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NAVIGATING THE MANOSPHERE: AN EXAMINATION OF THE INCEL MOVEMENTS' ATTITUDES OF SEXUAL AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

BY

ALBINA LASKOVTSOV

THESIS APPROVED:

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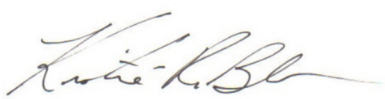

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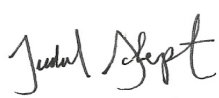

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NAVIGATING THE MANOSPHERE: AN EXAMINATION OF THE INCEL MOVEMENTS' ATTITUDES OF SEXUAL AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

BY

ALBINA LASKOVTSOV

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
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ABSTRACT

There is a considerable and established literature on the topic of violence against women. Yet, there remains understudied areas of foci with lesser attention paid to its occurrence within online and digital contexts. Of particular interest is the networked misogyny and sexism of the online group that self-identifies as “involuntary celibates”, or “incels”. Drawing on data collected from online forums and chat rooms, the language and discourse of this particular group are analyzed through an integrated conceptual framework encompassing hegemonic masculinity, aggrieved entitlement, and patriarchy to better understand the prevalence and types of violence promoted by “incels”. Emerging themes revealed the pervasiveness of rape culture, pro-attitudes of violence against women, male victimization and oppression, sexual entitlement, and masculinity crises.

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Chapter I

Introduction

On November 2nd, 2018 a 40-year-old man, Scott Paul Beierle, walked into a hot yoga studio in Tallahassee, Florida seemingly to participate in a yoga session and instead opened fire into a room of unsuspecting women. He managed to injure four and kill two before turning the gun on himself. This apparent random act of violence was anything but disorganized or unplanned. Beierle drove 250 miles to the town in which he used to go to school, some twenty years ago, and specifically targeted an event that he knew would be predominantly attended by women. His aim was to murder as many women as possible. His intentions were made clear when investigators began combing through his life and uncovered a myriad of literature drafted by Beierle himself. His collection of novels and poetry revealed a deep-seated hatred and resentment of women spanning decades. He wrote graphically about his desire to rape and kill women. Beierle had a history of groping and assaulting women that led to his subsequent expulsion from Florida State University. He faced allegations from female soldiers of inappropriate touching from his time in the military, as well as being fired from multiple teaching positions, again, for inappropriate sexual misconduct (Hendrix, 2019; Holcombe, 2019, p.1). Beierle actively posted videos on YouTube, which have since been taken down, explicitly advocating for violence against women, the LGBTQ community, and social institutions like law enforcement.

Beierle's attack against women is not necessarily unique—given the long history of violence against women in the US—but what is new is his association with the relatively newly formed involuntary celibate or 'incel' movement (Ging, 2017). Involuntary

celibates are men who have gathered in an online community to rail against women for not having sex with them. Incels resent the fact that they are unable to find sexual partners (Ging, 2017) and Beierle expressed many of the popular sentiments that the group holds. His history of sexual misconduct coupled with an adherence to a misogynistic ideology, clearly contributed to his final act in Tallahassee that exemplified his rage and hate toward all women. However, it is difficult to ascertain how much of this can be attributed to his being a member of the online incel community.

A preliminary exploration of the incel movement and incel culture reveals a narrow understanding of what the term means. *The New York Times* describes incels or involuntary celibates as, "misogynists who are deeply suspicious and disparaging of women, whom they blame for denying them their right to sexual intercourse" (Chokshi, 2018, p.1). Due to the relatively recent rise of the incel movement, the intent of this research is to provide an overview of the ideologies they promote and to examine the connection between incels and their attitudes of sexual violence against women. It should also be noted that an exact number of incels is difficult to track, given the anonymity provided by the internet. There are reports that number incel membership at tens of thousands, around 40,000 (Beauchamp, 2019), while others estimate in the hundreds of thousands (Kutchinsky, 2019). This examination of incels will be situated within an exploration of the larger online culture that provides a framework for studying incel culture. Cyberspace is the medium in which incels operate to spread their messages and invoke violence and harassment against women as a justifiable response to their supposed oppression (Parent, Gobble, & Rochlen, 2018).

Drawing on a conceptual framework of hegemonic masculinity, aggrieved entitlement, and patriarchy, the perspective for exploring the attitudes of sexual violence against women within the incel community will be examined paying particular attention to the concept of toxic masculinity. Toxic hegemonic masculinity is uniquely applied to the study of incels by explaining their tenuous relationship with expressions of masculinity and how this translates to the hatred of women. This research focuses on these two known phenomena: sexual violence against women and cyberspace. It particularly attempts to identify misogynistic and violence-fueled language on popular incel chat rooms and forums in order to measure incels' attitudes of violence against women. This research is a qualitative exploratory study that utilizes a content discourse analysis of the data gathered from online forums that specifically feature self-identified incels. The following section will begin with a brief review of the pertinent literature.

Chapter II

Literature Review

There has been relatively little scholarly attention paid to the incel movement. With the exception of a few academicians like Emma Jane and Debbie Ging, the phenomenon has only recently emerged as a topic of interest within the field of criminology. For example, in 2017 Debbie Ging wrote explicitly about the culture of the Manosphere and how it has bred a masculinity crisis for men within the incel movement. She provides descriptive information about the incel culture and details its foundation. In addition, Emma Jane (2018) has written extensively on online misogyny and what she has termed "e-bile,"[1] specifically as it exists on incel platforms and forums. Also, J.B. Mountford (2018) provides fresh insight into the online culture of the incel movement by analyzing the group discourse within their cyber communities to reveal how these men navigate masculinities and how this expression leads to acts of violence against women. While there has been little written directly about incels, the role of the internet in the promotion and proliferation of gender-based violence (both ideological and otherwise) has been written about in more depth. The following section addresses some of the ways in which it has been previously addressed before highlighting the relevance of this literature to the incel movement and the theoretical lens through which the data here are analyzed.

Gender and online spaces

Literature on cyberspace and cybercrimes has become increasingly more relevant in a society dominated by the internet (Poland, 2016). Online harassment and cyberbullying have progressively become significant issues with important implications

[1] Gendered hate speech and vitriol targeting women online (Jane, 2018).

for the victims and the perpetrators (Lipton, 2011). Emily Harmer and Karen Lumsden (2019) explore the concept of "online othering," in which marginalized groups on the internet experience targeted racist, misogynistic, and sexist messages and acts, thereby creating a toxic and exclusionary digital environment. A broad review of the literature clearly reveals that feminist researchers have noted that experiences of online spaces differ according to gender (Marwick & Caplan, 2018; O'Donnell & Sweetman, 2018; Poland, 2016) and women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sexism (Barak, 2005; Ging & Siapera, 2018; Henry & Powell, 2017), gender-based objectification (Nussbaum, 2010), abuse (Poland, 2016), harassment and threats (Maass & Cadinu, 2006; Fairbairn, 2015; Henry & Powell, 2017; Marwick & Caplan, 2018), gendertrolling[2] (Mantilla, 2013), as well as violence that can transcend from the cyber into the physical (i.e. 'real-life') (Fairbairn, 2015; Filipovic, 2007). The Pew Research Center in the United States released a report in 2017 indicating the likelihood of women experiencing gender-based harassment and abuse with 21% of women between the ages of 18 and 29 reporting having been sexually harassed online (Ging & Siapera, 2018).

Gendered cyber-harassment, like in the physical world, tends to be targeted towards women in positions of power, making 'professional' women particularly vulnerable. This includes women academics, those in the fields of medicine, technology, sports, and other male-dominated arenas (Barak, 2005; Filipovic, 2007; Hirshman, 2019; Kavanagh, Litchfield, & Osborne, 2019). Cybersexism, like physical sexism, aims to enforce and maintain male dominance in those spaces and silence women into submission

[2] A gendered form of bullying and harassment online, specifically targeting women (Mantilla, 2013).

and inferiority (Poland, 2016). For example, a recent event in 2014 that played an important role in unveiling toxic online culture, was the now dubbed "Gamergate." This was a hate campaign against a specific female video gamer, Zoe Quinn, that was spearheaded by her ex-boyfriend Eron Gjoni (Ging, 2017; Massanari, 2017; Salter, 2018). Although it initially targeted Quinn, it became a much more dispersed and systematic campaign of harassment and abuse (Harmer & Lumsden, 2019; Massanari, 2017). Male gamers attacked female gamers, journalists, and other critics of the gaming culture by sending out abusive and derogatory posts, denigrating their character, and publicizing their private information, like in Zoe Quinn's case where her ex-boyfriend released information regarding her alleged sexual infidelities (Nagle, 2017; Phillips, 2016).

Other women like Alanah Pearce (Jane, 2016), a gamer journalist, and Anita Sarkeesian (Mantilla, 2013), a feminist media critic and blogger, also faced an onslaught of violent and threatening messages via video game chat rooms and social media accounts like Facebook and Twitter (Henry & Powell, 2017; Jane, 2016). These online threats turned to physical acts of harm, which included being doxed (where personal and identifiable information is published online for public access) (Mantilla, 2013; Salter, 2018) and SWATed (sending false tips to police which result in private residences being raided by law enforcement) (Salter, 2018) by men online. This not only causes immediate trauma and fear of violence and harm, but often leads to being displaced from their homes. In the above examples, these women were attacked for infiltrating male spaces and blamed for spreading a feminist agenda that was perceived as being set on destroying the "gamer subculture" (Salter, 2018).

A unique quality of Gamergate was its organized and coordinated method of attacking women. What soon followed was a new academic exploration into networked misogyny (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Marwick & Caplan, 2018; Moloney & Love, 2018). Scholars recognized this was made possible by the anonymity offered in cyberspace, lessening accountability of the aggressors and making it virtually impossible to track them down (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Ging, 2017; Mountford, 2018; Peterson & Densley, 2017). The coordination of multiple individuals to work together in an unprecedented effort to prevent women from encroaching into these spaces, revealed a much bigger truth about the institutionalized system of oppression that operates freely and openly in cyberspace.

