When patriarchy fails its own promises: A qualitative analysis in the normalization of violence against women in Incel communities

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Abstract

This thesis investigates how violence against women is discursively normalized within the online Incel community, a subculture within the broader online "manosphere", known for their lack of romantic experiences. Drawing on Michel Foucault's theory of discourse, power/knowledge, and normalization, this study conducted a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of 60 posts from the forum Incel.is. The analysis identifies three dominant and interrelated discursive strategies: (1) Dehumanization of women, (2) Sexual entitlement and misogynistic resentment, and (3) Victimhood and anti-feminist backlash. These strategies function to justify violence by framing women as subhuman, sexually withholding, and hypergamous. Simultaneously, Incels are portrayed as biologically disadvantaged and socially excluded victims of a misandrist society. The study reveals how Incel discourse forms a coherent regime of truth in which gendered violence is framed as logical, justified, and even cathartic. Through rhetorical devices, such as metaphor, meme language, and humor, misogynistic discourse is rendered banal and thinkable. This discursive environment not only encourages symbolic violence but also desensitizes users to physical harm and radicalization. The findings contribute to the growing scholarship on digital misogyny by demonstrating how online spaces foster the radicalization of patriarchal grievance through linguistic repetition, identity formation, and a sense of belonging. The thesis concludes by assessing the broader societal implications for gender equality, digital platform governance, and the reproduction of structural violence in online fringe subcultures.

Keywords: incels, normalisation, discourse, violence, patriarchy

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Chapter 1: Introduction

A subculture that has been steadily growing in popularity is called the Involuntary Celibate (Incel) community. This subculture is defined by its male audience, who are mainly young men coming together due to their lack of romantic interactions with the opposite sex. They feel rejected due to their looks, height, or race (Sparks et al., 2022, p. 732). This rejection manifests itself into anger and resentment towards themselves, society and specifically, women. Incels became known in mainstream media through mass murderers who were self-proclaimed Incels, such as George Alfred Sodini, responsible for the 2009 Collier Township shooting and Elliot Rodger, responsible for the Isla Vista killings in 2014 (Baele et al., 2019, p. 1667).

However, the Incel community does not exist by itself. It is part of a larger network of online male communities collectively known as the "manosphere". The Manosphere has evolved into an interesting conglomerate of smaller subcultures, such as Pick Up Artists (PUAs), Men's Rights Activists (MRAs), Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW), and Involuntary Celibates (Incels) (Ribeiro et al., 2021, p. 196). In these forums, predominantly men have come together to form a community where they can express their personal frustrations related to "men's issues". These issues often revolve around dating, relationships and the perceived systemic discrimination that men face.

To understand the manosphere's ideological foundations, a brief overview of its historical roots will be illustrated. The Manosphere traces back to the Men's Liberation Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which criticized traditional male gender roles. According to Coston and Kimmel (2013), while women were confined to the house, men were exiled from it and only added value through their monetary contributions (p. 369). The Men's Liberation Movement initially took inspiration from the Women's Liberation Movement. However, Men's advocates soon distanced themselves from the movement once women started critiquing the gender roles imposed on men, specifically by linking masculinity to issues, such as rape, sexual harassment, and domestic violence (Coston & Kimmel, 2013, p. 370).

discrimination of men's issues such as custody laws, divorce, and military enlistment. Men's Rights Activists saw this development as the "worst of both worlds" and heavily relied on anger to further drive their movement (Ribeiro et al., 2021, p. 197).

By the 1980s, the Men's Liberation Movement made it clear that men were also unhappy with the "male sex role", be it due to superficial friendships, shallow relationships with their partners or strained relationships with their children (Coston & Kimmel, 2013, p. 370). In response to this male discontent, various groups of men have been founded, which have separated into different men's movements, such as Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW), Men's Rights Activists (MRA), and Pick-up Artists (PUA). These male communities share overlapping ideologies but differ in their methods and degrees of radicalization. According to Ribeiro et al.'s (2020, p. 2) taxonomy, Men's

Rights Activist (MRA) position themselves as advocates for men's legal and institutional rights, centering on areas such as family courts, fatherhood and circumcision, along with major institutions, like schools, the military, and healthcare, which they believe inherently discriminate against men. According to Goldwag (2025, paragraph 5), while MRAs may have valid and sometimes unsettling complaints about men's treatment, the misogynistic tone often prevails. Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW) takes this one step further by encouraging men to withdraw from women, feminism, and romantic relationships fully, and thus "are going their own way" (Lin, 2017, p. 78).

In contrast, Pick Up Artists (PUA), a core subculture dating back to the early 1970s, encouraged the manipulation of women by utilizing shared techniques and scripts, which they call "game". "Game" typically, if not always, entails objectifying women and promoting harassment techniques, such as "negging", where cutting remarks are used to throw off women's confidence. PUAs demonstrate an aggressive entitlement over female bodies.

Finally, Involuntary Celibates (Incels) represent the most fatalistic and potentially violent segment of the manosphere. Unlike MRAs, MGTOWs, and PUAs, they do not claim explicit superiority over women but harbour feelings of rage and resentment towards themselves and women for being unfairly rejected from sexual and romantic access.

Although these groups within the manosphere differentiate in their discourse constructing women and masculinity, Incels have become popular in both academic and media discourses for their explicit support of violence to perceived gender injustice. Thus, this raises a pressing research question: "How is violence against women normalized in the Incel subculture?"

Consequently, digital media's emergence has accelerated the reach and influence of the manosphere. These shared anti-feminist ideas have expanded significantly, particularly with the development of the Internet, which has facilitated the dissemination of ideas and new spaces for expression.

In online spaces, the manosphere can be found on websites, discussion boards, blogs, and subreddits, which are characterized by a rejection of feminism, the belief that society is biased against men and not women, and a nostalgic reclaiming of patriarchal power. Overtly misogynistic statements and anti-feminist declarations accompany these online spaces. Ging (2017) argues that the internet's ease of information dissemination has opened the door for increasingly more extreme anti-feminist views, misogyny and violent rhetoric (p. 7). These online environments have created a space for harmful discourses and offer support to men who feel neglected and perceive a lack of fulfilled patriarchal promises.

Within the broader digital ecosystem of the manosphere, the Incel community stands out for its extremism and its anti-feminist rhetoric. Members of the Incel subculture feel personal distress over the lack of romantic attention from the opposite gender and, thus, aim to find meaning in their

alienation from the dating culture by participating in online communities. Hart and Huber (2023) report that Incels depict themselves as a wronged group, arguing that women only focus on superficial characteristics, such as physical appearance, height and financial attributes (p. 3). Incels view their celibacy as involuntary, blaming biological disadvantage and systemic injustice. In this worldview, society is ruled by women and a handful of attractive, wealthy men while Incels suffer and are relegated to a "subhuman" (Hart & Huber, 2023, p. 3). Members of the Incel community mainly communicate online, where they heavily thematize and discuss physical attractiveness, sexual and romantic struggles, and misogynistic and anti-feminist rhetoric (Stijelja & Mishara, 2023, p. 13).

Despite the rise of interest in Incel culture, data collection is often challenging as Incels are perceived as a high-risk and hard-to-reach group (Costello et al., 2022, p. 382). From a psychological perspective, some studies have explored self-esteem, depression, and anxiety among those lacking romantic connections (Ciocca et al., 2022, p. S113; Costello et al., 2022, p. 375- 387; Sparks et al., 2022, p. 731-740). Linguistic analyses have examined Incels' coded language that allows them to distinguish between "true" Incels (trucels) and "fake" Incels (fakecels) who have had romantic interactions (Waśniewska, 2020, p. 70). This coded language reinforces in-group identity while also strengthening shared beliefs. Lastly, from a cultural point of view, Incel culture raises the question of nature versus nurture, as no one is born an Incel. However, exposure to misogynistic echo chambers fosters toxic ideas of masculinity and intensifies insecurity and mental health issues, which can normalize violence (De Roos et al., 2024, pp. 4573-4597; Solea & Sugiura, 2023, pp. 311–336; Miranda, 2023, p. 3; Tranchese & Sugiura, 2021, p. 2729).

While Incel culture has received increasingly scholarly attention in recent years, existing literature majorly focuses on psychological profiling (see Ciocca et al., 2022, p. S113; Costello et al., 2022, pp. 375-390), radicalization pathways (see Baele et al., 2023, p. 385; Barcellona, 2022, pp. 170-186) as well as how misogynistic discourse online can translate into violence in the offline world (see O'Donnell & Shor, 2022, p. 336-347). However, relatively few studies have applied Critical Discourse Analysis to a dataset extracted from an Incel forum to examine how violence against women is discursively normalized. This thesis addresses this gap by researching not only what Incels say but how they say it. Thus, by analyzing the normalization process of discursive patterns, such as objectification, dehumanization, and victimhood, this thesis makes a cultural-discursive contribution to the academic field of gendered digital hate. Incel forums are framed as symbolic spaces where patriarchal violence is linguistically justified.

From a broader social perspective, this analysis contributes to the political discourse surrounding inclusivity and policies promoting gender equality, as well as the rise of digital misogyny. This thesis examines explicitly how the Incel community blames women and expresses anger through

language. Anger is problematic as it activates prejudice and stereotyping, and thus, fosters dehumanization and serves as a discursive justification for discriminatory or violent treatment.

Accordingly, this thesis asks the following research question:

RQ: How is violence against women normalized in the Incel subculture?

To address this question and better capture the normalization of violence, the thesis uses three sub-questions:

- How are women discursively constructed in the Incel subculture?
- What forms of violence (i.e., linguistic, psychological, physical) are mentioned in the subculture?
- Moreover, how is violence towards women justified?

The data for this research will be sourced purposively from the active Incel forum, Incel.is, and analysed through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to trace how discursive patterns work to normalise violence against women.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

To answer the research question, "How is violence against women normalized in the Incel subculture", this chapter will provide a theoretical foundation rooted in Foucauldian discourse theory, through which patriarchal and Incel discourses can be read as a part of a wider regime of knowledge and power. The chapter therefore opens with an exploration of Foucault's concept of discourse, normalization and disciplinary power. Second, it illustrates how these discourses are embedded within patriarchal discourse. Third, these ideas will be applied to the Incel subculture by examining its roots, distinctive language, and use of digital platforms. Lastly, the chapter addresses violence as a discursive practice, distinguishing between different typologies and considering how they are normalized, justified and perpetuated in society and the specific context of Incel communities. Foucault's framework is used in this thesis due to its emphasis on disciplinary power, which is embedded in everyday practices. In this sense, discourse constitutes objects and subjects of knowledge through repeated and institutionalized practices. Thus, discourse represents a structuring system that produces what can be said, known, or thought. In Incel communities, women are not only a topic of discourse but are constructed as a specific out-group, such as "femoids", "Stacys", or "holes", through discursive patterns. Foucault's approach allows this thesis to examine how Incel discourse operates through repeated discursive practices, peer surveillance, internalized norms and the production of compliant subjects. These tools are particularly useful for analyzing structural and symbolic violence, which are often subtle, discursive, and embedded in online practices. Thus, Foucault's discourse theory provides the analytical tools to frame how violence becomes normalized through discursive patterns and regimes of truth.

