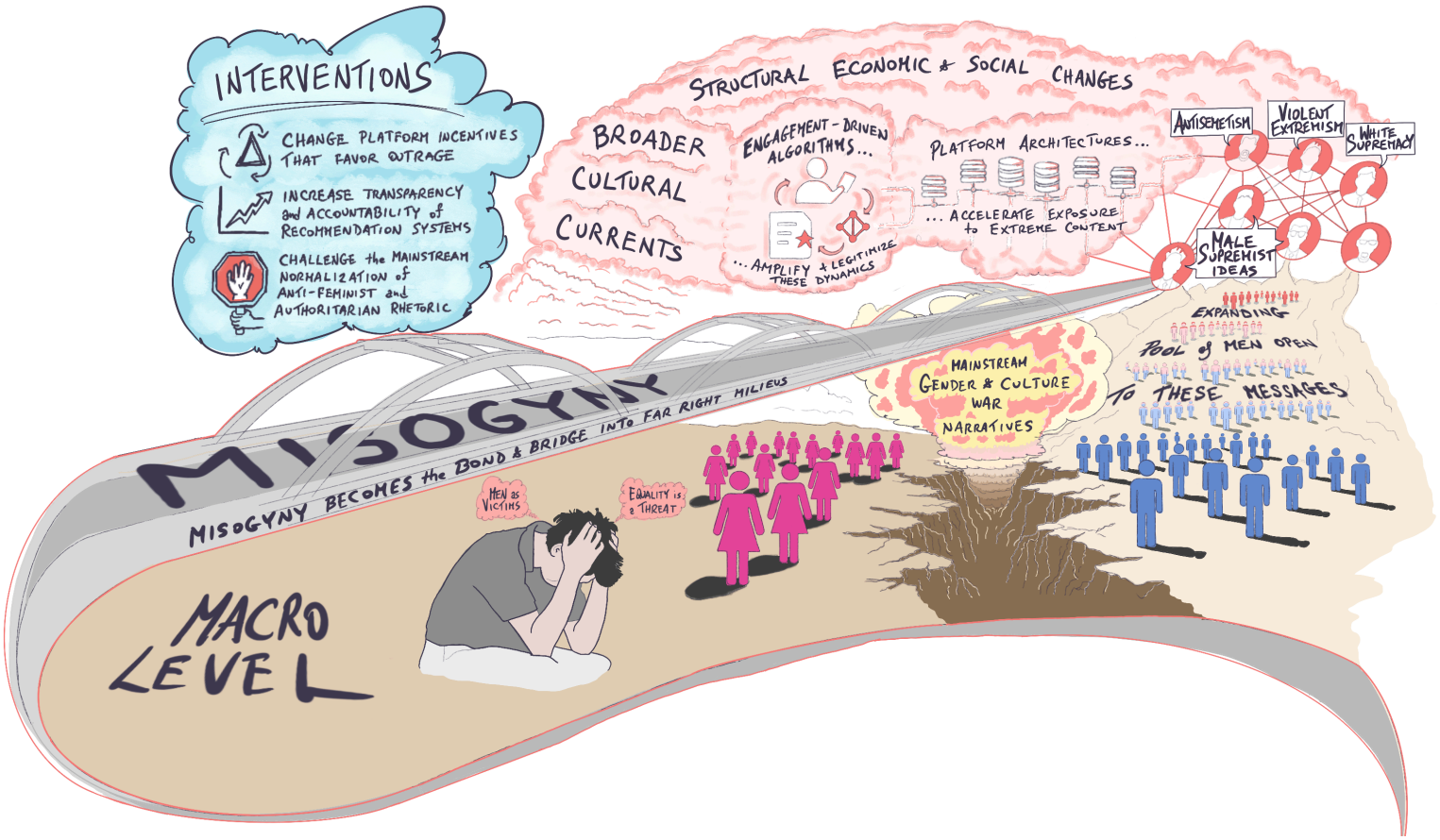
Andrew Tate is the clearest illustration (Leeming 2023) — packaging misogyny, displays of wealth, and self-help into an aspirational vision, then normalizing explicit contempt for women and flirtation with authoritarian politics. Clips circulate on TikTok and YouTube Shorts stripped of context and optimized for virality (Regehr et al. 2024), functioning as high-speed recruitment tools into a broader world of Red Pill content.

Parasocial bonds amplify the effect. Influencers cultivate an image of intimacy — the "older brother who tells you what no one else will" — so audiences trust their judgments and follow them deeper (Rothut et al. 2023). When a trusted influencer vouches for a more extreme figure, the endorsement carries real weight. Combined, these processes turn the manosphere into a social machine that continually converts personal grievance into a hardened ideological identity, making disengagement costly and further radicalization more likely.

LEVEL THREE · PLATFORMS & SOCIETY

03 MACRO LEVEL

Where platform architectures and cultural currents amplify and legitimize these dynamics — expanding the pool of men open to the message.



ALGORITHMS AND CULTURAL CURRENTS ACCELERATE EXPOSURE AND EXPAND THE RECEPTIVE AUDIENCE

ENGINEERED FOR OUTRAGE

The macro level situates individual and community dynamics inside larger technological and cultural structures. Social media platforms are optimized for engagement (van Dijck and Poell 2015) — not democratic health, social cohesion, or individual flourishing — so their recommendation systems favor content that evokes strong emotions. Outrage, fear, and resentment perform well by those metrics.