Furthermore, it was found that gender-based hate speech and online misogyny has the potential to escalate into cyber-sexual violence that may have more problematic implications (Cripps & Stermac, 2018). These acts can include, but are not limited to, image-based sexual exploitation like revenge pornography[3] (Cripps & Stermac, 2018; Dodge, 2016), Deepfake pornography[4] (Harmer & Lumsden, 2019), cyber-stalking (Citron, 2014; Hazelwood & Koon-Magnin, 2013), and rape threats (Dodge, 2016; Fairbairn, 2015; Henry & Powell, 2015; Jane, 2018). Rape and death threats in particular, have the ability to operate as a "silencing strategy" for women online (Harmer & Lumsden, 2019), which often results in "online othering." This leads to a digital

[3] Private and personal images, of a sexual nature, made public online (Harmer & Lumsden, 2019).
[4] The manipulation of one's digital images to be portrayed within a forged and false representation of themselves (Harmer & Lumsden, 2019).

environment being so inhospitable and toxic, that many female users often have no choice but to remove themselves from the internet completely.

Rape culture

Rape culture is the term given to describe an environment in which certain beliefs about women's sexuality, behaviors, and values, perpetuate and normalize the instances of sexual violence committed by men acting out in sexually aggressive ways (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Buchwald, Fletcher, & Roth, 1993; Dodge, 2016; Harding, 2015; Murray, 2017; Phillips, 2016). Some of these beliefs include justifying sexual violence against a woman who was inebriated or dressed in a provocative manner. In addition, in rape cultures women are often held responsible for their own victimization, and their trauma and experiences are minimized (Henry & Powell, 2017). Rape culture is extensively written about in the literature as a force that promotes the perpetuation of violence against women and girls (Dodge, 2016), excuses the offenses of the perpetrators (Goldberg, 2015), as well as legitimates and normalizes their behavior (Henry & Powell, 2017).

Rape culture was initially coined by the second-wave feminists of the 1970s in an effort to combat sexism and reveal the deep-seated nature of sexism that facilitates violence and harm against women (Gavey, 2019; Phillips, 2017). Emilie Buchwald, Pamela Fletcher, and Martha Roth (1993) wrote extensively about the ways in which rape culture presented itself in *Transforming a Rape Culture.* They contributed to the overall discourse surrounding the socialization of sexual aggression against women by men and what that meant for future generations. They discussed the normalization of violence against women in churches, schools, prisons, families, and other social settings

(Buchwald et al., 1993). They argued that these acts of violence were made possible by the pervasiveness of rape culture and its ability to infiltrate even the most unsuspecting institutions. These early scholars provided insight into topics rarely explored before: the gendered sexualization in erotica and pornography, marital rape, sexual abuse of children in school settings, and campus rape (Buchwald et al., 1993). These insights sparked future research on these subjects, expanding the knowledge and understanding of these phenomena and provided a foundation for future exploration into separate, but related arenas like the incel movement.

Early academicians like Martha Burt and Susan Brownmiller greatly contributed to the preliminary discourse surrounding rape culture and rape myths. Susan Brownmiller (1975) in *Against Our Will: Men, women, and rape* writes about the historical depiction of rape as it was perceived in US society at that time and historically. Although aspects of her early work have been criticized by feminists and non-feminists alike, she provided the groundwork for which future literature was built upon regarding sexual violence and abuse against women. Brownmiller (1975) writes about rape as a larger societal construct in where patriarchy and male superiority is exalted and upheld. Andrea Dworkin has also been credited in early feminist literature as an activist against sexual violence against women. She wrote about rape as an act of terrorism against women's bodies and a form of oppression against basic human dignity that supported patriarchal structures (Allen, 2016).

Rape culture is intertwined with rape myths, which fuel its very existence. Rape myths such as "she asked for it," and "it wasn't really rape," (Gavey, 2019; Germain, 2016; Kilimnik & Humphreys, 2018; Rollero & Tartaglia, 2018) are false sentiments that

directly influence how some people view rape and its occurrence. Rape culture includes many behaviors that directly affect women's sexual agency and autonomy. These behaviors include, but are not limited to sexual objectification (Fasoli, Durante, Mari, Zogmaister, & Volpato, 2018), slut-shaming (Ringrose, & Renold, 2012), victim-blaming (Niemi, & Young, 2014), denying the occurrence of rape and sexual assault (Fraser, 2015), and trivializing harm associated with these acts (Hockett, Saucier, Hoffman, Smith, & Craig, 2009). Relatedly, cultural scripts are just as important in promoting rape myths and the acceptance of violence against women in the media. These cultural scripts dictate how masculinity and femininity ought to be displayed, enacted, and reified, as evidenced by media's portrayal of male dominance, the sexual objectification of women, and a growing interest in participating in hook-up culture (Hust, Rodgers, Ebreo, & Stefani, 2019; Wade, 2017). As noted above, rape culture has infiltrated virtually all social spaces, including the digital arena. Therefore, it is unsurprising that it has found its way into the online coalescence of men who identify as being part of the Manosphere; it is this online group that house incels.

The Manosphere

Of particular contextual relevance to the incel movement, is the much larger ideological online space called the Manosphere. This space contains within it numerous groups that focus their attention on undermining feminists and re-claiming masculinity (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Jane, 2018). As a term, 'Manosphere' was coined in 2009 when it appeared for the first time on a blogpost (Ging, 2017). The Manosphere encompasses aspects of rape culture including toxic masculinity, misogyny, and prescriptions to rigid heteronormative gender scripts. While there is little scholarly

attention within the field of criminology to the Manosphere, several scholars have researched the subject. In 2016, Lise Gotell and Emily Dutton explored the prevalence of sexually violent sentiments in popular Manosphere online groups. In addition, Jan Blommaert (2017) has written about the dynamics within the Manosphere and how it has the potential to radicalize the users and viewers of these sites. The Manosphere is described by the Southern Poverty Law Centre (2018) as a "key site for misogyny."

In general, the Manosphere is understood to contain within it several groups: Men's rights activists (MRA), Pickup artists (PUA), Men going their own way (MGTOW), traditional conservatives, and incels (Ging, 2017; Marwick & Caplan, 2018; Nagle, 2017; Nichols & Agius, 2018; Schmitz & Kazyak, 2016). For clarity each will be defined in brief, but as the focus here is incels, further attention will be focused on that group. Pickup artists are men who help other men learn manipulative tactics to entice women to have sex with them (Nichols & Agius, 2018). Men going their own way promote an independence from women by avoiding relationships with them altogether (Lyons, 2017, pg.1). Traditional conservatives or TradCons, are men who subscribe to a deeply conservative religious ideology that guides their relationship with women in a rigidly heteronormative and patriarchal orientation (Ging, 2017).

Of particular importance here is a sub-section of the Manosphere, the Men's Rights Movement (MRM) or men's rights activists who came about as a reactionary force to the 1970's Women's Liberation Movement (Gotell & Dutton, 2016; Marwick & Caplan, 2018). While men's rights group has received some attention in the literature (Kimmel, 2013; Palmer & Subramaniam, 2017; Poland, 2016), it is important to note that more so than any other group within the Manosphere, men's rights activists focus on

rallying for the suppression of the 'feminist agenda' and upholding men's rightful position as the dominant gender (Nichols & Agius, 2018). The existing literature on the topic has revealed that earlier forms of the organization did not try to devalue sexism against women, but instead focused their efforts on illuminating sexism that men experienced (Lumsden, 2019; Marwick & Caplan, 2018). What is now relevant is that the men's rights movement is just as much about upholding male dominance as it is about undermining women and suppressing the feminist agenda (Marwick & Caplan, 2018). They argue that a marginalization of men's rights exists within parental custody battles in which the courts are operating under biased and sexist pretenses, as well as in gendered discourse regarding sexual assault (Jane, 2018; Poland, 2016). For example, men's rights activists believe that women in general and feminists in particular, are invisibilizing the instances of sexual violence that men are experiencing (Rafail & Freitas, 2019); they aim to make it a gender-neutral issue (Marwick & Caplan, 2018; Mountford, 2018).

More broadly, studies have found that heteronormative gender scripts play an important role in dictating the direction the men's rights groups went during the 1980s (Ging, 2017; Messner, 2016). During this time men's rights activists argued that modern society was emasculating men, while raising feminist issues and placing them on a pedestal, thus perpetuating the victimization of men (Ging, 2017; Gotell & Dutton, 2016; Jane, 2018; Rafail & Freitas, 2019). Traditionally masculine men are supposed to subscribe to specific gender norms and feminists are often viewed (particularly within the Manosphere) as saboteurs of this pre-determined social contract (Messner, 2016).

Marwick and Caplan (2018) have argued that the incels of today are a modernized version of the men's rights activists of the 1970s, and even though they differ in

important ways, they subscribe to the same ideological sentiments. As mentioned above, the Manosphere encompasses variations of this group (i.e., Men going their own way, Pick-up Artists, etc.) (Marwick & Caplan, 2018; Mountford, 2018). At the core they believe in the marginalization of men's rights and the erosion of patriarchal society. Their goal is to push women out of mainstream spaces for fear of female encroachment (Banet-Weiser, 2016). In the case of incels these spaces are digital (Poland, 2016). They also aim to hinder the advancement of the feminist agenda (Jane, 2018; Mountford, 2018; Schmitz & Kazyak, 2016).

Sexual violence against women

There is an abundance of literature that addresses sexual violence perpetrated against women (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013; Kavanagh et al., 2019; Leclerc, Chiu, Cale, & Cook, 2016; Nichols & Agius, 2018; World Health Organization, 2002). Much of this literature examines rape and sexual assault in the context of dating (Gross, Winslett, Roberts, & Gohm, 2006), intimate partner relationships (Mennicke, 2019), rape scripts (Germain, 2016; Ryan, 2011), rape as a weapon of war (Hynes, 2004; Korac, 2018; Loken, Lake, & Cronin-Furman, 2018), and the aforementioned broader rape culture (Phillips, 2016). Other research examines societal responses to the issue of rape and sexual assault including lack of control (Kilimnik & Humphreys, 2018), poorly administered criminal justice responses (Spohn & Tellis, 2012), and victim narratives that aim to dispel current gendered sexual scripts and myths (Močnik, 2018).

