

# Online anti-feminism within the Incel community and ideology

*Feminist ethnographic and feminist content analysis of Incels' manifestation of online anti-feminism, masculinity structures and aggrieved entitlement on r/Braincels*



Sofie Cathrine Farhadi Berthelsen

GNVM03  
VT2021

Department of Gender Studies  
Lund University

Supervisor: Irina Schmitt

# Abstract

This thesis is a critical, feminist ethnographic research of one of the most extremist and violent movements that originated from the growing online anti-feminist ideology. Based on a feminist poststructuralist epistemological tradition, this thesis researches the growing Incel movement through feminist cyber-ethnography, netnography and feminist content analysis. The analysis bases on a dataset of 980 threads and comments from Reddit's former subreddit r/Braincels granted by Analyse & Tal.

The Manosphere is an umbrella term for separatist men's groups online, which has become more radicalised, violent, and extremist since they moved from offline forums to online social media and blogs. Within the Manosphere is a community of men who self-identify as Involuntary Celibate or Incels. Incels is the most extremist group of the Manosphere and is associated with misogyny, extreme hatred and violent fantasies towards women, and several terror attacks. Incels is a product of the growing online anti-feminism, which merges hatred towards feminism, the feminist, and the woman. Furthermore, Incels are a product of a masculinity crisis, resulting from online anti-feminist views, where the man has to reconstruct his place in society from a conservative, normative, and patriarchal structure of masculinity. The masculinity crisis reproduces an ideology of men's place in society to be eliminated by feminists and women, resulting in misogyny and aggrieved entitlement, which for Incels constitutes in their entitlement towards women's bodies.

This thesis' analysis presents findings that answer the research questions of how the Incel community and ideology manifests within online anti-feminism and how they express hegemonic and hybrid masculinity and aggrieved entitlement towards women's bodies.

The analytical findings present that the Incel community exists as a product of online anti-feminism, as Incels merges their hate towards both the feminist, feminism, and the woman. Furthermore, it presents that Incels has created a hierarchy of attractiveness based on hegemonic and hybrid masculinity, reproducing conservative, patriarchal, and masculinist views on a "real" man. The thesis also presents how Incels, as a result of online anti-feminism and the masculinity crisis, has developed an aggrieved entitlement towards women's bodies despite extremist misogynistic views. The thesis aims to give a new and broader perspective on the growing online anti-feminism by looking at the most extremist movement within the Manosphere; Incels.

Key words: Incels, Involuntary celibate, Online anti-feminism, Hegemonic masculinity, Hybrid masculinity, Aggrieved entitlement

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# List of Abbreviations

**Incels** – Involuntary Celibate

**MRA** – Men’s Rights Activists

**MGTOW** - Men going their own way

**PUA** – Pick Up Artist

**TRP** – The Rep Pill

# Chapter I - Introduction

*Men are afraid that women will laugh at them.*

*Women are afraid that men will kill them.*

This thesis starts with a quote ascribed to the Canadian author Margaret Atwood<sup>1</sup> as it contextualises the new online anti-feminism of men's claim of being oppressed and their extreme hatred towards women. Growing out of the Internet and social media is a new online anti-feminism, established in far-right groups, political ideologies, and loosely in unorganised movements. The new online anti-feminism is in constant development and creates radicalising, and extremists ideologies that challenge gender equality and gender roles. As I will discuss, it is linked to terrorism, mass shootings and promoting hatred and violence towards women, racialised minorities and people within the LGBTQ+-community.

Through feminist cyber-ethnography, netnography and feminist content analysis, this thesis will analyse one aspect of this movement placed within the Manosphere, an umbrella term for separatist men's groups that primarily operate online. Within the Manosphere is a loose, unorganised group of men who self-identify as *Involuntary celibate* or *Incels*. Incels are described as "a group, of mostly of young men, united by a strong feeling of rejection and rage towards the opposite sex. (...) The community is obsessed with theories about looks and relationships, and members often express desire to hurt others or themselves" (Ribeiro et al., 2020a, p.2). Involuntary celibacy, or sexual deprivation, is the primary criterion that makes a man self-identify as Incel (Ging, 2019). However, their ideology expands over various other theories and constructions. Besides sexual deprivation, Incels finds community by hating women, whilst simultaneously feeling an entitlement to their bodies. Furthermore, they believe in a misandrist and a gynocentric conspiracy that secretly oppresses men. Incels are primarily cis-gendered, heterosexual men, and their construction of genders is normative and binary, bases on biological determination and excludes sexualities other than heterosexuality,