2.1. Defining discourse

To see how societal norms are constructed and sustained, it is important to define the concept of discourse. From a Foucauldian perspective, discourse refers to systems of ordered practices that systematically shape and construct objects and subjects of knowledge. As Foucault puts it in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972, p. 117), discourse is "a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation". Discursive formation refers to a set of statements that systematically and coherently form knowledge, objects, and concepts within a particular field of discourse (Foucault, 1972, p. 38; Cousins & Hussain, 1984, p. 84). For instance, in Incel's discourse, the repeated use of themes, such as misogynistic language, the objectification of women, and patterns that justify violence, creates a discursive formation that produces and reinforces a specific social reality.

Similarly, Keller (2017), in *Discourse, Power/Knowledge and the Modern Subject*, describes discourse as the institutional and linguistic means through which meaning is produced and people,

objects, and practices are organised (p. 70). Additionally, Stuart Hall (1997) defines discourse as the frameworks we use to talk about or construct knowledge of a given topic or practice (p. 6). Thus, these definitions emphasize that discourses consist not only of language but also of ideas, practices, statements, and institutional norms within a particular field, social activity, or institutional site in society. Thus, such discursive practices draw the line of what is socially acceptable, relevant, and "true" within a given historical and cultural context.

2.1.1. Discourse and Power/Knowledge

In *Power/Knowledge* (1980), Foucault examines how power and knowledge are mutually produced through institutionalized discursive practices that regulate behavior (Hall, 1997, p. 75). He explains that power through what he calls an apparatus, which consists of "strategies of relations of forces supporting and supported by types of knowledge" (Foucault, 1980, p. 196). He points out that apparatus is inherently strategic, constructed through the manipulation of relations of force. As a result, the apparatus operates in a play of power while simultaneously being shaped by specific norms of knowledge that both emerge from it and impose limits on it (p. 196).

As knowledge is linked to power, what is considered "true" is determined by power relations. For Foucault, "truth" is socially and historically produced. Hence, each society follows its regime of truth (Foucault, 1980, p. 131). These regimes of truth determine what type of discourse is accepted and considered true. Thus, "truth" asserts itself to the power to make itself true (Hall, 1997, p. 76).

There are various power relations that shape discourse and social structures. Foucault lists five dimensions of power (p. 40): Major power institutions (1), such as the government, state agencies, and the military; hierarchy of position (2), that mark authority and status; inter-group dynamics (3), grounded in an "us.versus-them" logic that skews control over conversation, turn-taking, speech acts, topics and style; enactment of power (4), which depends on the form and intensity of each institution's particular reach; legitimacy of social control (5), which varies depending on whether it is imposed or maintained by force. The third dimension of power, group power relations, is considered the most relevant in Incel communities. In Incel communities, discourse is structured around a specific regime of truth, the belief in the "black pill." This regime frames ideological beliefs about gender, biological determinism, and misogynistic essentialism as truths. It functions as a discursive formation that regulates what can be known, said and believed in Incel communities.

2.1.2. Disciplinary practices and normalization

In *Discipline and Punish* (1977), Foucault introduces the concept of disciplinary power as a form of social control that produces "docile bodies." "Docile bodies" are trained to function

obediently and productively in society through disciplinary powers, such as surveillance, routines, and norms (p. 136). The panopticon, a prototype prison, works by making inmates feel constantly watched, creating a perpetual self-surveillance that allows power to run on its run, which famously illustrates how individuals regulate themselves (p. 201).

Incel communities enact their own form of panopticism by encouraging a state of surveillance regarding other members' devotion to the "blackpill" worldview and their celibate state (e.g., being labeled a "fakecel" if previous relationships with women are exposed). Any deviation from this leads to exclusion and is seen as betrayal. Thus, peer-driven surveillance reinforces disciplines that create "docile bodies."

The disciplinary power within the Incel community frames Incels as both subjects and products of patriarchal discourse and normative ideals of masculinity. While Incels reject mainstream liberal norms, they are still deeply invested in patriarchal standards, such as physical dominance, sexual and romantic success, and wealth. Even though Incels believe themselves to be "black pilled" and see the "truth" regarding gender relations, they are still affected by social norms and see themselves through the lens of "the anonymous patriarchal other" (Bartky, 1998, p. 34). Thus, they have internalized disciplinary norms of masculinity, but they engage with these norms with resentment when they cannot meet them.

From a feminist perspective, Sandra Bartky (1998) argues that women's bodies and behavior are often disciplined through bodily discipline and an internalized male gaze (p. 34). Accordingly, women have internalized gender norms, such as thinness, beauty, and sexual availability, whereas Incels have internalized patriarchal norms of masculinity, such as dominance, wealth, and physical fitness. However, while women strive to reach closer to these imposed gender norms, Incels outwardly reject them and believe that they are unfairly denied the rewards patriarchy promises. This perceived rejection incites feelings of resentment, hostility, and hate toward women,

In the following section, discursive practices through which normalization functions will be discussed. This includes an examination of how language, humor, and cultural representation reinforce gendered hierarchies, making violence against women appear natural and justified within the Incel community.

This is where the process of normalization becomes critical, as disciplinary power produces internalized standards of gender and success. Normalization functions as the mechanism through which these standards are rendered invisible, unquestioned, and taken for granted. Normalization in this framework is not neutral. It is a discursive outcome of power/knowledge relations.

Using Stuart Hall's *Representation* (1997), normalization can be understood as the process through which certain meanings, ideas, or ways of talking about the world become accepted as "natural," "common sense," or "true" within a particular culture or discourse (p. 6). Therefore, it

defines what is appropriate and legitimate to say, think, or do. Most importantly, it also establishes what one should not do. According to Hall (1997), the construction of what is "natural" or "true" happens within discursive formations, which are clusters of "ideas, images, and practices that provide ways of talking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society." (p. 4). Similarly, Foucault (1980) calls these formations a "regime of truth," where dominant discourses maintain their authority by structural exclusion of specific meanings (p. 131). This authority is maintained through discursive formations, including humor, metaphor, dehumanization, and victimhood. Thus, language becomes a tool through which sexist attitudes are considered normalized.

It is important to note that normalization is never a neutral process, but it is tightly interwinted with existing power dynamics. Normalization reinforces dominant cultural codes and produces knowledge on how we see the world and how individuals see themselves as a subject of that discourse. Thus, normalization is the outcome of discursive power. Language, in particular, is a prime tools for sustaining sexism and gender discrimination (Menegatti & Rubini, 2017, p. 1). When people consistently use language that describes men as rational, competent, and decisive, while casting women as emotional, caring, and dominating, it reinforces the idea that these traits are inherently tied to gender. Thus, by participating in discursive formations (or regime of truth), subtle forms of sexism go unchallenged and, over time, are normalized (Chavez & Del Prado, 2023, p. 67)

As seen in the previous section, normalization through language is the continuation of a dominant discourse, which is not necessarily the "truth." One form of discourse is humor, which is an effective tool for reinforcing cultural norms. Humor, like any other discourse, uses language, images, and shared cultural cues to represent the world in a specific way. Moreover, humor can mask discriminatory beliefs as "just jokes" while simultaneously reproducing dominant power structures.

Chávez and Del Prado (2023) warn that sexist jokes and hate speech circulate widely on mainstream Social Networking Sites, where content moderation is often lacking (p. 57). Because such gender-targeted humour is presented as "just being authentic," it slips more easily into everyday talk and thus gains traction in normalised discourse. According to Martin and Ford (2018), some forms of humor can be "aggressive, coercive and manipulative" and thus are "not necessarily prosocial and benevolent" (p. 40). This type of humor often involves a target that enables in-group members to emphasize their differences from members of an out-group. Thus, even though these jokes are made at the expense of others, they create genuine bonding among in-group members.

In Incel forums, women are frequently the target of dehumanizing and misogynistic jokes. For example, a common trope is the slur "Femoid/Foid" typically paired with claims such as "femoids do not have feelings but just want Chad's attention". While such statements seem absurd, they allow members to vent misogynistic frustrations while bonding over the shared ideological belief that

women are manipulative and only care about an attractive partner, a "Chad." This type of language normalizes hate speech under the guise of humor and irony, allowing users to express misogyny without being held accountable. In this case, it desensitizes users to harm and strengthen their identity through exclusionary humor.

In this way, discourse does not only reflect violence but enables and legitimizes it. Through normalization, disciplinary control, and symbolic devaluation, Incel discourse constructs a regime of truth where violence against women is rationalized and celebrated.

Overall, discourses are produced through power relations within specific historical contexts and are reinforced by everyday interactions and institutions, making them appear natural and legitimate. Because of this, discourse can take on an irrefutable a-historicity, making it socially constructed and often systematically unequal as a given system of power constructs knowledge. For example, gendered discourse establishes the norms and expectations assigned to men and women, contributing to a cultural framework in which violence against women can be justified, downplayed, or outright denied.

Moreover, Incel communities often reinforce patriarchal norms and hierarchical ideas of gender, sexuality, and power. Their communities become echo chambers of hate, where misogyny is normalized and encouraged, complaints are collectivized, and violence against women is justified. Thus, Incel culture can be seen as a space where patriarchal discourses about gender and power are reproduced and radicalized.

The following sections will illustrate how these discursive logics of power and normalization manifest in patriarchal discourse, Incel culture, and the construction of violence as an accepted practice.

2.2. Patriarchal discourse

The concept of patriarchy has been interpreted across various fields. In the most general sense, patriarchy refers to a system of power in which men dominate women and their reproductive capacities, and older men dominate over younger men (Beechey, 1979, p. 70; Millett, 1970, p. 25). According to Beechey (1979), patriarchy is embedded in social structures, cultural practices, and interpersonal relations (p. 66). It shapes how people think, speak, and behave without questioning it. Patriarchy exists in complex intersections with other dominant systems of power, such as capitalism, politics structures, or organized religion (Ortner, 2022, p. 307).