Sexual violence against women is most readily upheld systemically and through institutional power. Universities and colleges have recently been under fire for perpetuating a culture in which sexual assault and rape has become commonplace

(Germain, 2016; Krakauer, 2015). It has been extensively written about within the context of campus life and early studies revealed that between one in five and one in four young women have been sexually assaulted or raped while attending college (DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1993; Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000). Ethnographic research has revealed risk factors associated with campus rapes and sexual assaults such as alcohol and drug consumption, Greek-life associations, and off-campus versus on-campus parties (Armstrong, Hamilton, & Sweeney, 2006). Research also suggests that about 87% of alcohol-involved sexual assaults are being committed by the same offenders; these same offenders have a high probability of being school athletes or fraternity members (Foubert, Clark-Taylor, & Wall, 2019). Existing research shows that fraternity members are three times more likely than other non-fraternity affiliated men to commit an act of sexual assault (Loh, Gidycz, Lobo, & Luthra, 2005; Foubert, Newberry, & Tatum, 2007). Recent revelations within college rape investigations have shown the complicated policy procedures, or lack thereof, and complex criminal justice proceedings in effect on many college campuses (Hirshman, 2019; Dick & Ziering, 2016). This in conjunction with the ingrained rape culture continues to perpetuate instances of campus sexual assault and excusing and justifying the behaviors of the offenders.

In association with college campus sexual assaults, male college athletes have been identified as a high-risk group for committing acts of sexual violence against fellow female athletes and students (Franiuk, Luca, & Robinson, 2019). The common link between fraternity groups and college athletes is the presence of a hyper-masculine and aggressive culture in which pro-rape attitudes and behaviors are disseminated (McCray, 2015; McMahon, 2007). Given the celebrity status of college athletes, much media

attention has been given to college athletes who have been accused of sexual misconduct. Recently there have been several cases in which athletes were named the offenders against women: Jameis Winston of the Florida Buccaneers (2013), Brock Turner of Stanford (2016), and several football players at Baylor University in 2016. Multiple colleges and universities (i.e. University of Montana, University of North Carolina, Boston University, etc.) have been investigated for their poor handling of sexual assault accusations, especially against prominent athletes (McCray, 2015; Reel & Crouch, 2019). In 2015, Larry Nasser, a USA gymnastics doctor was outed as a child predator and sexual abuser. With over 300 victims, the doctor was able to manipulate young girls into staying silent for years allowing for decades of abuse (Eiler, Al-Kire, Doyle, & Wayment, 2019). Men using their position of power to use and abuse women is not new or specific to gymnastics, but Larry Nasser illuminated its pervasiveness within the institution of sport.

In 2017, a *New York Times* article revealed the decades-long abuse and harassment by famous Hollywood producer, Harvey Weinstein (Farrow, 2019; Kantor & Twohey, 2017). This became a catalyst for a renewed social movement that was dubbed #MeToo by its founder Tarana Burke. Interest in the movement resurged in 2017 and was progressively disseminated by other female activists and celebrities (Hirshman, 2019). The #MeToo movement became an important contribution to the century-old discourse surrounding workplace harassment and abuse of women. Powerful men in media, government, and various other businesses were being ousted as abusers in numbers never seen before. Hundreds of men have been exposed for sexual misconduct, harassment, assault, and abuse (Carleson, Salam, Miller, Lu, Ngu, Patel, & Wichter, 2018). The #MeToo hashtag was intended to give women a space online to come together in

solidarity over shared experiences of sexual abuse and harassment (Hebert, 2018). Literature on the online social movements such as #MeToo and #TimesUp is scant with the exceptions of scholars such as Judy Battaglia, Paige Edley, and Victoria Newsom (2019) who write about the importance of the movement as well as its greater implications for intersectional feminists.

There is also literature pertaining to the larger US government and military and their contribution to the toxic culture in which sexual assault of servicemen and women continues to occur (Burns, Grindlay, Holt, Manski, & Grossman, 2014). A survey in 2011 (Barlas, Higgins, Pflieger, & Diecker) revealed that 21.7% of women and 3.3% of men in the military have reported sexual abuse and assault by other members of the military. A 2019 Pentagon report has revealed that instances of sexual abuse and assault against both men and women have increased 38% since 2018 (Crawford, 2019). In a study of instances of sexual harassment in a military institution, Pershing (2003) found that 96.8 percent of women in the military reported experiencing sexual harassment in a six-month period. The military is often portrayed as a microcosm of the larger society in which sexual abuse and harassment of women prevails, thus by studying it as a site of sexual abuse of women informs the larger understandings of social structures that upholds violence against women.

Sexual violence in cyberspace has also received considerable scholarly attention (Henry & Powell, 2017). Online sexual harassment and abuse is exemplified in unique gendered nuances through sexist hate speech, dissemination of pornographic imagery (i.e. cyber-stalking, rape threats, and virtual rape (Cripps & Stermac, 2018; Marwick & Caplan, 2018)). Research has consistently shown that women are disproportionately the

targets of online harassment and speech, thus transcending the lived reality of women in the offline world into the online world (Henry & Powell, 2015; Kavanagh et al., 2019). Sexual harassment and abuse of women that occurs physically is translated into digital harassment and abuse, thus the crimes being perpetuated are not new but rather redesigned to better fit the new platforms (Barak, 2005). The concept of sexual cyberbullying has been recently expounded upon as a form of harassment via the internet. Individuals use digital technologies (i.e. laptops, smartphones, video recorders, etc.) to harass and abuse other individuals online through explicit threatening messages and images (Ehman & Gross, 2019). The rise of the incel community as a site for the dissemination and perpetuation of ideologies that promote violence against women is particularly important to understanding sexual violence in cyberspace.

Incels and sexual violence

There has been limited research on the incel community and its' use of sexual violence given that they are a relatively recent phenomenon (Ging¸ 2017; Jaki et al., 2018; Mountford, 2018). The research that does exist examines how incels justify sexual violence against women by arguing that their sex, by default, means that women are to be used for sexual intercourse and if they will not provide sex to men, it is a man's right to take it from them (Blommaert, 2017; Mountford, 2018). Bratich and Banet-Weiser (2019) published recent work that made the connection between older misogynistic and sexist groups like Pick-Up Artists and the more recent development of incels. They pointed out that the underlying beliefs they share about women are not at all new but speak to historical patterns of misogyny and sexism. The scholars also attempt to trace how incels'

assertions of sexual rejection then led to their justifiable acts of violence, such as with the case of Elliot Rodger.

Some incels exist within a fantasy paradigm called, "The Red Pill," (Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019; Mountford, 2018; Summit-Gil, 2017; Winter, 2019). This is a concept derived from the 1999 blockbuster, *The Matrix.* In the film the main character, Neo, is faced with a decision to either take the red pill in order to know the truth about the world, or the blue pill to be permitted to live in ignorance (Ging, 2017; Nagle, 2017). Some incels have built their community on this concept. Their red pill is the truth about men in Western society; they are sex-deprived (Jane, 2018), oppressed (Murray, 2017), victimized (Blommaert, 2017), and entitled to their anger (Kimmel, 2013). To take the blue pill within the incel community is to remain ignorant and oblivious to the demise of manhood and traditional masculinity (Rafail & Freitas, 2019). The Red Pill operates as a mutated form of inceldom and specifically targets women and feminists, while mainstream incels lament their lack of sexual experiences and often attempt techniques and methods of approaching women and initiating conversations, albeit mostly unsuccessfully (Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019). Although the Red Pill subset of incels differs slightly in their tactics and methods of misogyny, their core ideology is nevertheless closely aligned. The Red Pill provides incels with a belief system that they can then use as a unifying force against their supposed victimization and oppression (Nichols & Agius, 2018). Incels are demographically young, white men operating on the internet (Mountford, 2018). They exist on a variety of online platforms, spanning a multitude of social networking sites, like Reddit, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, 8chan, and 4chan.

One of the most famous cases of incel violence featured Elliot Rodger, a mass murderer who went on a shooting spree in 2014 in Isla Vista, California. He was a self-identified incel who explicitly blamed women for not having sex with him and attractive men for sleeping with all the women. He used mass violence as a vehicle to act out a form of "retribution" (Blommaert, 2017; Ging, 2017; Murray, 2017; Myketiak, 2016). He was an active member of the incel community on several sites like Incel.me and PUAhate.com. Rodger identified with a sense of victimhood because he felt he was owed sexual intimacy and when he was not able to access it, he turned violent (Bloomaert, 2017; Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019; Murray, 2017). He wrote a manifesto that was published online for all to read. He expressed resentment at his "lonely, depressing life," (Rodger, 2014, p. 108) and blamed "tall, hunky jocks," (Rodger, 2014, p.111) and "evil, slutty bitches" (Rodger, 2014, p. 111). He inevitably called for a "Day of Retribution against all women for rejecting me and starving me of love and sex," (Rodger, 2014, p. 111).

Since his spree, Rodger's words have been widely repeated and spread on the internet. He became an important icon within the incel community. Although there is much dispute within the community regarding the effectiveness of his crimes, most incels can agree that his actions had an important impact on the community. Elliot Rodger has earned a term in his namesake; "going ER" translates to "going Elliot Rodger," meaning to commit acts similar to Rodger's fatal spree (Jaki et al., 2018; Murray, 2017). News broadcasters also published Rodger's manifesto and helped spread his infamy. Research dictates that news media plays a role in perpetuating the violence that was committed, in this case by Elliot Rodger (Dodge, 2016; Fairbairn, 2015). There are important

implications that must not be missed when investigating the effects of such publications. Cyberspace may be the medium in which this occurs, but the digitization of violence is the effect that must not be excluded in further research.