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<sup>1</sup> Atwood never said those words directly, although they originated from a lecture she gave in the 1982 University of Waterloo called *Writing the Male Character*. The lecture was published as a book titled *Second Words: Selected Critical Prose, 1960-1982*.(Dickson, 1996; (Bundel, 2018.)

as they only discuss sex from a heteronormative<sup>2</sup> perspective. Geographical originates Incels from the U.S. and Canada, although because they are an Internet community, they have spread over Europe and The Global South; the Incel community has become global (Ging, 2019). It is difficult to locate them geographically and place a national or ethnic belonging, although English is the primary language. Anti-feminism is on the rise as a counterpart to the growing, mainstream feminist movement. The Incel ideology has grown out of the new online anti-feminism. As Incels are not an organised movement, their beliefs loosely flourish across different online forums such as Reddit, 4chan and 8kun - all websites with low moderation, making it easy for hateful and violent topics to expanding online anti-feminist views.

As online anti-feministic views are easily shared and spread on the Internet and contain violent language, Incels has become the most extremist, violent-encouraging and violence-related sub-group of the Manosphere (Ribeiro et al., 2020, p.2), making them an interesting movement to study.

## 1.1 Aim and research question

This thesis aims to identify themes manifested in the Incel ideology and community as expressed in threads from Reddit's former subreddit<sup>3</sup> r/Braincels. The overarching focus of the thesis is how the Incel ideology is positioned within the new online anti-feminism. Online anti-feminist ideology founds on hatred towards the feminist, the woman, and the gender-equality which feminism has brought (Thorup, 2020). As a result of online anti-feminism, the masculinist man finds himself in a masculinity crisis where hegemonic and hybrid masculinity is challenged (Connell, 2005; Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2012; Kimmel, 2013). Furthermore, this study aims to outline Incels' aggrieved entitlement towards women's bodies and the construction of a hierarchy of attractiveness resulting from online anti-feminism (Kimmel, 2013). Based on these theoretical frameworks, this thesis seeks to answer the following overarching research question: *How is the new online anti-feminism manifested within the Incel community and ideology?* In order to explore this question, the following research questions will seek to unfold the online anti-feministic Incel ideology: *What*

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<sup>2</sup> The term "heteronormative" is used as Incels construct heterosexuality as normative, as the only sexuality, and as constructed to be "natural" (in context of biological determination).

<sup>3</sup> Communities of the website Reddit is called subreddits. r/Braincels is the subreddit for the community where the Incels got mainstream.

*expressions of hegemonic and hybrid masculinity manifests in the Incel community and ideology? And How is aggrieved entitlement expressed within the Incel community and ideology?*

Through feminist content analysis, of 980 threads from Reddit's subreddit r/Braincels, this thesis aims to answer the research question. The dataset is granted by the analysis bureau Analyse & Tal and is created for the report *The Angry Internet - A threat to gender equality, democracy & well-being* (2020) on the recommendation of the Nordic Council of Ministers. Furthermore, the analysis and general knowledge of the Incel community and ideology come through immersive engagement on several Incel-related websites, primarily Incels.co and Reddit.com, to understand the Incel community's language, pictures, and memes and the construction of gender and sexuality.

Thus, this thesis aims to fill several gaps in previous research of Incels. First, it aims to contribute with an analysis of how online anti-feminism is the founding ideology from which the Incel ideology has grown. Furthermore, it will outline how hegemonic and hybrid masculinity connects to Incels' construction of gender, sexuality, and aggrieved entitlement of women's bodies.

## 1.2 Outlining this thesis

The thesis proceeds with the following chapter: **Chapter 2** outlines the background of the Incel ideology, hereunder the Pill philosophy, the hierarchy of attractiveness, and the construction of women. Furthermore, it contextualises Incels historically within the Manosphere and societal by outlining Incels' use of social media and the numerous Incel-related terror attacks. **Chapter 3** presents the theory, which creates the framework for this thesis' analysis. The chapter will outline and theorise the new online anti-feminism, masculinism, and the current masculinity crises. The chapter also outlines how hegemonic and hybrid masculinity and aggrieved entitlement result from the online anti-feminism of which Incels founds their ideology. **Chapter 4** outlines previous research on the Incel community and ideology, of which some is used as secondary theory for the analysis. **Chapter 5** presents the methodological framework of this thesis and the methods it builds on; a combination of feminist cyber-ethnography, netnography, immersive engagement, and the method of analysis: feminist content analysis. The chapter also includes

an outline of the material, how I was granted a dataset from Analyse & Tal, the dataset's methodological background, and how it was filtered to fit this thesis. Furthermore, it outlines Reddit as a social media platform. Final, the chapter includes ethical considerations when conducting research online and positioning me as a researcher. **Chapter 6** presents the analysis and discussions, while **Chapter 7** concludes the findings and thoughts of further research. After the list of references follows the appendixes. **Appendix I** lists Incels neologisms of terms and acronyms, and **Appendix II** lists Incel-related terror attacks. Furthermore, **Appendixes III** and **IV** show two tables from Analyse & Tal, which describe the methodological process of filtering and the total content of posts and threads of the dataset. And final, Appendixes **V** and **VI** are memes from Reddit describing differences between Chad and the Incel.