Audits of YouTube show that users who start with "rational" gender discussion or anti-"SJW" clips are recommended progressively more extreme material; after only a few clicks, a nontrivial share of paths lead to alt-lite and then explicit alt-right channels (Ribeiro et al. 2020). Experimental TikTok accounts posing as teenage boys, given minimal signals of interest in fitness, rapidly receive a flood of misogynistic and incel-adjacent content (Regehr et al. 2024; Thomas and Balint 2026). The effect is cumulative: personalized feeds saturate users with more of what kept them engaged, building a technologically produced echo chamber where hostility to women looks ubiquitous and normal.

Recent literature cautions that algorithms are not omnipotent puppet masters (Munger and Phillips 2020; Bruns 2024). Users make choices, and extremist creators actively game platform systems with search optimization, coded language, and evasive tactics to avoid moderation. The consensus: algorithms are powerful accelerants and amplifiers, but they operate in tandem with human agency and organized exploitation.

→ **Algorithms are accelerants, not authors — they scale a demand that is already being cultivated.**

Mainstreaming & the Secondary Transfer Effect

The pipeline does not operate in a cultural vacuum. Political rhetoric that paints feminism as overreach or frames a "crisis of masculinity" provides a legitimizing backdrop for explicit hate. As Perliger et al. note, misogynist ideas "are an extreme manifestation that amplify mainstream gender norms" (Perliger, Stevens, and Leidig 2023). Male supremacist ideology has deep roots in patriarchal norms that predate the internet; what is distinctive now is their rearticulation in the language of grievance and victimhood (Miller-Idriss 2022).

This overlap is visible in cross-pollinated memes: white-nationalist forums fill with misogynistic jokes, while misogynist forums increasingly feature "Great Replacement" talk and anxieties about birthrates. The secondary transfer effect explains the pattern — people who adopt strong prejudice toward one group are more likely to adopt prejudice toward others (Zick et al. 2008). "Trad" aesthetics repackage extreme gender traditionalism as an aspirational lifestyle, narrowing the perceived distance between mainstream conservatism and explicit extremism (Miller-Idriss 2025; Kelly 2017).

Structural Conditions & the Crisis of Meaning

Finally, socioeconomic conditions set the stage. Youth unemployment, precarious work, housing insecurity, and rapid cultural change create dislocation for many young men, and markers of adulthood are harder to reach than for previous generations (Langenkamp 2025; Murphy 2023). Some interpret these pressures through a gendered lens — blaming feminism or changing norms rather than economic policy. This is where the levels intersect most clearly: structural crises create large cohorts searching for meaning, communities offer identity and targets for blame, and platform architectures give those communities unprecedented reach and speed.

WHAT CAN BE DONE

INTERVENTIONS AT A GLANCE

Because the problem is systemic, no single measure will interrupt it. Effective response means acting at every level at once — reaching the individual, reshaping the community, and re-engineering the platform.

MICRO

THE INDIVIDUAL

- ✓ Address loneliness, mental health, and identity crises among young men.
- ✓ Offer alternative narratives of masculinity built on purpose and belonging, not dominance.

MESO

THE COMMUNITY

- ✓ Disrupt the social rewards for misogynistic and extremist performance.
- ✓ Support, amplify, and incentivize prosocial counter-communities.
- ✓ Reduce the reach and monetization of the most harmful influencers.

MACRO

PLATFORMS & SOCIETY

- ✓ Change platform incentives that favor outrage.
- ✓ Increase transparency and accountability for recommendation systems.
- ✓ Challenge the mainstream normalization of anti-feminist and authoritarian rhetoric.

The through-line: stop the flow of red-pilling upstream by giving young men prosocial narratives, belonging, purpose, and mental-health support — before grievance hardens into ideology.

GATEWAY & GLUE

Taken together, the literature shows that what is often called the misogyny-to-extremism pipeline is better described as a multi-level sociotechnical ecosystem. At the **micro** level, individual vulnerabilities and quests for significance create a receptive audience. At the **meso** level, communities and influencer networks transform those vulnerabilities into shared identity and hardened ideology. At the **macro** level, platform architectures and cultural currents amplify and legitimize the whole.

Misogyny operates within this ecosystem as both gateway and glue. It is often the first grievance that draws men into radical spaces, and it is a theme that cuts across white supremacist, nationalist, and authoritarian projects. Hatred of women connects otherwise distinct movements under a shared commitment to restoring hierarchy and punishing those who challenge it.

> *"Misogynistic radicalization is a systems-level problem rooted in how we structure platforms, politics, and gender relations — not simply a matter of a few 'bad apples' who watched the wrong video."*

At the same time, radicalization is neither uniform nor inevitable. Many men visit manosphere spaces briefly and leave. Some hover at the base of the pyramid, harboring hostile beliefs but never acting on them. Others disengage as life circumstances improve, though they may carry forward a residual suspicion of women or feminism. These variations underline the importance of attending to both risk and resilience factors.

For policy, prevention, and platform governance, the implication is straightforward and uncomfortable: there is no single fix. Effective response requires coordinated action across all three levels at once. The research synthesized here makes clear that any serious attempt to interrupt the flow from misogyny to extremism will have to engage that system in full.

THE CHARGE

To build the digital infrastructure to disrupt hate before it takes root.

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This review synthesizes a core evidence base of 108 sources drawn from 745 screened scholarly items — peer-reviewed articles, books, chapters, research reports, and theses — emphasizing work from 2020 to the present, with select foundational sources retained where directly relevant.

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DIVERTING HATE



ABOUT

Diverting Hate is an applied research nonprofit disrupting digital harm by steering vulnerable men and boys away from hostility and towards hope.