Chapter III

Conceptual Framework

In this study, the incel movement is analyzed through an integrated conceptual framework of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987, 1995), aggrieved entitlement (Kimmel, 2013), and patriarchy (Bettman, 2009; Ford, 2019). These are commonly explored concepts within the fields of sociology and criminology and have been applied to larger studies on violence against women (Battaglia, Edley, & Newsom, 2019; Gotell & Dutton, 2016; Henry & Powell, 2015). These concepts provide a unique lens through which the incel movement is assessed. The following section will provide an overview of the terms: hegemonic masculinity, aggrieved entitlement, and patriarchy. More importantly, I will detail how these concepts come together to construct a frame through which to view and better understand the incel movement. This includes understanding the motivations of incels that lead them to threaten women and advocate for violence against women. I will begin with the concept of hegemonic masculinity.

Hegemonic masculinity

The study of masculinities and particularly hegemonic masculinity emerged in the academic literature in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It has been pioneered by scholars like R.W. Connell (1987), James Messerschmidt (2012), and Michael Kimmel (2013). "Doing gender" is an important concept within masculinity studies and it dictates how men and women perform gender in an effort to uphold traditional male and female gender and sex roles. West and Zimmerman (1987) are credited with their analysis of doing gender and how it relates to men and women performing their gender in terms of gender display. Femininity and masculinity are displayed through cultural idealization of said

gender performances. They become naturalized into everyday life and signify the essentialness of gender (Goffman, 1977). By performing one's femininity or masculinity as dictated by larger societal norms, institutions reify and sustain their power structures based on sex category. West and Zimmerman (1987) stated that if one is unable to do gender appropriately, they will be held accountable by the larger institution. Arguably, it is offered here as it has been elsewhere, that incels are unable to do gender in a way that legitimates their masculinity.

Hegemonic masculinity has been a tenuous subject in the field with many interpretations and distinctions being made about its application to gender (Vito et al., 2018). For example, hegemonic masculinity has been applied to Elliot Rodger's shooting spree in Isla Vista by explaining how his acts of violence performed hegemonic masculinity, since Rodger was not able to perform it in a traditional sense (Vito, Admire, & Hughes, 2018). Antonio Gramsci (1971, p.247) writes on hegemony as a "position of dominance" achieved through collective consensus. This shapes who directly benefits from systems of oppression and who does not, and in some cases dictates patterns of victimization. An important aspect of this concept is a group's ability to claim and reproduce their dominant position within society. Connell (1987) wrote extensively about the influence of masculinities in contexts of power structures that uphold hegemony.

Masculinity is defined as the, "social roles, behaviors, and meanings prescribed for men in any given society at any one time" (Kimmel, 2004, p. 503). Scholars have historically grappled with the application of masculinity to larger understandings of gender and gender relations (Reddy, Sharma, & Jha, 2019). This is primarily because attempts at applying masculinity to gender are often typological and essentialist in their

definition of what a “typical male” looked like and behaved like (Messerschmidt, 2018, p. 14). Hegemonic masculinity has been historically defined as “the pattern of practice that allowed men’s dominance over women to continue” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.832). Alternatively, femininity refers to qualities and characteristics that are essentially attributed to women at a social level (Budgeon, 2014). Femininity has been re-defined through history, particularly by the second-wave feminists at an attempt to reduce inequality as it relates to the devaluation of femininity and feminine qualities in Western society (Budgeon, 2014).

Connell (1995) emphasizes that social structuring of gender practices through institutions like education, government, and family, dictates how hegemonic masculinity is normalized, naturalized, and legitimized through the continued subordination of women. In addition to dominating women, hegemonic masculinity also aims to subordinate other men who do not subscribe to, or possess, dominant characteristics of this form of masculinity, but rather identify with counter-hegemonic masculinities, hybrid and other masculinities (Jewkes, Morrell, Hearn, Lundqvist, Blackbeard, Lindegger, Quayle, Sikweyiya, & Gottzen, 2015). For example, hegemonic masculinity has been theorized by Connell (1987) as being uniquely heterosexual, in that it aims to separate itself from any female or feminine qualities, thus labelling homosexuality as an “other” masculinity. Gay men are then distanced from hegemonic masculinity as a means of constructing and sustaining heterosexual masculinity (Donaldson, 1993; Nichols & Agius, 2018).

These “other” masculinities, such as hybrid and subordinate masculinities are readily applied to the incel movement (Jewkes & Morrell, 2018). Other scholars in their

explorations of the Manosphere reveal that most men within this community are not men who are considered hegemonically masculine and this is the source of their resentment towards society and women. Their inability to be seen as conventionally attractive or intellectual perpetuates a type of self-victimization and feeds into the "White man suffering" trope (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Ging, 2017) that dominates the Manosphere. It was expected that this research will reveal similar narratives and tropes in the incel community that can be understood through the existence of hegemonic masculinity that is perceived to reject other or subordinate forms of masculinities. While feminism criticizes hegemonic masculinity and speaks to its harmful and dangerous implications, it was hypothesized that the incel community, like the Manosphere, may displace their feelings of resentment and anger against the social institutions at play onto the actors they see as being most blame-worthy (i.e. masculine men and women) (Blommaert, 2017; Jaki et al. 2018; Myketiak, 2016).

Quite important to this study, is the recognition that hegemonic masculinity often houses a separate but related masculinity, known as toxic masculinity. This is often what is exhibited within the Manosphere, specifically by incels. Toxic masculinity is guided by an adherence to hyper-sexualized and aggressive behaviors and beliefs that underpin much of the violence that women experience (Ford, 2019; Yarrow, 2018). Toxic masculinity often advocates for participation in hook-up culture (Wade, 2017), adherence to misogynistic and sexist beliefs (Ford, 2019), and defining masculinity by rigid and harmful guidelines (Vito, et al., 2018).

These harmful guidelines are laid out for traditionally masculine men to follow (i.e. restrictive emotionality, anti-femininity, sexual activeness, etc.) (Donaldson, 1993;

Kimmel, Hearn, & Connell, 2005). It is suggested by previous studies that when men inadequately live-up to these pre-determined standards of masculinity, they react in other ways that reaffirm their masculinity that may include acts of sexual aggression (Hunt & Gonsalkorale, 2014; Poland, 2016). Aggression is often associated with manliness and is perceived as a clear, visible sign of masculinity. By being overly aggressive a man can reassert himself as a dominant masculine male (Smith et al., 2015). For example, studies of school shootings examine the impact of hegemonic masculinity on many young men's acts of violence. They conclude that many young men commit violent acts due to an aspect of their masculine identity being challenged in some way (Kalish & Kimmel, 2010; Nichols & Agius, 2018). In a similar vein, by applying hegemonic masculinity to the incel movement it was hypothesized that incels do not feel they can achieve the ideals of hegemonic masculinity through socially prescribed avenues (i.e. gender scripts and norms). As a consequence, they react through the promotion of ideologies that promote aggression and violence. This aggression is further compounded by feelings of being denied something they feel entitled to (in this case access to women's bodies); a feeling of aggrieved entitlement.

Aggrieved entitlement

Additionally, part of the integrated approach used here includes the concept of aggrieved entitlement. A simple definition of the term is as follows: the sense that something one deserved in the first place has been taken away, thus warranting acts of retaliation and/or violence (Kimmel, 2013; Nichols & Agius, 2018). Kimmel (2013) writes in *Angry White Men* about men who feel emasculated by job loss and other financial disadvantages perceived to be the result of immigrants, feminists, and other

historically marginalized groups of people taking over. It is this sense of emasculation and entitlement that fuels feelings of aggrieved entitlement. The political goal is often to retain that which was lost and "take back" what they believe they were entitled to initially. Aggrieved entitlement has been used in an attempt to explain misdirected rage against people of color and sexual minorities (Vito et al., 2018). Within the purview of this paper, aggrieved entitlement will be applied to the incel movement as a tool to illuminate incels' motivations and larger ideological drives.

In an attempt to explain violence against women, particularly within domestic relationships, Kimmel (2013) attributes this violence to a sense of entitlement and rights that men feel they are owed. Violence in cases of retaliation appear to be warranted if men feel their masculinity is being challenged in any way. Through this lens, their actions are restorative and, in a sense, an attempt at the retrieval of their lost masculinity. Aggrieved entitlement also legitimates feelings of victimhood and justifies the violent acts of revenge that aggrieved men then partake in (Vito et al., 2018). It then becomes a method of 'restoring the self' (Kalish & Kimmel, 2010) through violent retaliation as a way of coping with any challenge to one's masculinity or masculine identity.

Elliot Rodger was the first self-identified incel to call for an uprising or a rebellion against women (Blommaert, 2017). This sentiment was then repeated by other incels, like Alek Minassian, who drove his van into downtown Toronto in an attempt to murder as many women as possible (Jaki, et al., 2018; Kassam & Cecco, 2018, p.1). Before his attack, Minassian posted a message on Facebook claiming "The Incel

Rebellion has already begun! We will overthrow all the Chads[5] and Stacys[6]" (Kassam & Cecco, 2018, p.1). Acts of violence against women in these cases serve as reactionary tactics against women's refusal to be sexually available to these men (Murray, 2017). Rodger's words in his manifesto titled "My Twisted World" read as follows, "Women's rejection of me is a declaration of war, and if it's war that they want, then war they shall have" (p.131). This example provides context in which Rodger and Minassian felt justified in their entitlement and rage that then led to their subsequent acts of violence. It was expected that similar narratives will emerge in this study.