# Chapter II – Background

This chapter contextualises and outlines the Incel community and ideology. First, a historical contextualisation of the Manosphere, followed by an outline of the Pill philosophy. Further, the chapter outlines the Incels' hierarchy of attractiveness for men and women, the effect of social media and algorithms, and Incel-related terror attacks.

## 2.1 Outlining the Manosphere

Incels are a sub-culture of extremist online communities under the umbrella term The Manosphere (O'Malley et al., 2020) which also includes communities such as Men Right's Activists (MRA), Pick up artists (PUA), and Men going their own way (MGTOW) (Ging, 2019). These groups are created out of the 1960s Men's liberation movements, which focused on challenging the normative construction of masculinity. During the 1960s and 1970s, some movements became more focused on anti-feminist ideologies and opposed the "claim that male privilege adversely affects women" (Ging, 2019, p.639). The anti-feminist ideologies embraced conservative gender roles and viewed women's rights and empowerment gained from feminist movements as a problem against men's position in society. MRA is one of the pioneers in fighting for men's rights in the context of military conscription, divorce, and custody laws (Ribeiro et al., 2020, p.2). The groups have become more extremist and hateful throughout the latest years (Ribeiro et al., 2020, p.2), and the network has increased after they moved the debate and activism to the Internet (Ging, 2019, p.639). Social media and the Internet have played a particular role in the Manosphere's evolution as messages, conspiracies, and ideological views can easily be spread through these platforms. The Manosphere has received steady media attention throughout the latest years, from Incel-related shootings and rape cases on college campuses to the disputed Gamergate, where male gamers were doxing, harassing, threatening female gamers, and the female journalists covering the case (Ging, 2019, p.639). The following chapter will outline the different aspects of the Incel ideology, from the Pill philosophy to the hierarchy of attractiveness.

## 2.2 Outlining the Incel ideology

The term *Incel* originates from a Canadian queer-woman, by the pseudonym “Alana”, who in 1997 created a website called “Alana’s Involuntary Celibacy Project” (Hoffman et al.). The site aimed to give young people an outlet to share their frustrations on dating and sex. After 4chan launched in 2003 and Reddit in 2005, the users claimed the term Incel to become male-only connected to extreme misogyny and violence (Hoffman et al.). As mentioned in the introduction chapter, an Incel is defined, both by scholars and themselves, as a man who is sexually deprived and lives in involuntary celibacy. It means an Incel wants to have sexual or romantic relationships with women but has no success. Different theories and concepts construct the Incel ideology, although the premise is the Pill philosophy which the following section outlines.

### 2.2.1 The Pill philosophy

The Red Pill terminology started on the subreddit r/TheRedPill and is the philosophy that connects the different groups of the Manosphere. The Pill philosophy originates from the cult movie *The Matrix* (1999) – which ironically is directed by two trans-women, Lana and Lilly Wachowski (Mountford, 2018). In the movie, the protagonist, Neo, is given a choice between taking the Blue Pill, to continue living in delusion and the denial of reality, or the Red Pill, which will awaken him to the true reality of the real world. Transferred to the Manosphere and the Incels’ Pill philosophy, the Red pill awakens one to feminism’s misandry and how it has brainwashed society to secretly oppress men (Ging, 2019, p.640). Other movements such as conspiracy theories, QAnons, and anti-vaxxers have recently adapted the Pill terminology and use it as a metaphor for awakening to reality. The terminology is used on various sites concerning the Manosphere’s different groups, including Incels, where men must awaken to see the true shallow nature of women. The Incel community has its own “Pill”: the Black Pill. The Black Pill is a nihilistic understanding of society and life. By “taking” the Black Pill, people awaken to a harsher reality than when “taking” the Red Pill. It reveals the “truth” of how “women and society are intrinsically biased against men who lack specific physical attributes, who therefore have no hope of ever being attractive to women or even accepted by society” (Hoffman et al., 2020, p.568). Incels believe women have superficial standards for men’s looks, which Incels do not live up to, hence their

involuntary celibacy (Kelly & Aunspach, 2020, p.158). When “taken” the Black Pill, a man recognises and embodies the permanent condition of his “inceldom” (Hoffman et al., 2020, p.568; DareGender & Cybernauterne, 2020).