Kate Millett (1970) further identifies patriarchy as a system within the family that socializes children into gendered roles and reinforces women's subordination (p. 33). Building on Millett, Juliet Mitchell (1974) argues that kinship arrangements, meaning where men "exchange" women, position

men in a symbolic father role that imprints an internalised sense of inferiority on women (Beechy, 1979, p. 68; Mitchell, 1974, p. 402). Revolutionary feminists conceptualize patriarchy's foundation as men's control over women's reproductive capacities (Beechey, 1979, p. 66). In this sense, the control and policing of women's bodies is central to patriarchal power.

Patriarchal ideals are deeply visible in Incel communities. Incels participate in a discourse that reflects both internalized patriarchy and a desire to restore male dominance. As Kaiser (2020) states, Incels seek to re-establish a patriarchal social order by defending masculine privilege and male dominance and an opposition to feminism (p. 56). Incels view themselves as victims of feminism and modern gender relations, which sociologist and gender studies researcher Micheal Kimmel calls "aggrieved entitlement" (p. 34). This entitlement is derived from "tradition," where, in a misogynistic worldview, men are entitled to a wife and a traditional masculine (dominant) role within the family and society (Kaiser, 2020, p. 57).

Additionally, James (2024) states that aggrieved entitlement emphasizes male entitlement and violence to restore masculinity under threat (p. 2). Even though Incels are rejected from or renounce sexual and romantic relationships, women are still heavily critiqued, policed, and dehumanized. This strengthens the patriarchal logic that men's control over women's sexuality and reproductive capacities is a fundamental right of male power (Beechey, 1979, p. 70). A symbolic discourse of dehumanization is employed, where women and other marginalized groups are framed as "Other" and as passive objects in a male-centered worldview (Kaiser, 2020, p. 62). Within Incel forums, this ideology is reinforced through community validation and group solidarity, producing a form of patriarchal brotherhood that mirrors male-exclusive institutions like the military or the police (Ortner, 2022, p. 309)

Therefore, Incel communities often reinforce patriarchal norms and hierarchical ideas of gender, sexuality, and power. Their online communities become echo chambers of hate, where misogyny is normalized and encouraged, complaints are collectivized, and violence against women is justified. Thus, Incel discourse is not only misogynistic but also an expression of patriarchal ideology, which is reproduced and radicalized. It encompasses reproductive control, symbolic devaluation, and structural victimhood to create a narrative in which male dominance needs to be reclaimed. Therefore, Incels see a decline in patriarchy and actively mobilize for its restoration (Kaiser, 2020, p. 56)

2.3. Incel culture

The Incel community, short for "Involuntary Celibates", emerged in 1990, with Alana's Involuntary Celibacy Project website. In an interview with the BBC, founder Alana, defined the term as "anybody of any gender who was lonely, had never had sex or who hadn't had a relationship in a

long time" (Taylor, 2018, paragraph 11). Thus, initially, a website created for late bloomers, a term used to describe people who reach puberty, maturity or success at a later stage in life compared to others, to create a space for them to exchange personal experiences, specifically discuss the lack of romantic experiences. However, by 2000, it became a place of toxicity, misogyny, and racism. Incorporated into the broader manosphere, Incels began to direct their frustration and anger towards sexually active men ("Chad's"), feminism and women ("Stacy's").

Despite increased media attention, the Incel community remains difficult to study due to its anonymity and marginalized status. In 2019 and 2020, the Incel forum, Incel.co, released the results of a community poll (N=665), which included questions about their demographics, romantic history, self-perceived attractiveness and emotional well-being (Anti-Defamation League, 2020, paragraph 4). Even though the results were self-reported and unscientific, it helps conceptualize who identifies as Incels. Thus, the "average" Incel is white, in his mid-20s, average height and never had a sexual relationship with a woman. The poll from 2020 (N= 665) confirms that 82% were between the ages of 18-30, 55% identify as white or Caucasian, whereas the other 45% are divided among a range of ethnic and racial groups, such as Black, Latino, Asian, Indian, or Middle Eastern (paragraph 11). Moreover, Inceldom is also represented across countries and continents. 43% of respondents are from Europe, 38% live in North America, and the rest are spread across Central and South America, Asia, Oceania and Africa (paragraph 12). Lastly, one question asked Incels to identify why they could not form a romantic relationship. An overwhelming majority (86.5%) cited physical appearance (86.5%), low self-confidence and anxiety (74.2%), lifestyle (65.9%), socioeconomic status (59.5%), physique (58.1%), and height (48.5%) as barriers. These responses illustrate how Incels view romantic rejection as biologically determined and socially reinforced.

Two central discourses reinforce this worldview: Blackpill ideology and biological determinism. Incels share the belief in a Red Pill theory, which they adapted from the film franchise The Matrix (1999-2003). In the movie, the main character has two options: the blue pill, to remain oblivious to the inner workings of society, or the red pill, to wake up and accept a painful reality (Rauch, 2023, paragraph 1). In the late 2000s, the alt-right, specifically the manosphere, adopted this metaphor to free themselves from liberal points of view and to say that women cause men's unhappiness and sexual distress. Thus, they are redpilled. Conversely, men who do not adhere to this thinking are considered bluepilled. Basically, in the Incel community, one's ideology depends on which colored pill they have taken. Thus, -pilled denotes a suffix for indoctrination (paragraph 6).

According to Rauch (2023), in the early 2010s, the Blackpill ideology has become the most radical version (paragraph 6). If the Redpill is considered pessimistic, then the Blackpill takes it to a nihilistic extreme, where members believe that fighting against a feminist system is futile (Sparks et al., 2022, p. 733). Thus, "being black pilled" is an intrinsic part of the Incel identity, and frames

"Inceldom" as a permanent condition" (Hoffman et al., 2020, p. 568). Blackpilled Incels are encouraged to acts of misogynistic terrorism by "go[ing] ER"/be a "hERo", which references the 2014 Isla Vista murder spree perpetrated by Elliot Rodger or to commit suicide (Rauch, 2023, paragraph 8).

Incels believe that women's sexual preferences are governed by hypergamy, which is the belief that women are evolutionarily predetermined to pursue the most physically attractive male (EUROPEAN COMMISSION & Radicalisation Awareness Network, 2021, p. 5). This discourse frames sexual rejection as a result of fixed genetic inferiority rather than social or emotional factors. As Costello et al. (2023) explain, this deterministic framing allows Incels to explain their perceived failures as inalterable (p. 990).

Language plays a key role in reinforcing these two central discourses. According to Costello (2020), the retreat into an Incel identity is seductive as it gives men a sense of perceived bonding through shared feelings of unfairness, a common enemy, and extensive in-group out-group terminology (paragraph 7). Two significant discursive strategies underpin this: dehumanizing language for the out-group and fatalistic self-deprecating language for the in-group (Baele et al., 2023, p. 384; Tietjen & Tirkkonen, 2023, p. 1238). Attractive men are labelled "Chad", while women are described as "Roasties", "femoid/foid/feminioid", "holes", reinforcing the discourse of Women as Meat, Women as Objects and Women as Commodities (Prażmo, 2020, p. 22). These metaphors are not incidental but integral to how Incels construct women as inherently exploitative and dehumanized.

The second discursive strategy used in Incel communities is the use of self-deprecating terms and fatalistic terminology, such as "Subhuman", "truecel", "Mentalcel". These terms strengthen feelings of victimhood, hopelessness and the belief that Incels are destined to be alone and sexually excluded. Moreover, this victimhood language builds a strict hierarchy of suffering and strengthens in-group belonging. Members use terms that reinforce mutual recognition and solidarity in their shared misery. This victimhood discourse also protects Incels' from external critique from "Normies", the media and women. Through this fatalistic discourse, Incels both bond over their marginalization and vilify those considered responsible for it.

Digital platforms play a key role in the dissemination of Incel discourse. Incels' discursive strategies quickly mass-migrated extremist ideas to online platforms, from subreddits, such as r/Incels and r/Braincels, which were banned in 2017 and 2018 due to the promotion of misogynistic hate speech to less regulated and anonymous spaces such as 4chan, Incel.is and Telegram. These bans were part of broader platform moderation efforts to tackle the increase of violent and discriminatory speech, but they led to the formation of more radicalized spaces. On these sites, Incels find a sense of collective identity, committed to their discourse, encouraging the normalization and promotion of extremist views. Williams et al. (2021) described these forums as "deviant cybercommunities" that allows Incels to connect and have a space where manipulation and violent discourses thrive (p. 388).

This process is facilitated by networked media logics which prioritizes user generated content, the visibility afforded by algorithms, and the formation of niche communities (Klinger & Svensson, 2014, pp. 1245-1246, p. 1250). Combined, these conditions foster environments where misogynistic discourse can thrive. Platforms, like Incel.is, not only encourage exclusionary logic, but also enable more radical online behavior.

Overall, Incel culture is structured by a discursive regime in which women are dehumanized, sexual rejection is seen as systemic and unjust, and violence is rendered as legitimate and justified. These discourses are closely related to online infrastructures that reinforce a strong in- and out-group mentality, produce symbolic power within the community, and normalize extreme misogynistic language.

2.4. Violence

Understanding how violence against women is normalized within the Incel community, it is important to define what constitutes "violence." Many scholars have emphasized that violence is a concept that is contested and shaped by disciplinary, moral, and political considerations (Bufacchi, 2005, p. 194). Violence can refer to observable acts of harm, structural inequalities, or mechanisms of devaluation. Accordingly, violence in the context of Incel discourse must be understood as both discursive and physical harm. The latter includes acts of assault, murder, or destruction of property, whereas the former is enacted through language, symbols, or cultural practices. Thus, discursive violence can be identified through degrading metaphors, hate speech, or exclusionary language.

From a psychological perspective, Anderson and Bushman (2002) define violence as "aggression that has extreme harm as its goal" (p. 29). In their framework, intent and observable behavior, which refer to external acts of harm, are essential. Violence is constructed as a direct interpersonal action aimed at causing suffering. This definition allows for analyzing explicit threats or fantasies of harm. However, it does not account for less visible but equally harmful discursive processes, such as the use of dehumanization or misogynistic rhetoric.