Patriarchy

Including patriarchy within the conceptual framework is essential to understanding the larger societal structure in which incels promote and proliferate attitudes of sexual aggression and violence against women. Patriarchy is categorized as a system in which there is male domination and female subordination (Hunnicutt, 2009; Messerschmidt, 2018). This system of power is reinforced by traditional gender roles in which the division of labor between men and women maintains inequality. Patriarchy is also used as an anthropological term that denotes hierarchical social positions within families or societies that again uphold power over women and some men, who do not identify with hegemonic masculinity (i.e. gay, transgender, bisexual men) (Gilligan & Richards, 2009; Nichols & Agius, 2018). This allows for a system of power and control to exist that then promotes larger gender inequalities. Patriarchy privileges the very

[5] A stereotype for an aggressively masculine white man who is often blamed in the incel culture for sleeping with all of the viable female sexual partners (Jaki et al., 2018).
[6] A stereotype for a sexually promiscuous white woman who is not sexually available to incels (Jaki et al., 2018).

systems that sustain it; this includes social institutions like the military, education, and the church (Nichols & Agius, 2018). It reinforces the status quo of power whilst ensuring powerlessness among those who are not privileged (i.e. people of color, low socioeconomic class, sexual minorities) (APIGBV.org, 2019). Operating as a system of power, patriarchy continues to shape and maintain the gender divide, albeit less forcefully now in the last fifty years thanks to the efforts of feminism (Ortner, 2014). Nevertheless, its resilience and prevalence continue to be felt in virtually all aspects of everyday life.

Patriarchy has been used in academic literature as a theoretical tool to help explain intimate partner violence (Dutton, 2010), domestic violence (Katz, 2015), sexual assault (Phipps, 2019), and other gender-based related offenses. By applying it as a theory, patriarchy helps explain how larger structural and hierarchical systems enforce a system in which men dominate and women remain subservient. Patriarchy has historically maintained women's position within the household as the housekeeper and the caregiver to their husbands and their children (Ford, 2019). Since adhering to traditional gender roles (such as motherhood and housekeeping) reinforces patriarchy and its structural inequality, incels find it favorable to advocate for women's continued oppression in order to maintain these antiquated social roles (Bettman, 2009; Garland, Phillips, & Vollum, 2018).

Considering incels' social positioning within a masculine and patriarchal society, it was hypothesized that their outspoken hatred and sexism toward women will operate as forms of retaliation. Their acts of violence can then be interpreted as exercises of patriarchy, further methods of domination over women and acting out larger societal scripts in which men's status is upheld and women are subordinate (Dragiewicz, 2008;

Nichols & Agius, 2018). It was also expected that evidence would emerge of other patriarchal practices other than acts of violence openly permeating the incel movement. These practices include, but are not limited to, trolling women online, stalking on and offline, threat of violence, and using derogatory and sexist language to further alienate women (Maass & Cadinu, 2006; Nichols & Agius, 2018; Otto, 2018; Poland, 2016). Through this lens, women who defy patriarchal standards like staying quiet, submissive, and acquiescent by challenging men's authority should invariably expect consequences. By disrupting the patriarchal order, they are faced with various forms of backlash like misogyny and sexism (Manne, 2016).

The following section will unpack findings gathered from the various incel chat rooms and online forums. The conceptual framework informs the analysis of the data and provides a foundation on which this research was conducted.

Chapter IV

Methods

Qualitative content analysis (QCA) was utilized in this study to assess the findings and ascribe meanings to the text and images gathered from the following websites and chatrooms: Incel.me, Incel.co, Incel.is, Incel.net, sluthate.com, and various sub-Reddits on Reddit.com. Qualitative content analysis is defined as "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns," (Hsiu-Fang & Shannon, 2005, p.1278).

This particular approach was selected for this study as it allows for an in-depth examination of events through a variety of methods (Silverman, 2007). This also allows for "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 2003,1p.45) of the phenomenon of study, situating the knowledge within broader contexts of society in which we live (Haraway 2003). In addition, qualitative data allows for the focus on language and words, and is not limited to numbers (Creswell, 2007, p.201). Specifically, ethnographic content analysis was purposefully selected for this study as it allowed for the identification of a specific online subculture in which digital discourse could be assessed.

Discourse analysis can be defined as a broad spectrum of different types of analyses that includes, but is not limited to, that of interviews, texts, and recorded speech (Silverman, 2005). The benefits of adopting such an approach is that it "emphasizes the way versions of the world, of society, [and] events…are produced in discourse" (Potter 2004, p.202). QCA coupled with discourse analysis allows for an interpretation of this data by identifying implicit messages that would not be readily assessed by a quantitative

approach alone. QCA and discourse analysis was effective in that it provided a much more dense and salient analysis of the present data.

Data

The primary sources for obtaining data about incels were the aforementioned websites. They were located by using the search engine, Google, and searching for the term 'incel forums.' These groups were easily accessible and showed up within major websites as the dominant arenas in which incels coalesced. Qualitative content analysis was applied to 120 separate text posts and 115 images, totaling 235 individual data points. The data was collected over a period of fourteen months. The texts varied in length from ten words to over a thousand words, culminating in paragraphs of text. The images were screenshots of other texts that circulated within the websites, or they were original in their content and were often depicted as memes, or popular pictures that were presented as jokes. These images were collected and numbered and often contained text, and as a result they are referred to as Picture and the number assigned to them in the findings section. The data collected were arranged chronologically and examined for emerging themes.

I was able to frame the emerging themes inductively, with the information coming from the research process itself (Creswell, 2007). More specifically, after observing the data through texts and images, the findings were derived.

Chapter V

Findings and Analysis

As indicated in previous sections, data was collected from several websites and chatrooms, totaling 235 individual data points. Qualitative content analysis was applied to the data and several themes emerged, the most prominent of which are discussed below and further analyzed through the integrated conceptual framework of hegemonic masculinity, aggrieved entitlement, and patriarchy. Each theme will be discussed in turn, but it is important to note that these are not mutually exclusive categories, rather there is significant overlap between themes.

Rape culture

One prominent theme that arose through analysis is the pervasiveness of rape culture within inceldom. The major principles of rape culture are as follow: sexual objectification of women, victim-blaming, trivializing sexual and physical harm, and excusing the perpetrator's behavior (Phillips, 2017; Dodge, 2016). These principles all appear within incel culture in one way or another and speak to the overall sexism and misogyny that pervades the cyberspace in which they appear. Rape culture is ironically contested by incels as "fake news" (Jaki, et al., 2018) and feminist propaganda that aims to discriminate against men, but its prevalence within incel chat rooms and online forums becomes clear within the context of this analysis.

A common element of rape culture that has seeped into mainstream incel discourse is the overt sexual objectification and pornification of women. Women are simultaneously desired and detested within inceldom, creating a particular environment in which explicit sexual objectification is normalized and encouraged. One incel declares,

"the way modern females dress and behave clearly is sexual behavior because it makes them look available, yours for the taking…" (Chat 3, 2019, January). He is associating the way a woman dresses with her sexual availability, regardless of consent, which serves as an example of rape culture in action.

Certain terminology is consistently being utilized by incels to describe women in explicitly misogynistic and sexist ways. For example, "bitch" (Chat 29, 2018, February), Chat 17, 2019, March), "dirty fucking whores," (Chat 24, 2018, November), "sluts," (Chat 24, 2018, November; Chat 25, 2018, November), "stupid little femoid[7]," (Chat 17, 2019, March), "pathetic cunt," (Chat 33, 2019, March), "thots[8]," (Chat 26, 2018, February; Chat 30, 2019, April), "cum dumpsters," (Tolentino, 2018, p.1), "bratty, narcissistic assholes," (Chat 27, 2018, February), and "dumb whore," (Chat 28, 2018, February), were terms that came up at least once but typically on multiple occasions and in multiple posts by several users. This language was encouraged and proliferated by the culture in place within this cyberspace.

Women are repeatedly being represented by incels as sexual beings. They perceived them as "walking holes," (Picture 37, 2019, April) who are not just sexually promiscuous, but responsible for men's sexuality and sexual drives as the designated sexual gatekeepers. An example of this comes from a text post from an incel on a Reddit sub-reddit, r/TheRedPill, "Women use sex and their body as leverage to navigate through life," and another states, "Women are hypergamous [sic]. They monkey branch. Whether they are conscious of it or not, they are constantly looking for a better male (higher status,

[7] A derogatory and objectifying term used to describe women (Chat 17, 2019, March).
[8] That Ho Over There, (Chat 26, February 2018).

richer, better looking, more alpha)" (Chat 15, 2019, March). Further, another incel writes, "Females are trolls who purposely arouse everyone they see" (Chat 34, 2019, January). These statements signify women's sexual insatiability and incels' resentment of that promiscuity. In the incel reality, women are doubly unable to prevent their sexuality from emanating and are also responsible for how that sexuality is perceived by onlookers, particularly men.

An important finding that is associated with this discussion is the rejection of rape and sexual assault as a valid and real act of violence against women. These assertions are often coupled with incels' belief that superior, masculine men, who are referred to within their lexicon as Chads, are always able to find sexual partners by virtue of their male superiority. An example of this is stated in the following message, "Sexual assault is a joke and doesn't really exist imo [sic]. All the Chads get laid by "assaulting" [sic] girls and getting them to sleep with them" (Chat 1, 2019, January). They believe that laws against sexual assault are in place only to prevent incels and beta males to have sex with women, because women would never naturally find incels attractive, thus society is further marginalizing "sub-Chads"[9] (Chat 35, 2019, January) by enforcing legal sanctions that discriminate again them. This is further cemented by the following text, "It's a feminist ploy to give women further unquestionable authority over men and redefine "rape" [sic] as a natural courtship behavior such as holding hands, eye contact, etc." (Chat 10, 2019, April). Essentially, this statement argues that women are using rape as a weapon against incels because they do not want their attention or propositions.

[9] Also known as incel or beta (Chat 35, 2019, January).

Another principle of rape culture, victim-blaming, continues to weave itself through incel discourse. As a way to fight against the tactics of feminism in representing women as victims, incels say women cannot be victims on account of their sexual licentiousness. An incel writes "it was the stupid femoid's fault that she got raped by her boyfriend," (Chat 39, 2018, January) as a way to push back on the lived reality of rape culture and to further demonize women. A popular discursive strategy within the Manosphere is to responsibilize women for their own victimization and to further distance the perpetrators from accountability. One incel writes, "…you [other incels] actually think rape is horrible and think women should make better choices in order to prevent getting raped" (Image 96, 2019, February). Another post explains that, "A woman sexualizing herself and showing her boobs also causes mental trauma to minds, especially incel minds who can't get any. Therefore women sexualizing themselves is wrong, for the same reason rape is wrong" (Chat 36, 2019, January). He then proceeds to explain how "nobody cares about male suffering." This tactic of reversing and shifting blame to depict incels not only as victims but somehow distant and separate from those who harass and abuse women, is effective in that it draws an arbitrary line between the "nice guys,"[10] and the Chads. A screenshot taken from one of the online incel groups depicts several of the findings discussed above.

[10] Common and popular description of incels by incels; these are men who treat women kindly and respectfully as a way to prove themselves worthy enough to have sex with (Chat 12, 2019, February; Chat 7, 2019, March).

Source(s): Image 1, 2019, March. Incel.co.

Rape jokes are also pervasive within inceldom; they are typically implemented to trivialize the occurrence of rape and sexual assault, while also serving as a distancing tactic. The following two screenshots provide examples of this practice (Pictures 2 and 3).

Source(s): Image 2, 2019, April. Reddit.com.

Source(s): Image 3, 2019, April. Incel.co.

Relatedly, an insidious finding that has found its way through dozens of data is that of pro-attitudes toward incest and pedophilia. While not a common or popular pattern within incel ideology, it has come up enough times to be considered relevant to this study. Some incels defend pedophilia and incest on the grounds that vulnerable, immature young girls could be the only females with whom they would be able to have sex (Chat 16, 2019, March). Adult, sexually adept women who reject incels do so because they are too picky, shallow, and irrational to find incels sexually attractive. Prepubescent girls, on the other hand, can be coerced into subservience and acquiescence. This is particularly important to note within the context of patriarchy and how pedophilia is being justified as a tool of patriarchy (Dragiewicz, 2008). One incel explains “The union of older man and younger woman is a very natural one, one that has endured for most of human history before our culture became the poison it is today” (Chat 37, 2018, November). In the following example, one incel finds historical justification for pedophilia.

14-15 year old teenage white girls should have sex with me because if your ancestors hadn't come to America, I'd be living with a cute Native American girl right now. That's why young white foids[11] should correct their ancestor's mistake by fucking me. I don't want old fat roasties[12] either. I want 14-year old JBs[13]. This is what I demand as my compensation. (Picture 2, 2019, April).

Source(s): Image 4, 2019, April. Incel.co.

Another common justification for pedophilia within inceldom is the growing sexual unattractiveness of adult women. Some incels believe women over thirty can no longer be viable sexual partners due to them having an extensive sexual history, and therefore, no longer being sexually desirable. These kinds of women are often described as "roasties" within these online groups. For example, "What's wrong with being

[11] Objectifying terminology to describe women; same as femoid (Picture 2, 2019, April).
[12] The likening of a woman's vagina to roast beef because of her apparent sexual promiscuity (Picture 2, 2019, April).
[13] Jail bait (Picture 2, 2019, April).

attracted to a prime teen? Much more natural to be attracted to a young, tight 15 year old than a used up, expired 30 year old hag" (Picture 113, 2019, April). On the other hand, young girls who are virgins are referred to as "tendies," as in tender, and not yet spoiled by having sex with men, (Picture 59, 2019, April).

A popularly visited forum on *Incel.me* asked the following question, "So how do some families get away with father-daughter incest, anyway?" (Picture 9, 2019, April). Several responses followed with one replying, "If the daughter is trained well she will never snitch on her father, she can't have a baby until she's around 13 so the father will have a few years to train her." A sexual relationship between a biological father and daughter is not only normalized but desired by some incels and men within the Manosphere. The sexualization of young girls is not a new phenomenon given the use of prepubescent girls in popular media. From pornography, to fashion, to advertisements young girls' bodies have long been objectified, and sexualized in everyday life (Caputi, 2014; Ford, 2019). What is new however, is the blatant nature of it.

Violence against women

Attitudes of pro-violence and aggression against women were present throughout inceldom, but it was particularly poignant as it related to tactics for retaliation or expressions of masculinity and patriarchal power. A common strategy employed by incels was the use of violent rhetoric that either explicitly advocates for violence against women or reinforces misogynistic and sexist messages about women. These messages are often built on stereotypes of women within heteronormative frameworks, such as condemning the way feminism has given women certain freedoms that no longer keep them dependent and reliant on men.

A particular post online featured a graphic depiction of a rape, "I wish I could fuck her through the whole night and then hold her blood stained sheets of her taken virginity for the whole world to see" (Picture 7, 2019, April). One of the responses to this statement said, "We need to change that 'I wish I could,' to an 'I will.'" Another example of this violent language is seen in the following, "They FUCKING NEED IT. Rape, anal, etc. Physical abuse slapped around talk dirty etc [sic]. They don't know why they love it but they do. They will constantly want you if you treat them like piss and fuck them like an animal" (Chat 14, 2018, June). This example not only reifies the harmful implications from using such violent language, like depicting women as objects and degrading the lines of consent while justifying rape and sexual assault, but also the presence of an encouraging comradery among incels who are quick to back each other up to show solidarity.

Another example of this proposed comradery is seen in a forum on *Incel.co* that asked fellow incels:

> Why don't men act together to gangbang pretty girls? Why don't all the men collectively agree to have sex with this girl right then and there? I'm dying to just fuck her on the spot, and I'm guessing the rest of the men are too, and yet we don't act together to make it happen (Picture 39, 2019, March).

Another post expressed misogynistic and violent sentiments by stating:

> Well, wouldn't raping her also be a recognition of her weakness? Yet cucks[14] will hold a door for her, without raping her later. That would be like if you fed your

[14] Cuck comes from the word cuckold, which means to be a husband of an adulterous wife; a weak-minded and weak-willed man (Ging, 2017).

> dog and then didn't expect him to fetch a newspaper for you, or discipline him for taking a shit on the floor. Animals need to be kept under control or they run amok and fail to perform their functions of service to humanity (Picture 12, 2019, April).

The implication here is that women's worth ends with their sexual services and must be kept in check by way of physical and mental intimidation and abuse.

The comparison of women to animals is another popular trope in which women are stripped of their humanity and effectively objectified in order to continue their subordination. One post by an incel suggests treating women like livestock (Chat 23, 2019, March) as livestock can be managed and controlled. This particular post ends with the incel writing "It is in the nature of all femoids to want to be violently taken." Not only is this comparison to animals a harmful tactic of rejecting women's humanity, but it effectively excuses men's use of violence against women.

Another finding that was uncovered is incels' willingness to share their stories of sexual assault, as depicted in the following example:

> After the bar closed I got frustrated and horny and decided to stalk her to a lonely setting where I attacked her and groped her and tried to rape her. I felt a sensation I have never felt a feeling of power and confidence and control. I didn't feel any regret or remorse afterwards. I kinda laughed it off. It is no big deal to me at all and I would do it again (Chat 32, 2019, February).

A descriptive and graphic post was titled, "frightening girls," and stated:

> I once approached a teenage girl (around 14 years old) by asking her for directions first. Then I proceeded to ask for her name. She became afraid and

> started walking away. I followed her…her gait was peculiar, because she ran like a newborn fawn. She had no reason to be frightened. I wasn't gonna do anything. But the feeling when you follow a girl and she notices you, and she tries to lose you and pick up her pace. That is kind of a good feeling. You become important to her. I recommend you lonely incels try it some time. Just to make her afraid. It should be harmless psychological fun (Picture 20, 2019, January).

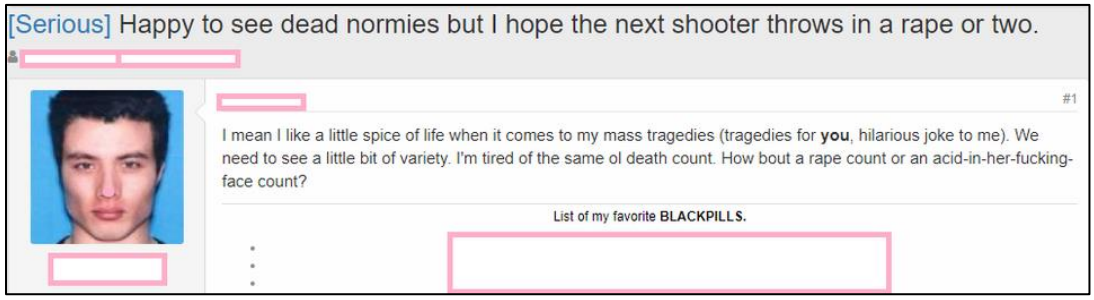
This so-called "harmless psychological fun," has dangerous implications for women's sense of safety. Psychological intimidation is a legitimate strategy of abuse and has been linked to further violence and abuse against women. For example, it has been historically practiced by abusers in contexts such as domestic violence. The author of this post made sure to indicate that he "abhorred rape," and knew his limits, therefore stalking young girls was indeed harmless. For the purposes of this study, this particular text indicates the spectrum in which violence is advocated. It is argued here that violence is not limited to physical and sexual acts of abuse, but includes emotional, psychological, and mental intimidation and threat of violence.

Explicit calls for action are also present within incel discourse. Especially after Elliot Rodger went on a shooting spree in 2014, other men felt emboldened enough to follow in his footsteps. Elliot Rodger is sometimes referenced to as "St. Elliot," (Picture 1, 2019, April) and called a visionary for going on a rampage. One incel writes, "If we all go ER at once we'd accomplish so much more" (Picture 18, 2019, April). This same post includes a directive to fellow incels, "If you see a drunk girl passed out and no one's around make sure to cut off her clitoris if you're able." Along this post was an attached

image of female genitalia and a shoddy 'how to' manual. Another popular post circulated on several online forums shortly after Rodger's act of violence.