In contrast, John Galtung's (1969) typology significantly broadens the concept of violence. According to Galtung's (1969) article, *Violence, Peace and Peace Research*, there are two fundamental types of violence: "direct" and "structural". Direct violence is "where the investigator of an act of violence can be traced to a person or persons," thus referring to physical acts of harm (p. 170). This type of violence is explicit and immediate, and it is often sensationalized in media coverage. For instance, Elliot Rodger, a self-proclaimed Incel who killed six people and injured 14 in 2014, exemplifies direct violence linked to Incel discourse. Meanwhile, "structural violence" shows that the structure is unequally distributed power and provides unequal life chances (p. 171). This definition clarifies that violence includes not only acts of war or assault but also systemic inequalities

embedded in social structures, which prevent individuals from reaching their full potential. In this context, Incel discourse constitutes structural violence by embedding misogynistic rhetoric into normalized patterns of speech and imagery, such as degrading metaphors, biological determinism, and dehumanization.

These repeated discursive patterns create what Galtung calls a structural arrangement of symbolic harm, where violence is enacted through language, norms, and discursive strategies that make harm thinkable, sayable, and justified. Through Galtung's framework, Incel discourse can be seen as a reproduction of structural gendered harm, where language plays a central role in maintaining power dynamics. Direct and structural violence work in unison, only a minority of Incels commit physical harm, whereas the majority contribute to a discourse where misogyny and gendered violence are normalized.

To further understand how symbolic harm escalates, Allport's (1954) five-point scale of prejudice provides a useful typology for following how discriminatory language can develop into explicit violence (pp. 13-15). Antilocution (1) is the act of projecting negative imagery onto the out-group through derogatory speech and hate speech. Antilocution paves the foundation for harsher forms of prejudice. Avoidance (2) posits that in-group members actively avoid interactions with the out-group, leading to social exclusion and isolation. Following Antilocution and Avoidance, members of the out-group deal with discrimination (3) and, thus, are denied equal treatment. Through these acts of linguistic violence, the idea of physical attacks (4) is facilitated. Therefore, the in-group feels comfortable vandalizing, burning, or inflicting physical harm on out-group individuals. Lastly, Allport discusses extermination (5) or removal of the out-group as the final step of expressing and implementing prejudice. Allport (1954) stresses that antilocution (language) is used as a discursive manifestation to dehumanize the out-group and desensitize the in-group to unjust and violent treatment.

In the context of Incel discourse, repeated use of dehumanizing slurs ("foid," "hole," "cattle") represents a form of antilocution that naturalizes the perception of women as subhuman. This facilitates hate speech and discrimination, as women are excluded from Incel forums and framed as morally inferior. Each stage builds upon the previous one and enables the next. For instance, when degrading language (stage one) is normalized, it removes moral constraints. It desensitizes Incel members by making avoidance and discrimination (stages two and three) more acceptable and finally justifying physical violence. (Stage four and five)

The support for violent fantasies or offline acts of violence reflects how discourse enables an environment where Incels can freely express themselves and their hate for women. Allport's model complements Galtung's typology by highlighting the power of language in producing a discourse where violence is justified and even celebrated.

Chapter 3: Research design and method

This chapter outlines the methodological approach taken to examine how violence against women is normalized in the Incel community. Building upon the theoretical framework established in Chapter 2, this study uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to explore the structural and symbolic mechanism through which Incel discourse justifies gender-based violence. CDA will allow this thesis to identify the normalization of violence against women by answering our research question: "How is violence against women normalized in the Incel subculture?". As discussed previously, Foucault's definition of discourse as a system of knowledge production and subject formation offers a rich foundation for analyzing how language practices produce and normalize gendered power hierarchies.

CDA is particularly suited to analyzing texts that appear normal or accurately represent events or people but are often embedded in discursive meanings. As Machin & Mayr (2023) explain, the term "critical" denaturalizes the language used "to reveal the kinds of ideas, absences and taken-for-granted assumptions in the text [...] reveal the kinds of power interests buried in these texts" (p. 4). CDA highlights linguistic patterns in order to examine "connections between language, power, and ideology hidden from people" (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p. 4). This technique is particularly useful in discovering hidden misogynistic views embedded in Incel discourse, where normalization strategies may be subtle, implicit, and discursive. Empirical data for this thesis comes from a publicly accessible online forum used by self-identified Incels, which will be discussed in the following section.

3.1. Platform context: Incel.is

This study uses the Incel.is forum as its primary data source due to its popularity in the Incel community and the volume of user-generated discourse relevant to the research question. This forum hosts 28,000 members, 638,316 threads, and 14,763,329 posts as of May 2025. Thus, a high amount of anti-feminist content is anticipated. Given the multimodal function of the platform, such as the inclusion of links to other Social Networking Sites, pictures, videos and long texts, Incel.is provides a rich context for exploring the normalization of violence against women in a digital space.

The platform is organized into multiple thematic subforums, including Incel ("Must-Read Content" and "Inceldom Discussion"), Copes ("Gaming" and "Anime & Manga"), and Offtopic ("The Lounge" and "Politics, Philosophy & Religion"). The data for this thesis will be collected from the "Inceldom Discussion" board as it garners the most engagement.

Furthermore, delving deeper into the platform structure and established norms can be achieved by exploring the "Site Information" tab, where rules are explained and frequently asked questions are answered. Starting the post, it posits that only Incels are allowed to be members, therefore, excluding women and LGBTQ+ individuals, non-Incels, and those under 18. Following

this, the rules for the platform (Image 1) are divided into four categories: experiences ("Do not discuss or request personal romantic or sexual experiences.."), behavior ("Do not persecute, harass, or attack others," "do not humble-brag"), accounts ("You can only have one account"), and content ("Do not worship or praise people," "Do not post bluepilled content of any kind," "No gay or LGBT content, unless you are criticizing it.").
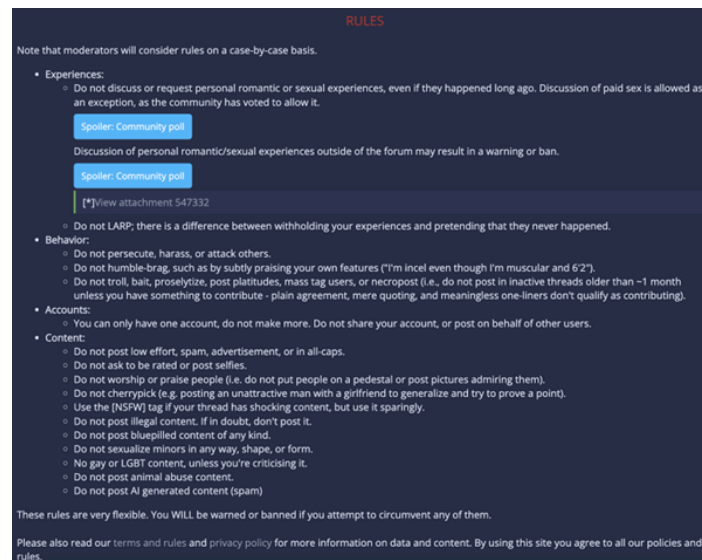

Image 1: Rules implemented by Incel.is

In the Sticky Thread (a thread that is highlighted by the staff) "Introduction to Incels," posted in 2018, questions such as, "What does Incel mean?", "What do Incels believe?", "Why is the language on the forum so offensive?" "Do Incels hate women?" are answered by the platform's official account. The platform already considers the offensive language used and their view on women. They explain that Incels find it hypocritical that offensive language is an acceptable attribute in dating or job hiring but not in their online vernacular. Thus, they make it a point to use offensive language to draw attention to this paradox. Moreover, they remove themselves from taking any responsibility for how their platform perpetuates hate speech towards women. They specify that Incels are not a homogeneous group, and thus, there is no universal agreement on how women are viewed. So, while some might crave a loving, caring, stable relationship with a woman who loves them back, a majority still blames women for their own "sub-humanity."

3.2. Data collection procedure

To study the Incel community, the online forum Incel.is was used to gather data to discuss how violence against women is normalized. In this study, a "thread" is defined as the original post and up to five following replies ordered chronologically. A total of 10 threads were collected, including the first five responses, resulting in 60 posts comprising approximately 3,000 words. The smallest

post consists of one word (Thread 9, T9C3), whereas the maximum words were 836 words (Thread 3). Out of the 60 posts, 59 were textual with some emojis, and one post consisted of a video (Thread 7), which has been included due to its relevance and richness in data.

The first 10 threads, organized according to the last message posted on the platform, were collected on the 3rd of May 2025 to accurately capture their current discourse on women and how it normalizes violence against women. The chosen threads (N = 60) were downloaded as PDF files and logged in an Excel spreadsheet to facilitate tracking and prevent data loss. Purposive sampling was used to identify relevant threads. Keywords in the thread title, such as "woman", "girls", "females", "foids", "femoids" and/or "Stacy" had to appear in the thread title without considering the thread's overall topic. In addition to textual indicators, threads were selected if a minimum level of user engagement was met (at least four comments).

Table 1 below provides a summary of the 10 threads with the given title and a number. Additionally, while absent from the table, the comments from each thread will be referred to as T1C1, T2C1, T3C1, and so forth.

Table 1: Thread Summary

Thread	Thread title	Summary
1	If She Liked You, She'd F* You*	Claims women only interact with men to exploit or have sex with them, mocks emotional vulnerability, and justifies detachment from women.
2	Anime Girls > Real Women	Rejects real women due to their appearance and behavior and idealizes anime girls as purer and more sexually appealing.
3	Dying for Sex Rage Post	Mocks a terminally ill woman's story of sexual exploration, frames her actions as immoral, and her media portrayal as evidence of societal collapse.
4	Bluepilled Mom	Recounts a conversation with a mother encouraging romantic hope, dismisses her as naive, and reinforces Incel fatalism.

5	Abortion and Lynching	Calls for the execution of women who have abortions, portrays them as murderers, and justifies mass violence.
6	Women as Holes	Fully dehumanizes women, describing them only as sexual objects with no personality or value beyond sex.
7	Violence on Metro Video	Shares a video of a woman being physically assaulted, expresses enjoyment, and reinforces racial and gender-based hatred.
8	Reddit Defends Misandry	Highlights supposed double standards in society's response to male vs. female hate speech and uses this to justify Incel rage.
9	Woke Therapist Allegation	Uses a news story about a female therapist's arrest to condemn feminism, mental health professions, and "woke" women.
10	Neanderthal Rape Fantasy	Compares Incels to Neanderthals, fantasizes about rape as revenge, and critiques women for selective reproduction.