> You can't hate Elliot Rodger and claim to be an incel. Elliot Rodger is the saint of the Incel brotherhood and his manifesto is our bible. To hate him and claim to be one of us (Incels) is an act of disbelief and should be punished seriously. Yes he took innocent lives but nothing comes without sacrifice. Elliot envisioned a bettER [sic] world in which incels would be treated like actual human beings and not socially ostracized, bullied, alienated and disconnected. His messages will influence the future beta uprising (Picture 115, 2019, April).

Further, an incel references Alek Minassian's act in Toronto by saying, "Why aren't you ramming a van into a crowd of normies[15]? My excuse is that I don't have a license" (Picture 19, 2019, April). Further, an incel continues this thread by writing, "We need more people willing to sacrifice themselves for the cause" (Chat 37, 2018, November). The following image includes a picture of Elliot Rodger alongside a glorification of his actions and a call for future acts of violence against women.



Source(s): Image 5, 2019, April. Incel.co.

[15] Normies are 'normal people,' those who are not part of inceldom or the Manosphere. (Chat 37, 2018, November; Picture 16, 2019, April).

These sentiments, in direct reference to prominent incels within the community, represent those who took it a step further than the use of violent and misogynistic language online. An additional example of this sort of call to action discourse can be seen in the following quote:

> Isn't it weird that we're made fun of for not being able to get sex, while also being told that it's easy to get sex? I just thought of this because I saw a post from some old-slut-troll. She was talking about her Tinder experiences, making fun of guys for being "thirsty," But I remember I once made a thread asking if committing rape was permissible/understandable if one was not able to find a willing sexual partner. Her reply was that anyone can get sex, so this hypothetical situation could not exist (Chat 4, 2019, April).

In addition to an abundance of rape threats, incels invoke the threat of harm and death toward women. One incel asked, "When will there be a female genocide?" (Chat 18, 2019, March). As a response to a young woman committing suicide after the Parkland shooting in 2018 (Capatides, 2019, p.1), an incel wrote, "I could give 2 fucks about some wh*re killing herself, in fact, the very thought of the wh*re hanging herself or whatever makes my cock extremely hard" (Chat 48, 2019, March). Even in death, women are the subjects of ridicule and graphic condemnation.

In reference to women being murdered in Morocco, an incel wrote, "one dumb blond [sic] got her fool head slowly sawed off with a dull knife, while she squealed and gurgled" (Chat 19, 2019, April). Further, "just make that chick disappear," (Chat 20, 2019, April), suggests yet again the impending violence that women can and do experience. Another incel uses feminism to justify physical retaliation against women

who hit men in the following quote, “Don’t ever let a woman hit you and take it. ALWAYS hit back. They hit you first, you mollywhop the fuck out of them. You have an inherent right to self-defense. Always hit back” (Chat 21, 2019, April). Another user replies, “Feminists, this is the world you created. Enjoy, bitches” (Chat 22, 2019, April). The following quote quite clearly sums up the previous points made above:

> Our whole civilization is built on the threat of violence. It’s one of our base hardwired instincts. Pain is to be avoided, therefore don’t do things that cause you pain. Unfortunately the threat of violence has been almost wholly removed from normal social interactions, by the gynocentric societies/institutions. Hence all the shitty behavior you see from kids and adults. Laws mean nothing without the threat of violence. Personal responsibility means nothing without the threat of repercussions (sudo violence) [sic] (Chat 31, 2019, April).

These examples, when viewed through the lens of patriarchy, illuminate the way incels fully adhere to this ideology by advocating for the subordination of women through the threat and use of violence. These tactics are promoted by incels as a means of ensuring women know their place in society and if they challenge any patriarchal hierarchies, incels have the right to promote violence as a natural recourse against women. Women’s place in society, as advocated by incels and other men within the Manosphere, is within a subservient role that exclusively limits women to being caregivers and sexual objects for men’s use. They are expected both to have maternal instincts and be sexually available to men. This sexual entitlement is a pervasive theme within inceldom and will be explored in greater depth.

Sexual entitlement

An additional finding that has emerged through the data analysis is the presence of sexual entitlement. Although incels often express immense self-loathing and self-deprecation, they still buy into the antiquated beliefs about women's social positioning, in that they exist to serve men and they must be sexually available to any man at any time. One incel puts it bluntly, "Men are entitled to sex" (Chat 38, 2019, April). This sentiment is often preceded by an adherence to traditional heteronormative scripts like telling women to "let your husband do his work" (Chat 40, 2019, February) and "behave modestly" (Chat 40, 2019, February).

Aggrieved entitlement furthers our understanding of the incel movement because an important ideology within inceldom is the desire to go back in time to when women were more domestic, submissive, prescribed to typical heteronormative gender roles (i.e. homemakers and caregivers to their husbands and children), and generally accepted the social norms that kept them at home and out of the work force (Nichols & Agius, 2018). Considering that violent behavior is a prominent outlet for some men who feel particularly entitled to some social privileges, like being taken care of by a wife in a domestic setting, certain social changes are seemingly threatening to these privileges (Vito et al., 2018). Most incels believe that feminism is the reason that men have become emasculated and oppressed, thus violent rhetoric and behavior becomes an outlet of that aggrieved entitlement.

In addition, incels also favor social changes that would revoke the 19th Amendment and remove women's political power and autonomy, thus reinforcing women's dependence on men's approval, permission, and authority (Jaki et al., 2018).

This is often justified by misinformed beliefs that women "don't even like having equal rights," (Chat 43, 2019, January) and "women don't value liberty" (Chat 44, 2019, January). In these instances, incels are taking their individual aggrieved entitlement and aggrandizing it to the societal level while ironically attributing their micro level harms to an imaginary equality that women have supposedly achieved through the advancement of their rights. There is no recognition that despite the legal advancement of women's rights, women still are subjected to pervasive and institutionalized inequalities in virtually every aspect of their lives. Therefore, the aggrieved entitlement touted by these incels is based on an inherent ignorance to the reality of the social world in which they live.

Other radical sentiments include labeling women as physical and literal property of men, firstly owned by their fathers and then their husbands when they are inevitably married off. These attitudes evidence the pervasiveness of patriarchal ideology within inceldom, and their dependence on gendered and misogynistic sentiments to uphold further inequality (Nichols & Agius, 2018). There have also been connections made between religion, such as Christianity, and violence against women as a method of upholding traditional patriarchal positions (Rakoczy, 2004). Particularly, contested topics surrounding women's reproductive rights within the realm of conservative religious fundamentalism is often expressed as a technique of further oppression of women's rights and autonomy and promotion of patriarchal ideals and values (Calvi, Rankin, Clauss, & Byrd-Craven, 2020).

Sexual entitlement serves as another method of control over women's autonomy and sexuality by aiming to prevent women from being monogamous (despite the berating that women receive from incels for any perceived sexual promiscuity). It is common for

incels to call women “whores” (Chat 24, 2018, November) and “sluts” (Chat 24, 2018, November) for being in a relationship with a man, especially if that man is perceived to be a Chad or an alpha male. Women are whores and sluts only if they are not in a sexual relationship with incels, thus there is a fine line that women tread. One post supports this claim by stating the following, “I just feel a lot less attracted when a female has a long-term partner. Why would she go for that, but for preventing other men from having sex with her?” (Chat 42, 2019, February). Another man writes, “Less men getting sex = more incels and more justified hatred towards women,” (Chat 9, 2019, April). Women abstaining from having sex with certain men is a justifiable reason, for this incel, to hate women.

Male victimization and oppression

An important premise of incel ideology is their supposed victim-status and oppression. This was often displayed as self-loathing and self-deprecation, which was frequently shrouded within feelings of aggrieved entitlement (Kimmel, 2013). Incels internalize feelings of low self-esteem and rejection, which then has the potential to produce negative associations to women, relationships, and sexual intimacy. Some incels then turn this into feelings of rage and the need to retaliate against women. Their perceived victim-status is also the result of feeling displaced by other superior men (i.e. Chads) and being virtually ignored by most women. The emergence of feminism within mainstream media and popular culture is also a source of resentment for incels.

The persona of the “nice guy,” (Chat 12, 2019, February) is a particularly salient concept within inceldom. Incels often describe themselves as nice guys because they believe they are generally truly nice guys who would never hurt or abuse a woman and

would treat her well, thus women should find them sexually attractive and be sexually available to them. The nice guy persona is merely another tactic of distancing themselves from the abuse and violence that women experience in their everyday lives. By claiming the nice guy persona, incels can then insulate themselves from the very harms they advocate for. This is more readily expressed within the following statement:

> No matter what you do for women, they will fuck you over in some way. Being a nice guy doesn't get you anywhere anymore with women. You could treat her like an absolute princess and she would go fuck some chad all while saying, "where's all the good men" or "why do I only attract fuckboys[16]". It's a losing battle gentlemen (Chat 12, 2019, February).

Another incel expresses this sentiment by stating "If a boy is brave enough to ask [a woman out], the least a foid[17] could do is accept. It's just cruel to reject a guy on looks alone, to not give him a chance" (Chat 5, 2019, February). Further, "they [women] routinely reject legitimately decent nice guys because they aren't at least 8/10." And women, "don't care about us lonely men," (Chat 49, 2019, March). Another incel laments "Incels live with constant rejection and loneliness because they aren't good looking, but see normies get a girlfriend and have a good social life. This is constant PTSD. There is no pain greater than the pain of loneliness" (Chat 2, 2019, March; Chat 6, 2019, March). Clearly for incels, their existence as lonely, single men creates a lot of strain and tension in their social lives. This inability to find girlfriends or women to have sex with produces

[16] A sexually promiscuous man who is only interested in quick, impersonal sexual encounters or hookups (Chat 12, 2019, February).
[17] Objectifying term describing women

feelings of resentment and rage that have the potential to result in acts of violence, as discussed in previous sections.