3.3. Data analysis procedure

This study follows a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework to identify how discourse reinforces power and normalizes violence. CDA enables the exploration of what is being said, how it is being said, and what is being omitted or naturalized. Foucault's understanding of the discourse of subjects, norms, and regimes of truth provides the theoretical foundation for the analytical tools employed.

Each thread (Original post and up to five comments) was manually read and analyzed using the five tools of CDA adapted from Machin & Mayr (2023, pp. 30-46): Word Connotation, Overlexicalization, Suppression, Structural Opposition, and Lexical Choices and Genre. Word Connotation analyses the emotional or ideological tone behind the chosen wording. Thus, the analysis examines whether the terms are used to express anger, fear, or objectification of women.

Overlexicalization is explained by "the sense of over-persuasion, which is normally evidence that something is problematic or of ideological contention" (Machin & Mayr, 2023, p. 37). Therefore, the analysis focuses on identifying synonyms and excessive descriptions that uphold or challenge certain discourses. Suppression will be the absence of certain terms, thus what is ignored or erased. Structural Oppositions, such as Man/Woman, Chad/Stacy, and Redpilled/Bluepilled, are opposing concepts that, with the use of connotation, allow us to interpret people, objects, and situations. Lastly, Lexical Choices and Genre uncover the type of language used. It will identify how users position themselves and relate to the community through the use of slang, memes, or rants.

The analysis process was framed by three guiding questions to ensure consistency among reading the threads,

- How are women linguistically portrayed or described? (e.g., dehumanized, sexualized, or interiorized/devalued)
- What types of violence are stated, implied, or encouraged? (e.g., linguistic, physical, sexual)
- In what ways does language normalize or justify violence? (e.g., through humor, metaphor, memes, victim-blaming, or victimhood)

These guiding questions will allow for identifying patterns and discourse strategies through which women and violence against women are described and normalized.

In practice, an Excel sheet was used to assign each tool and guiding question into a column to record each post. The process began with reading the original post and extracting relevant quotes for each designated tool. Then, this process was repeated for comments. This allowed me to observe patterns across the threads consistent with the tools of CDA.

The patterns were grouped into three overarching categories: Deconstruction of Womanhood, Types of violence (Linguistic, physical, sexual), and normalization of violence. By collecting how often each thread can be sorted into each category, the analysis revealed how language is used to justify, incite, and normalize violence against women.

3.4. Operationalization

To better record the normalization of violence in an Incel forum, the core constructs were operationalized:

Deconstruction of Womanhood focuses on discourse that portrays women as less than human by using negative traits or framing them as animals, meats, or objects for men's pleasure. This concept will allow us to identify thought patterns in this Incel forum that justify the deviant treatment of women as such.

Types of Violence include linguistic violence (hate speech), physical violence (incitement to assault), and sexual violence (rape, revenge porn, intimate partner violence). Hate speech is most

prominent in Incel fora by insulting and using derogatory terms, such as "femoid" or "Roastie" to target women. Categorizing violence in Incel fora in these three categories will allow us to identify harms promoted in their discourse that foster a hostile and pejorative environment.

Normalization of Violence is a discursive strategy that justifies violence by dehumanizing women and desensitizing members against violence toward women. Incels' position as victims in society allows them to justify their anger due to poor and unfair treatment. Moreover, mass harm is often glorified, and the predator is framed as a martyr. Thus, Incels who receive no offline recognition from women or peers often idolize those who have caused violence in the world.

These concepts are grounded in a Foucauldian understanding of discourse as a structure of power, which produces knowledge, truth claims, and subjectivities that reproduce certain practices as sayable and thinkable.

3.5. Ethical considerations & positionality

This thesis considered the ethical implications of analyzing user-generated content. The data was collected from a public online forum that is accessible to internet users. Nonetheless, to protect user privacy, no personal data, such as names, physical attributes, or locations, was collected. Posts were anonymized where appropriate, and no direct contact was made with users. The intention was to study patterns of discourse and not individuals.

As a female researcher, I acknowledge my outsider positionality in studying this male online subculture. My interpretation is shaped by a feminist perspective, which may introduce bias in interpreting Incel content. However, it is important to note that no matter your race, ethnicity, or gender, violent slur-based rhetoric deserves critical scrutiny.

While I am not embedded in the Incel community and may lack full familiarity with all coded terms, an extensive relevant literature review and textual analysis were conducted to provide a strong foundation. Using five analytical tools to answer three guiding questions helped structure the data process, allowing me to remain systematic and focused on meaning rather than emotion. For example, derogatory terms like "bitch" were examined not as personal affronts but for their discursive function and connotation. This approach enabled a measured and scholarly examination of hateful rhetoric without legitimizing or excusing it.

Finally, I recognize that writing about Incel communities may provoke criticism, especially from those within the community being studied. Nevertheless, by basing my analysis on academic literature and clarifying my positionality, I hope to mitigate potential backlash and strengthen the academic merit of this research.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents the findings from a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of ten threads from the forum, Incel.is. The research question guiding the analysis is: "How is violence against women normalized in the Incel subculture?".

The dataset (N= 60) was selected through purposive sampling based on user-generated content, which mentioned "women" or a synonym, such as "foid/femoid", "whore", or "she". Additionally, only threads with a minimum of five comments were included to ensure a minimum of engagement from other members. Thus, each post includes the original text and the associated five comments, which allowed for analysis of both individual and collective discursive practices.

The data was analyzed using Machin & Mayr (2023) approach to CDA, using the following tools: Word Connotation, Overlexicalization, Suppression, Structural Oppositions and Lexical Choices & Genre (pp. 30-46). These tools allowed for the unpacking of ideological assumptions, emotional tones, absences, and rhetorical constructions embedded in discourse. In addition, the analysis was guided by three sub-questions:

1. How are women discursively constructed in the Incel subculture?
2. What forms of violence (i.e., linguistic, psychological, physical) are mentioned in the subculture?
3. How is violence towards women justified?

The data was systematically examined and recorded in an Excel spreadsheet, where each post was analyzed using excerpts based on the five CDA tools and relevant sub-questions. Through this process, patterns began to emerge across threads and posts, such as repeated figurative language, lexical patterns, and genre conventions. These patterns are grouped together into broader discursive strategies. These strategies emerged from the data as certain types of language and expression appeared repeatedly, such as negative naming (Overlexicalization), violent metaphors (Word Connotation), and binary oppositions (Structural Oppositions).

The findings revealed three dominant and intersecting discursive strategies that shape how violence against women is constructed, normalized and justified in Incel discourse. These strategies are (1) Dehumanization of Women, (2) Entitlement, and Resentment, and (3) Cultural Victimhood and Anti-Feminist Backlash. Each strategy is thoroughly discussed, supported with examples used from the representative thread.

Although the strategies are listed separately for clarity, many posts actually employ several discursive tactics at the same time. This discursive overlap reflects the interconnectedness of misogyny, sexual entitlement and cultural victimhood in Incel discourse.

4.1. Strategy 1: Dehumanization

A central discursive strategy across most threads (Thread 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10) is the dehumanization of women. Incel users construct women as a disposable, replaceable object without agency, autonomy or moral worth. This dehumanization manifests through three interconnected subcategories: objectification, which frames women as objects (Thread 1, 2, 3, 6); animalization, which frames them as animals (Thread 6 and 7); and instrumentalization, which reduces them to reproductive machinery (Thread 5, 6, 10). These themes serve to legitimize violence, reinforce male sexual entitlement, and strip women of their personhood. These discursive patterns are revealed through various CDA tools.

"If a foid is not going to fuck you……just stop even talking to her.
She is only going to exploit you for your resources.
Whether that be money, free rides, chores, etc.
(...)
His freedom and dignity he will give up to be her slave, ATM and protector.
And in the end, she will fuck Chad after Chad………but never him"

(Thread 1)

Core to male sexual entitlement is a dehumanizing view of women as objects which exist to serve men. According to Orehek and Weaverling (2017), this instrumentality, specifically, reduces women to their looks, particularly body parts or overall appearance. This leads to a perception of women as interchangeable with others possessing the same physical characteristics." (p. 720).

One of the linguistically rich examples of this subcategory appears in Thread 1, titled "If she liked you, she would fuck you.". The original poster (OP) sarcastically asks what positive things women have done and repeatedly refers to women through demeaning and degrading slurs.

Women are described as "foid" (female humanoid), which is a lexical choice that strips women of human status, while also asserts that they are only interested in sleeping with Chads and exploiting unseeming men who believe they have a chance with her.

The post employs overlexicalization in describing what women exploit from men ("money, free rides, chores"), reinforcing Incel's belief in the concept of hypergamy, the idea that women will only sleep with men from a higher social class. Moreover, men who do not fit this criterion have to be careful as they will give up their "freedom (...) to be her slave, ATM and protector" without receiving, the only thing women are useful for, sex. Women are not considered as people to respect. These descriptions deprive women of any identity beyond their sexual value.

"Now they are destroying the only thing that makes them useful by loosing up their holes for chad and aborting babies at the same time because they are too retarded to become a mothER. All holes should know their place in society and that litERal cattle are more useful than those fucking whores. :feelsaww:"

(Thread 6)

Another discursive dehumanization strategy is the animalization of women. Here, women are equated with irrational, instinct-driven creatures. Animalization through language is a discursive tactic that routinely elevates men and vilifies women (López Rodríguez, 2009, p. 83). It is based on a strategy of dehumanization that denies the individual to their agency. Moreover, throughout history, this discursive strategy facilitates the stigmatization of entire groups and represents them as undesirable (Salmen & Dhont, 2022, p. 3; Waśniewska, 2018, p. 10)

Thread 6 uses a mix of lexical slurs ("holes", "whores") and animal metaphors ("cattle") to frame women as subhuman. This explicitly compares women to livestock, which is used to mark women as stupid and expendable. The metaphor of "The people are cattle" is used to conceptualize groups as stupid and passive, lacking rationality and agency (Waśniewska, 2018, p. 11). Cows are considered objects in the production process and are assessed by their performance and cost-effectiveness (Waśniewska, 2018, p. 10). In this sense, women's value is marked by their reproductive capabilities. The OP writes that "cattle are more useful than those fucking whores", which positions them as beneath even commodified animals, suppressing them of personhood entirely.

In Post 7, the OP shared a video of a Black women being physically assaulted on public transport, with the caption: "Whore toilet gets brutally beaten by N* on Metro" (Original title did not censor the N word). The language used is a combination of a sexual slur and a negative and hostile racial description. The title already prepares the readers for the type of content they will see while also dehumanizing the victim and framing her suffering as deserving and entertaining. The term "toilet" is used to strip the woman of subjectivity, framing her as filthy. In the comments, the woman's inability to fight back is described as biologically determined ("millennia of wife beating hardwired their brains to be helpless against men", T7C2). This animalistic dehumanization suggests that women are evolutionarily conditioned to be submissive, like domesticated creatures. Thus, the assault is trivialized and seen as humorous ("Watching a foid getting beat up puts a smile on my face", T7C4; "fuck em. They deserve it and more", T7C5). These discursive patterns allow Incels to deny women's humanity and frame violence as biologically justified and emotionally satisfying. This reveals how deeply animalistic logic permeates the Incel discourse.

"Foids should have let those subhumans breed and they did to some extent with grape and all. But they deserved as much empathy and pussy as we do.
We are the modern day neanderthals, most of us are low iqed to progress, weak to face bullies and people in general, bad looking to breed and have a partner to live with and they hate us for being like this, as if it's our fault.
I hope we go extinct, but until then I wanna grape as much foids as I want and breed them . Spread my inferior DNA so that humanity can never prosper and has to always suffer."

(Thread 10)

"They're a baby murderer and at the same time, their single biological purpose is to produce babies.
They're defective cogs and need to be purged and cleansed from society"

(Thread 5)

The third discursive subcategory frames women as reproductive machinery. Thus, it posits that women's value lies within their capability to procreate. Thread 10 linguistically relies on structural oppositions between Incels and women. There is always a clear distinction between the out-group versus the in-group, which are positioned as morally superior. For example, in Thread 10, the OP describes Incels as evolutionary failures by calling Incels "subhumans" and "Neanderthals", but nonetheless women are at fault for not granting them reproductive access. Thus, Incels self-identify as biologically inferior but morally superior, while women are vilified for their mating preferences and shown as morally bankrupt. Again, women are reduced to their sexual functions. Moreover, the term "grape" as a euphemistic alteration of "rape," is a disturbing lexical choice that disguises sexual violence while making it linguistically acceptable. This post erases consent and treats women as breeding machines.

Similarly, in Thread 5, procreation is framed as their "single biological purpose" and calls women who have abortions "defective cogs", which equates the female body with a malfunctioning machine that no longer serves its primary purpose. Presenting reproduction as a woman's only social role is a clear example of instrumentalization in which Incel discourse completely negates women any right of sexual autonomy or agency. The use of the term "defective" carries a strong connotative weight which suggests a moral and functional failure, while also evoking a language of ideological purification by describing them as needing to be "cleansed" and "purged". Through these lexical choices and structural oppositions (e.g., productive vs broken, pure vs impure), the Incel discourse presents reproduction as compulsory. Thus, any deviation is constructed as a societal threat which

repositions women outside of "humans" and facilitates the idea that women are inherently deserving of corrective punishment.

Together these three discursive subcategories (women as objects, women as animals, women as machinery) constructs a coherent discursive system in which women are stripped of humanity and framed as inherently deserving of exploitation, control and violence. Following this, Strategy 2 reveals how this dehumanization adds to Incels' feelings of sexual entitlement and how that transforms into resentment when they experience a lack of sexual access.

4.2. Strategy 2: Sexual entitlement and resentment

The discursive dehumanization of women, as discussed in Strategy 1, provides the linguistic and discursive framework for more explicit forms of resentment. Incel legitimize the belief that women exist primarily to serve male needs by dehumanizing and devaluing women. This framing creates a related discursive strategy: sexual entitlement and misogynistic resentment. In this discourse, rejection is not seen as a normal interpersonal experience but as a structural injustice that produces anger. Thus, the Incel identity is not only marked by sexual exclusion, but belief that the withholding of sex is unfair, humiliating, and intentional. This discursive strategy can be understood through two discursive subcategories: (1) entitlement to sex as a male right, and (2) violence as a corrective tool or revenge. These patterns emerged across the dataset through repeated use of oppositional language (e.g. Chad vs Incel, giver versus gatekeeper), lexical choices ("slave", "ATM", "subhuman"), and the discursive structures that frame women's autonomy as harmful. Together the tools of CDA, especially word connotation, structural opposition and overlexicalization, demonstrate how Incels transform romantic rejection into a personal offence that legitimizes violence.

Sexual entitlement and misogynistic resentment towards women are one of the core pillars of Incel discourse. Across most Threads (Thread 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10), women are not only to be sexually available to men but are vilified when they express autonomy. This subcategory presents a binary logic where women are sexually available and therefore have value, or they are withholding sex and romantic relationships and seen as exploiting men financially and emotionally.

"If a foid is not going to fuck you……just stop even talking to her.
She is only going to exploit you for your resources.
Whether that be money, free rides, chores, etc.
(..)
His freedom and dignity he will give up to be her slave, ATM and protector.
And in the end, she will fuck Chad after Chad………but never him.."

(Thread 1)

This framing is particularly explicit in Thread 1, also discussed in Strategy 1 for its portrayal of women as objects, which constructs sex as a transactional right. Here, this entitlement is expressed as the OP reduces female companionship to a transactional exchange. Materialistic or emotional labor from men should be rewarded with sexual favors, otherwise the man is reduced to a "slave, ATM and protector". If sexual access is withheld, then the woman is to be discarded, and she is seen as exploitative and deceptive. The structural opposition between "Chad" (sexually rewarded) and "him" (exploited) is reinforced to underscore an unfair sexual market. Moreover, the tone is deeply connotative, expressing bitterness and disgust, while naturalizing a belief that sex is a transactional right that women must adhere to be perceived as valuable. He frames men who engage in non-sexual interactions as "subhumans" being exploited and uses it as proof of male humiliation.

This logic reflects what Kimmel (2013) describes as "aggrieved entitlement", the belief that men are entitled to power or privilege, which is seen as injustice if it is absent (p. 1- 44). Revolutionary feminists argue that one aspect of patriarchy is men's belief in their right to control women's bodies and reproductive capacities (Beechey, 1979, p. 70). Thus, even though Incel have, by choice or exclusion, opted out of sexual relationships, they still feel the entitlement to assert discursive control over women's bodies. In this view, their lack of sexual access becomes a structural injustice, which they believe is their patriarchal right.

This belief system is reinforced further in Thread 10, which will be discussed in the following section due to its explicit fantasies of violence. However, this thread also begins with a strong entitlement claim, as the OP argues that "foids should have let those subhumans breed", suggesting that Incels were denied something they are biologically owed. Here, the term "foid" functions again as a dehumanizing lexical choice. The idea that they are denied sexual access due to their genes supports the idea that women are not adhering to the natural, male-centered reproduction chain.

Moreover, Thread 10 shows how threatened rape becomes a form of revenge against women. Thus, sexual violence is not incidental but framed as reparative and a way to punish women for excluding Incels and to assert dominance over them. Moreover, the OP fantasizes about "spread[ing] my inferior DNA so that humanity can never prosper and has to always suffer". This desire reflects internalized self-hatred, but this self-deprecation is turned outwards as a justification for violence against others. Thus, this quote collapses sexual desire, self-hatred and violent rage into a single discursive act, indicating a deep resentment towards women as gatekeepers, society and himself for his lack of sexual access.

These threads reveal a discursive pattern, as rejection is framed as systemic betrayal that justifies resentment. This reinforces the idea that men are unfairly excluded which deepens their sense of entitlement and violent fantasies.

Following this logic, where Incels feel entitled to sex but feel humiliation when sexual access is denied, often manifests in violent fantasies or calls for punishment. Thus, violence becomes rhetorically justified as either corrective or deserving.

Thread 5, which was discussed under Strategy 1 for its description of women as "defective cogs", reveals violent fantasy as the OP calls for physical violence against women who have abortions. He continues by linguistically framing women as "baby murderers" and "defective cogs [that] need to be purged and cleansed from society" as they failed their "biological purpose" to reproduce. The OP uses words, such as "purged" and "cleansed", which implies genocidal connotations and portrays women as biologically broken and socially polluting. The overlexicalization of bodily and reproductive metaphors amplifies the intensity of resentment. This post exemplifies a call for execution of women, which is perceived as a rational response to morally corrupt women.

"Classic foid selfishness on display"; "disgusting whore who has done nothing meaningful, except decide to become her Collegeslut self again once she found out she had the C-bomb (…)

This is just how fucking easy they have it...all foids have to do is just literally exist"

(…)

"this was pure ragefuel"

(Thread 3)

"Filthy and degenerate whore rest in piss"

(T3C1)

"Dora the Sexplorer"

(T3C3)

Similarly, in Thread 3, this strategy takes on a cultural representation as it represents not just women themselves, but how society affirms and validates their choices. The OP mocks a terminally ill woman who chooses to explore her sexuality before dying, describing her actions as "slut fantasy being fulfilled". Her sexual agency is ridiculed and seen as an insult to Incels who feel they have been denied basic human contact. The comments add on to the anger by mocking the woman's diagnosis, which is described as "ragefuel". This post combines word connotation ("filthy", "degenerate") with structural opposition, where women are perceived as being universally rewarded for "nothing", while Incels are ignored and discarded for not having access to sex. Here, resentment becomes structural and interchangeable. Additionally, meme-like phrases, such as "rest in piss" exemplify a discursive genre of humiliation.

"Watching a foid getting beat up puts a smile on my face"

(T7C4)

"fuck em. they deserve it and more"

(T7C5)

"millennia of wife beating hardwired their brains to be helpless against men"

(T7C2)

Lastly, in Thread 7, violence is not only justified but actively enjoyed and celebrated. The OP shares a video of a Black woman being physically assaulted on public transport and titles the thread "Whore toilet gets brutally beaten by n**er on metro." (The original title is not censored). This combines a racial slur with a sexual insult, dehumanizing both the victim and the perpetrator, each positioned as forms of "the Other" within Incel discourse. The lexical choices in the title employ structural oppositions: Black/White, male/woman, perpetrator/victim, subject/object. The Black male perpetrator is framed as hypermasculine: violent, primal, and sexually dominant, while the female victim is constructed as hypomasculine: passive, overpowered, and deserving of punishment (Kimmel, 2017, p. 191). The comment section reinforces this interpretation, where women's access to sex is seen as a provocation.