Self-deprecation and self-loathing are popularly utilized tactics by incels to present themselves as victims. An example of this is in the following quote, “But I just assume she would have treated me like shit just like all the other girls do” (Chat 47, 2019, March). Another example by an incel states “She was indifferent to my existence because I’m too ugly” (Chat 41, 2019, March). Further, they use common words to describe themselves including, but not limited to, “pathetic loser” (Chat 17, March 2019), “ugly human being,” (Chat 41, 2019, March) “sub-human savages,” (Chat 8, 2019, March) and “limp-dicked beta” (Chat 13, 2019, March). This sort of language often transitioned into targeted misogyny and sexism against women that again reinforced male victimization and oppression.

A telling example of this is seen in the following quote, “In my personal experience every single modern woman I tried to date has been PURE EVIL. They just use me like some kind of object” (Chat 41, 2019, March). There is often a progression from indignation and self-deprecation to violent rage and misogyny, especially as their efforts to find sexual partners or experiences remain unreciprocated. This “no-sex-as-oppression” (Ford, 2019, p.196) trope is so salient, it permeates much of incel ideology. Women’s sexual rejection of incels often leads to a masculinity crisis, which is discussed in greater detail in the following section.

Masculinity crises

Finally, as has been mentioned above, but will be explored in greater depth here, incels suffer from a masculinity crisis that is socially paralyzing and effectively

alienating. This masculinity crisis has two main sources: the inability to perform hegemonic masculinity and being unable to find consenting and willing sexual relationships with women. This invariably distances incels from everyone else, the "normies," and results in pent up rage and resentment. I will show how incels navigate this convoluted and complex masculinity terrain and how this often stems from their inability to do gender in the right way, or in a way that is socially legitimate.

In exploring the first part of this analysis, as mentioned, incels do not subscribe to hegemonic masculinity as envisioned through their self-identified labels of "beta." A beta is subordinate to the alpha; the alpha is a man who is hegemonically masculine (Ging, 2017). Incels do not subscribe to these identities because they have internalized their self-victimization in an attempt to further isolate themselves from traditional masculinity. They believe they are intellectually inferior to alphas, as well as physically and sexually unattractive to women (Ging, 2017). These negative images self-perpetuate an ideology of a "suffering man," who has been victimized by society, specifically by men and women who are performing gender in hegemonic ways (Hearn, 2012; Messerschmidt, 2012). The following quotes reinforce this idea, "Chad gets everything. Sub-Chad is supposed to silently provide for the leftovers Chad throws away and never voice his needs" (Chat 45, 2019, April). And further, "incels usually agree that male sexuality is about having encounters with as many women as possible, while female sexuality is focused on mating with Chad" (Chat 35, 2019, January). Alpha men are also argued by incels to subscribe to the concept of "pump and dump," (Chat 41, 2019, March) which is to have sex with women in an efficient and impersonal way and then move on to another sexual encounter.

Incels buy into the larger gendered social order in which men are encouraged to be sexually promiscuous, as evidenced in the following quote, "Alfalfa[18] men naturally want to pound many women, they are driven to pollinate as far and wide as possible, luckily for them, they have the power to act on this urge" (Chat 46, 2019, February). Relatedly, incels realize there is disconnect between Chads and themselves. "Beta boys also wanna [sic] pound loads of peaches, but have less power to act on this urge, nudging them into the provider camp to pick up the scraps" (Chat 46, 2019, February). Incels constantly make comparisons between themselves and alpha males, who are a source of both awe and resentment; incels want to be them, but their inability to achieve this goal fosters bitterness and rage. This is exhibited in the following examples of incels internalizing self-victimization and resenting alpha males:

> …it was just watching other people have fun and live a good life that I'm not allowed to have. I started to feel hatred and rage in every fiber of my body. Realizing it would never be me, got so sick and tired of the deep sense of despair (Chat 47, 2019, March).

In a related text, an incel self-victimizes by stating, "any male who is born a nerd will be denied pussy and bullied by rapists. Then feminists will have sex with chad Gorilla rapists and deny the nerd sex because Females do not care about civilization at all," (Chat 11, 2019, April). As seen here, it is common for incels to blame their misfortune and inadequacy on unredeemable and irreversible genetic and biological traits. Incels believe they were born with those qualities that society deems deficient, which happen to not coincide with hegemonic masculinity.

[18] Alfalfa is another word for alpha men; Chad (Chat 46, 2019, February).

Relatedly, an incel writes, “Just like a regression of evolution when nice guys, high IQ guys, aspergers guys, empathic guys, nerd guys always finish last, and chad jock gorillas always have sex 500 times” (Chat 8, 2019, March). This reference to alpha men as “gorillas” serves a specific purpose in that it depicts these men’s sexual drives as animalistic, unhinged, and predatory. Incels argue that women overlook these objectively negative qualities in a sexual partner because Chads and alpha men happen to be sexually and physically attractive, while incels possess a set of qualities (i.e. nice, high IQ, empathic) that set them apart and resent that women disregard them for these seemingly superficial reasons.

Their masculinity crisis also stems from women’s rejection of incels’ propositions. Considering that an important masculine quality is sexual prowess (Vito, et al., 2018), incels’ inability to measure up to this threshold of masculinity often results in looking for alternative methods of doing gender.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

Involuntary celibates are an understudied population and this research has attempted to rectify this void in the literature and make a novel contribution to the expansive literature on violence against women. The goal of this study was to examine incels' varying attitudes of violence and aggression toward women. This was achieved through implementing the qualitative approach of content analysis examining text posts and images gathered on dozens of incel websites. The data were then analyzed inductively, and themes were then extrapolated. Five major themes emerged throughout the data: the presence of rape culture, pro-attitudes of violence against women, sexual entitlement, male victimization and oppression, and masculinity crises. These themes were assessed through an integrated conceptual framework of hegemonic masculinity, aggrieved entitlement, and patriarchy. These concepts provided the lens through which incel discourse online was examined and analyzed.

Arguably, one of the most notable and pervasive themes that emerged was the presence of rape culture within inceldom. Elements of rape culture such as sexual objectification of women, excusing perpetrator behavior, and the trivialization of the harm of sexual assault and abuse continuously and consistently appeared in the data. Incels used derogatory and explicit language in reference to women and female sexuality. They held women responsible for men's sexual drives while simultaneously rejecting and slut-shaming female sexuality. Incels also expressed skepticism toward the very real occurrence of rape and abuse that women experience; this usually stemmed from incels'

hatred and resentment of women, often depicting women as liars and unreliable, thus rape was not considered a real criminal or offensive act.

These beliefs about women often transitioned into direct and explicit misogyny and sexism as seen through their adherence to pro-violence attitudes. Incels often boldly advocated for violence against women. Justifications for violence against women often included its use as tools of retaliation, punishment, and just because. Just because women do not choose incels as sexual partners, they are depicted as deserving of any violence done to them as evidenced by misogynistic and aggressive language on incel chatrooms. Women who reject incels are also perceived as being deserving of this violence. Incels utilize the threat of violence, such as rape and death threats, to further alienate women from mainstream society as well as within cyberspace. These tactics also have a secondary goal in that they assist incels in expressing masculinity in a way that coincides with hegemonic and dominant masculinity. Incels' pro-attitudes of violence against women illuminates the belief system that incels advocate and help inform larger understandings of violence against women, particularly within the digital space.

An additional finding that emerged was a sense of sexual entitlement that permeated incel chatrooms. Not only did incels express sexist beliefs about women's own sexuality (in that it is insatiable and exclusionary), but that women owe men access to their bodies. This contradicting viewpoint often stemmed from a feeling of sexual entitlement. When denied this privilege, incels often expressed feelings of victimization and oppression. Their single and lonely status within society was frequently attributed to women's rejection of incels based solely on incels' seeming unattractiveness. These

feelings of male victimization underpinned much of the misogynistic and sexist language that was pervasive on incel chatrooms.

Finally, incels' adherence to a beta masculinity was evidenced through their usage of self-deprecating and self-loathing terminology that situated them within victimhood. Considering their inability to be perceived as hegemonically masculine men, incels did not perform gender in a way that was normalized and legitimized in mainstream society. This arguably resulted in a masculinity crisis that encouraged incels to perform masculinity in overly violent and aggressive ways, particularly within cyberspace. Their adherence to a beta masculinity was evident in their self-assigned labels of "betas" and "sub-Chads," which invariably positioned them as inferior to alpha males and therefore, unable to perform hegemonic masculinity.

Involuntary celibates are providing a new academic arena in which violence against women can be further explored. Incels are unique in that they coalesce in online spaces and provide a unified and networked front in attacking women with vitriol. Their sexist and misogynistic messages about women are not new, however, they further knowledge regarding the various and numerous abusive experiences that women undergo on a daily basis both on and off screen.

Limitations

This study has produced limitations that will be addressed here. As with many exclusive and secretive online subcultures, much of their activity proves difficult to track. I discovered in my research the elusiveness of incel chat rooms, and their inability to remain accessible and permanent. For example, one of the largest incel chatrooms was within a sub-reddit on Reddit.com called r/Incels, which housed over 40,000 members. This sub-reddit was banned shortly after Elliot Rodger murdered men and women in Isla Vista. Other online chatrooms that I accessed and observed (i.e., Incel.net, incel.is, and incel.me) were shut down and became inaccessible shortly after I started my research. This was often due to outsiders and third parties reporting the content of said websites and chatrooms as much of it was perceived to be of a threatening and problematic nature.

In addition, the intricacies of the incel subculture proved complex and varied, which affected the trajectory of my research. Incels themselves argued about incel ideology and terminology, such as the use of beta to describe themselves; some embraced it, while others resisted the label. The lexicon within the subculture should be explored in greater detail, as well as the cultural and social hierarchy, as it would identify a structure that the group adheres to. I differentiate in my research between what I term, mainstream incels, and those who subscribe to the Red Pill paradigm. There are important differences that I did not develop in my research, as the focus was on incel ideology as a whole. Future research would benefit in developing these avenues within inceldom and differentiating between ideologies, as they could provide insights into the subculture from multiple vantage points.

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