Overall, these posts show a common idea that women's sexual agency should be vilified unless it centers the Incel male. If women are not providing sex to Incels, their humanity is negated and framed as morally wrong. The Incel discourse relies heavily on phrases like "used up," "slut," "only valuable for sex," and "they all choose Chad" to strengthen this ideology. Through this discursive formation, where rejection from sexual access transforms into a narrative of patriarchal betrayal, resentment becomes a founded emotional response.

This resentment takes on a violent framing where the explicit belief that women owe sex becomes normalized. Women who refuse sexual access become the cause for male suffering, thereby justifying hate, revenge and violence.

The sexual and misogynistic entitlement described in Strategy 2 escalates into the justification and glorification of violence. Once women are perceived as sexually unavailable, exploitative or morally corrupt, then Incels frame their use of physical, psychological or linguistic violence as not only acceptable but deserved. This theme appears across several posts (3, 5, 6, 7, 10), where harm against women is mocked, fantasized or celebrated.

To summarize, the discursive strategy of sexual entitlement and misogynistic resentments builds on top of the dehumanization established in Strategy 1. It reframes sexual rejection as a structural injustice. Thus, violence becomes a necessity to rectify what society and women have denied them.

4.3. Strategy 3: Victimhood and backlash

While Strategies 1 and 2 reveal how Incel discourse centers on dehumanization and entitlement, a third discursive strategy further highlights these narratives by framing Incels as victims, both individually and collectively. In this category, Incels not only resent women as individuals but also position themselves as victims of a social order which favors women and unjustly marginalizes men. This structural opposition between privileged women and powerless men is central to how misogyny becomes embedded within a perceived social injustice.

This victimhood strategy can be observed through two categories, which have been identified by grouping together patterns of language that emphasize male exclusion, female privilege, and resentment towards social systems. These patterns relied on structural oppositions (e.g., "Chad" vs. "Incel,"" man vs. woman), emotionally loaded lexical choices, and self-deprecating metaphors that exhibit internalized despair. Thus, a coherent discourse was established that showed that misogyny is not only reactive but a justified response to a broken system.

This strategy can be divided into two related subcategories. First, perceived societal bias, where Incels believe that women are rewarded in society for being born a woman, whereas men, particularly unattractive men, are structurally excluded. Second, reversal of victimhood, where Incel believes that society is against them, they argue that misandry, not misogyny, is the dominant force in society. This narrative positions women's sexual agency and social advancement as symptoms of a broken misandrist system.

"Only in this clownworld could a woman whoring around be seen as an "enlightening" experience or journey.

(…)

This is just how fucking easy they have it...all foids have to do is just literally exist and even if they are terminally ill & decide their "spiritual journey" as a result from this amounts to just being a slut & bam, they will get a fucking TV-show covering their "story""

(Thread 3)

The OP of Thread 3 reacts to a media story about a terminally ill woman who chose to explore her sexuality before death. The user quotes excerpts of the story to criticize and ridicule mainstream media for producing such a story and presenting it as empowering. Moreover, he expresses resentment not only toward women but also toward society by using the phrase "clownworld," a term with strong connotative meaning in far-right and manosphere discourse, to delegitimize societal norms that validate female agency. Moreover, this post uses overlexicalization ("whoring around," "just literally exist," "fucking TV-Show") to represent an exaggerated sense of

injustice. Thus, the OP not only expresses anger towards women but also a society that reaffirms her choices. This affirms the belief in a systemic betrayal, in which women are socially rewarded while men are ignored or mocked.

"The reverse would get feminist outrage. "no how dare he cheat on his wife and sleep around!" God, I hate women"

(T3C4)

T3C4 reflects a structural opposition between female and male behavior. In the Incel view, women are celebrated for their behavior that would be vilified in men. Thus, this perceived imbalance is framed as evidence of a systemic betrayal, where men's suffering is ignored while women's choices are seen as important journeys.

"Who as all foids, seems to be unaware of what "accountability" means (…)
And ofc, it being the American justice system, I was not surprised it yielded such results (…) This foid (…) has the authority as a family therapist who had literal authorization over criminal justice programs."

(Thread 9)

Similarly, Thread 9 echoes this discursive pattern through the case of a female therapist charged with a hate crime. Here, the OP questions women's lack of accountability and the ability to avoid serious consequences.

In comparison with most threads that have direct references to violence or sex, here, the discursive pattern reflects the idea that women are protected and excused by society, which has been described as perceived social bias. Moreover, her gender, profession, and religion become representations of undeserving power. Thus, the OP strengthens the idea that men's suffering is structurally embedded while women can do no wrong.

The second subcategory, reversal of victimhood, builds upon this logic by positioning Incels as the true oppressed group in society. Thus, they are minimizing women's suffering and reframing misogyny as a response to misandry. This reversal allows Incels to engage in the discursive strategies where hatred and calls for violence are justified.

"Unreal legit saying being raped by a foid doesn't really matter because those whores get raped too
Remember gentlemen, never stop hating foids

Stay Based"

<div align="right">(Thread 8)</div>

> ":foidSoy: I want to see men die!
>
> Society: awww, what's wrong girl? Vent it all out, it's OK!!
>
> :incel:I am not satisfied with my dating life
>
> Society: loser incel, terrorist!"

<div align="right">(T8C1)</div>

Thread 8 captures this reversal of victimhood. The OP reflected and commented on, now deleted, Reddit posts that mocked Incels. One male Reddit user recounts that they were sexually assaulted but dismissed it as women are more frequently assaulted. The OP expresses anger at the male victim for minimizing his assault "just" because "those whores get raped too". Hence, the reversal lies in the implication that men's suffering is brushed aside while women's is taken seriously. The imperative "never stop hating foids" acts as an encouragement to hate as a justified coping strategy. This also reflects the genre of Incel posts as calls to emotional validation.

Moreover, a comment (T8C1) uses a meme-like structure to contrast how society reacts to female versus male suffering. By combining lexical choices and genre (emojis and a two-line structure), the commentator illustrates the point that society is empathetic to women but hostile towards men. The form reinforces the narrative that Incels are not only misunderstood but also deliberately vilified.

Another example of how sexual rejection is internalized as shame and reframed as hatred can be seen in Thread 2. This thread has been discussed for its dehumanization of women (Strategy 1), but it also provides insights into how Incel discourse constructs male victimhood and symbolic emasculation. In Incel's discourse, being denied sex, which is something they see as a biological right, is humiliating. This feeling of humiliation grows over the years and manifests itself into self-hatred. Linguistically, this is expressed both interpersonally and culturally, often through self-deprecating metaphors and emasculating discursive strategies.

> "Anime girls have proper and healthy body weights...massively more attractive than that of American women
>
> So anymore, whenever I feel the need to rub one out, I find myself drawn more to animated or drawn depictions of women created by the Japanese than I do some random disgusting fat Internet whore.
>
> Although there is a few harlots online who have healthy and attractive bodies, I avoid them also because one feels like a cuckold masturbating to a woman they can't have"

(Thread 2)

In Thread 2, the OP constructs a structural opposition between real women ("disgusting,", "weight swollen land masses,", "Internet whores") to fictional anime characters ("healthy body weights,", "more attractive"). This lexical choice, filled with slurs and exaggeration, reflects overlexicalization, where physical and sexual shaming is used to dehumanize women. Moreover, the OP's comparison serves not only to devalue women but also to articulate his own sense of inferiority and exclusion.

This post reflects self-directed violence. The OP calls himself a "cuck" when seeking sexual gratification from "Internet whores". This is a form of symbolic emasculation, where the Incel sees his own lack of sexual access as humiliating. Thus, it shows a lack of patriarchal power where sex is something that men are owed. Michael Kimmel (2017) argues that this lack of power and resentment often leads men to embrace violence to reclaim manhood (p. 196). Here, the inability to access sex becomes internalized as shame and externalized as a collective grievance, which positions women as the cause of male humiliation.

"We are the modern day neanderthals (...) bad looking to breed and have a partner to live with and they hate us for being like this, as if it's our fault."

(Thread 10)

Furthermore, Thread 10, which has been discussed in Theme 2 for its violent rape fantasy, also includes one of the most extreme languages for cultural and biological victimhood. Here, Incels identify themselves as biologically and socially inferior, invoking biological determinism. The structural opposition of "Neanderthal" vs. "modern women" implies that women's rejection of Incels is unnatural or cruel. This self-deprecating language not only affects their own mental health by transforming this shame into bitterness while simultaneously blaming women and society for their low self-esteem. The belief that they are excluded from society due to their physical appearance emphasizes a victimhood identity, in which women's denial of sexual access becomes the primary cause of their marginalization. Thus, the blame ("as if that's our fault") shifts the agency from themselves to women and society, which constructs a discourse that serves to justify violence and absolve Incels of responsibility.

"(…) I told her it's because I'm ugly and girls don't want to get near me, then she started saying bluepilled stuff like "there is someone out there for everyone" and "you just need to be more

confident" I told her I have tried multiple times and still got rejected, then she just walked away after telling me "you'll find someone eventually"

(Thread 4)

"what a stupid whore"

(T4C1)

"She will have to accept the truth one day"

(T4C2)

Finally, Thread 4 shows a nihilistic, self-deprecating discursive structure in which the OP recounts an interaction with his mother, whose encouragement to find a girlfriend is dismissed as "bluepilled." The OP has completely given up on finding a romantic relationship and has entirely given in to the Incel identity. He believes that his physical appearance is the cause of his Incel identity. This insistence that he will be rejected exemplifies how Incels will internalize cultural scripts of failure. Therefore, it forms the foundation for broader societal blame.

Furthermore, while his post lacks the graphic and violent resentment examined in other posts, this cannot be said for the comments. One comment insults his mother, who has her son's best intentions in mind, while the other reinforces a blackpill discourse by suggesting that she will eventually have to accept the "truth". The responses reinforce a binary opposition between truth (Blackpill) and delusion (Bluepill)

Hence, moments of interpersonal vulnerability are transformed into a collective discourse of hopelessness and hatred. Thus, Incel's sense of hopelessness is validated and amplified by the community, strengthening the narrative of victimhood.

In summary, this strategy combines victimhood narratives, emotional language, and structural oppositions to reframe male exclusion as a form of oppression. Women are to blame for Incel's suffering while simultaneously benefitting from a misandrist social system. By presenting misogyny as a reaction to systemic misandry, this discourse legitimizes a worldview in which violence is understood as cathartic, corrective, and just.

Combining the three discussed strategies, dehumanization (1), sexual entitlement and misogynistic resentment (2), victimhood and backlash (3), reveals that they adhere to a coherent discursive strategy in which a radicalized worldview frames violence as a discursively normalized outcome of perceived injustice. Each strategy contributes to a system of thought that frames violence against women, whether symbolic, rhetorical, or fantasized, as emotionally necessary and morally righteous.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter reflects the implications of the results presented in Chapter 4, by addressing the discursive strategies used in Incel forums. Specifically, it addresses the question: "What forms of violence are justified through these discursive strategies?" Drawing on the theoretical framework of Foucault and feminist theories of patriarchy, this chapter explores how symbolic and linguistic patterns foster an environment of hate, normalized misogyny, and forms of violence against themselves and women.

The analysis of 60 posts from Incel.is revealed three overarching and intersecting discursive strategies (Dehumanization of Women (1), Sexual Entitlement and Resentment (2), and Male Victimhood and Anti-feminist Backlash (3)). These strategies do not function in isolation, but form a linguistic universe where women are framed as inferior, exploitative and morally deficient. As Foucault (1972) conceptualized, discourse not only produces knowledge but also shapes behavior of the subjects and objects within that knowledge (p. 38). Accordingly, the discursive construction of women in Incel forums is explicitly violent and are reduced to the lowest degree. Language acts as a production of meanings which reinforces norms and legitimizes harm (Hall, 1997, p. 4). The excessive repetition of terms such as "foid", "hole", "cattle", "defective clog" reflects and encourages misogyny. Through normalization, these expressions are naturalized and encouraged to use. This creates what Foucault (1980) calls a "regime of truth", in which gendered violence is framed as common sense (p. 131).

These strategies reflect what Foucault (1977) calls the production of "docile bodies", which posits individuals internalize dominant norms and adjust their behavior accordingly (p. 136). In Incel discourse, this process functions in a paradoxical way. Incels produce docility through resignation rather than conformity, and thus, results in symbolic aggression. Hence, rather than producing compliant and socially adjusted subjects, it produces what can be termed docile male subjects. Thus, in the Foucauldian sense, Incels internalize a particular truth (as sexually excluded, biologically inferior and socially powerless) and accept this condition as unchangeable. This results in Incel projecting their frustrations outward and therefore creating a discourse that justifies violence as a rational response to perceived injustice. In this way, misogyny is weaponized as a means of reclaiming masculinity in response to perceived social and sexual powerlessness.

The analysis also confirms the symbolic and structural dimensions of violence as outlined by Galtung (1969, p. 171). While most posts exhibit linguistic violence through insults, slurs and degrading metaphors, some Threads (Thread 5, 7, 10) illustrate the discursive encouragement of direct physical or sexual violence. These fantasies expose broader discursive systems that frame violence as a logical response to perceived social injustice. The fantasy of "going ER", a reference to the 2014 Isla Vista mass murderer, Elliot Rodger, showcases how violence is celebrated as an identity and

revenge. Importantly, this normalization is often delivered through lexical choices and genre conventions, such as memes, mock interviews, or exaggerated rants, which present misogynistic statements as humor or satire. In this way, violence is not only justified but also rendered entertaining, masking the severity through genre-coded irony.

These expressions function within what Allport (1954) describes as the early stage of prejudice (antilocution), which conditions both the speakers and audiences to accept and eventually justify more explicit forms of aggression (p. 13-15). Through excessive repetition of key metaphors, such as "foid", "subhuman", and "Chad", this discourse strengthens its internal logic and silences alternative interpretations. As Foucault (1978) argues, repetition is not neutral but produces a regime of truth that can render certain ideas socially acceptable (p. 27). Incel discourse uses repetition to discipline both behavior and identity formation, where emotional states like anger, hopelessness and humiliation are shaped through discursive patterns. Meaning, through repeated discursive patterns (overlexicalization, lexical choices and genre), Incels learn to respond to rejection not as a way to change themselves, but as a justification for hostility and resentment towards women. While not all Incels engage in violent discourse and fantasies, the symbolic function contributes to a culture of desensitization and moral disengagement.

In returning to the feminist conceptualizations of patriarchy, these findings offer a significant departure from traditional views. Patriarchy has been defined as a system that privileges all men over women (Beechey, 1979, p. 70, Millet, 1970, p. 25). However, Incel discourse revealed a fragment within patriarchy itself, one where some men, particularly those deemed physically or socially inadequate, see themselves excluded from patriarchal promises. However, this perceived marginalization does not result in a rejection of patriarchal logic, instead Incels reinforce patriarchal values. They demand access to women as a right and punish those who go against this perceived order. Thus, when patriarchy fails to deliver on its promises to all men, it generates a discursive formation that seeks to reassert dominance through rhetorical violence.

The normalization of violence in Incel discourse, not only has consequences for its intended victims but also for its members. The community's reliance on a victimhood identity creates a logic of resentment and a moral order, in which members feel power that they perceive as denied in the offline world. This reliance strengthens Incel's nihilism as change is systemically rejected. Expression of accension, thus leaving the Incel community and forming a romantic relationship, are disregarded and ridiculed, and labelled as "bluepilled". Thus, a space of doom is created where change is unthinkable, and where docile masculinity is preserved through self-hatred, discourse rigidity, and symbolic aggression.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis has explored how violence against women is normalized within the discursive strategies in the Incel community. Using Foucault's theory of discourse, a Critical Discourse Analysis was conducted on 60 posts from the Incel.is forum. The research question, "How is violence against women justified in the Incel community?" was addressed, and three discursive patterns, (1) Dehumanization of women, (2) Sexual Entitlement and Resentment, and (3) Victimhood and Anti-Feminist backlash, were identified.

These discursive strategies explain the process of normalization by framing violence as a logical and justified response to perceived injustice. First, dehumanization strips women of subjecthood and moral value, thus removing ethical constraints. Second, the belief in systemic injustice fuels a sense of male grievance, through which violence is rationalized as deserved. Third, by positioning Incels as the true victims of a misandrist society, violence is reframed as a morally justified action. In combination, these discursive strategies create a worldview in which violence against women is naturalized.

The societal implications of these findings are significant. Incel forums are not merely platforms to vent or complain, but they function as discursive spaces that enable the radicalization of gendered hate. By incorporating misogyny into a broader context of victimhood and systemic injustice, these discourses create an environment that normalizes hate. This reinforces broader trends in digital misogyny, online radicalization, and gender-based violence, raising concerns about how fringe communities can gain mainstream attention through repetition, memes, and coded language.

This highlights the importance of implementing stricter and more nuanced content moderation, even on semi-anonymous or fringe platforms. Moderation policies should not only target explicit threats but also implicit practices that normalize violence. Language that frames women as subhuman or depicts male violence as a type of justice must be recognized as a part of a broader spectrum of gender-based violence.

This study faced several limitations. First, the dataset is relatively small, comprising only 60 posts collected from a single day of data collection from one platform, Incel.is. This limits both the scope and generalizability of the findings. While the analysed threads provided valuable insights into recurring discursive strategies, they may not fully capture the diversity or evolution of Incel discourse over a longer period of time or across multiple platforms. Additionally, discursive patterns may shift in response to external events, such as media scandals, mass violence, policy bans, new platform moderation policies, or changing in-group dynamics, which have not been accounted for in this dataset.

Secondly, the lack of demographic information, such as age, location, or socioeconomic background, limited the analysis to the level of language alone. This could have been interesting when

investigating different identity-based victimhood discourses or assessing the extent of radicalization in relation to the duration of one's identification with the Incel identity. Without knowing the speaker's identity, it is hard to fully understand how these discourses intersect with personal experiences and grievances. While the anonymity of the forum is useful for analyzing unfiltered discourse, it simultaneously oversimplifies the complexity of users' positionalities and motivations.

Lastly, while this thesis has highlighted different discursive patterns used in an Incel community, it remains unknown how individual users internalize or act on them offline. Thus, it cannot assess how users interpret, believe in, or are affected by these discourses. Thus, the analysis focuses on what is said rather than on how it is internalized or enacted. Even though the findings, specifically the comments, showed support for these discursive patterns, it is unknown whether Incels use misogynistic language as a form of irony or belonging or if it is a gateway towards deeper discursive radicalization.

Future research should expand both the methodological and conceptual framework. Thus, rather than focusing on analyzing a single Incel platform, future studies could examine Incel discourse over time. Thus, they could explore longitudinal shifts and how normalization becomes more explicit or how language evolves following offline acts of Incel-related violence. Different research could focus on cross-platform discourse migration by analyzing how coded language and metaphors spread across various platforms, including social media and mainstream spheres. Research conducted by Solea and Sugiura (2023) already lays the foundation for understanding how Incel discourse is becoming more prominent on mainstream platforms, as terms such as "Looksmaxxing" have already become a recognized vernacular in online slang (pp. 312-317). Lastly, another aspect worth studying would be the representation of Incels in the Media. Netflix's *Adolescence* (2025), a TV show which garnered a lot of media attention for its depiction of an Incel-related act of violence, has pushed Incel rhetoric into the mainstream. Thus, analyzing how this fringe community reacted and interacted with this piece of media and how it relates the Incel identity with violence could aid in the conceptualization of popular culture and how it challenges the Incel identity.

This thesis offered a discursive contribution to the study of gendered online hate. It demonstrated that Incel communities are producers and receivers of symbolic violence. Through the repeated use of degrading language (towards women and themselves), the activation of victimhood, and the construction of a misogynistic regime of truth, these spaces normalize and rationalize harm. Moreover, individuals, who do not identify as Incels, such as bluepilled men, women, and LGBTQIA+ members, are not allowed on Incel platforms. Incels are stuck in a discursive loop that echoes patterns of self-deprecating, hopelessness, and strict Incel identity. By grounding these findings in Foucault's discourse theory, the research shows how violence is made explicit, desirable, and justified by turning misogyny into a learned, repeated, and accepted way of being.

In summary, this thesis contributed to existing scholarship that frame Incel discourse as a radicalization process (Baele et al., 2019, p. 385; Ribeiro et al., 2020, p. 2; Costello, 2022, p. 375-390) but adds a discursive dimension by illustrating how normalization works through systemic discursive formations. These formations are structured by linguistic repetition, metaphors, and genre conventions that create the foundation for structural and symbolic violence. Through this lens, the Incel community is not only a site of misogynistic discourse, but also a space of disciplinary subject formation, where men learn to accept their own exclusion by turning their anger towards women, society and themselves. Thus, this study revealed how normalization of violence in Incel communities is a structural result of a discursive system based on dehumanization, entitlement and moral victimhood.

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