### 2.2.2 The hierarchy of attractiveness

Incels define men into three archetypes of hybrid masculinity: Chads, Betas, and Incels. Furthermore, they construct women into archetypes as well; The Stacy and the Becky (Ging, 2019). Their structures of genders are binary and heteronormative, where women are constructed as feminine while men as masculine and heterosexuality is the norm. Scholar of media and communication Jiyoung Chae theorises that *lookism* is a cultural phenomenon based on beauty standards reproduced in popular culture, societal norms, and culture (Chae, 2019). Lookism connects to biological determination and origins from the theory of humans selecting their partner based on how good the option for reproduction is (Chae, 2019). The theory contextualises Incels’ hierarchy of attractiveness, which also bases on biological determination and looks that are advantageous. The following chapter outlines the hierarchy of men and women’s looks, giving a deeper insight into the Incel ideology.

Through this thesis’s intense, immersive engagement, I obtained a broad knowledge of the hierarchy of attractiveness. Therefore, quotes from the dataset are used in the following sections to highlight this. The quotes from the dataset are in italics, quotation marks and are separated from the body text. The quotes include extremist language of misogyny, queerphobia, racism, and ableism.

#### *The Chad*

A Chad is also called an Alpha male and is at the top of the hierarchy of attractiveness. The construction of a Chad reproduces a normative and conservative understanding of a strong and attractive man. Incels describe him as tall, blond, white, with a complete set of hair and the ability to grow a beard. He has eyes placed not too close and not too broad, a fit body, clear skin, a square jawline, and a good posture (Ging, 2019):

*“Defo a Chad. (...) just that sharp jawline”*

*“men with “this” physique.> tall, wide, strong frame, large wrists and shoulders, lots of muscle, we get it, chad (or tyrone) only”*

These are the external values of a Chad. Incels believe that as a result of Chads good looks, he also has great success, money, and the ability to get any woman whenever he wants, especially the beautiful women:

*“Money – Status – Good Genetics (...) you need to be born with at least one of those 3 things to gain another one.. Born rich? Buy your way to the top.. Born Goodlooking? Halo Effect your way to the top.. Born with High Status parents? Monkey Branch your way to the top..”*

The counterpart to the Chad, who is white, is the Tyrone, who has the same external values as Chad, although he is a man of colour, most usually a black man. The Tyrone reproduces a racist stereotype commonly used about men of colour, who becomes the “beast” or the “barbarian” – a hyper-sexualised man from the Global South (Said, 2004).

*“Look it’s the girl all the geeks want but she only fucks Chad and Tyrone “*

*“but she’s sucking and fucking Chad and probably Tyrone in private”*

A person described as Tyrone is not seen as a primary Alpha as Chad is, although he is hated as much.

### *The Beta*

The Beta is the second of the hierarchy of attractiveness. He is also called a Normie. A Beta male is a regular man, as he has not yet “taken the Red Pill” and has not awoken. He does not have Alpha features, making his success, both professional and with women, lower:

*“Maybe chad has huge privileges in the workplace but certainly not billy beta or average joe”*

Incels patronises Betas for failing to realize women to be evil. Furthermore, Incels call Betas “cucks” or to be “cucked”, meaning that women use Betas for their money while always preferring romantic and sexual relationships with Chads.

*“But in modern society that’s considered toxic and entitled, and “true love” is wageslaving so that you can be a beta provider for a fat single mom who doesnt give a shit about you”*

## *The Incel*

Incels are at the bottom of their own hierarchy of attractiveness. As an adjective for themselves, they use the term subhuman. Incels believe features like a narrow jawline, short height, short vocal cords and high-pitched voices, small eyes, thin hair, and unmuscular bodies are factors for them being an Incel (Brunt & Taylor, 2021). They describe themselves as following:

*“he definitely has a gay alien skull plus bad facial bone structure, the retard thinks if he grows a beard along his weak recessed jaw he’s gonna be chad hahahaha fucking moron, you gotta have a forward projected square jaw for that to work”*

*“Thin frames, weak chins, bug eyes etc.”*

Everything small, such as their height, wrist, and frame, is viewed as unattractive and “woman-like”.

*“but mom passed those tiny ass wrist down to him”*

Because of these “unappealing” features, an Incel will never experience either success professionally or with women in the same way as Chads or Betas. The issue of appearances, especially heights, is taken as a measure of how much of an Incel someone is, although the most discussed topic is the face:

*“FACE is the reason. It makes it so you are only truly good looking at a really really low bodyfat percentage, because men faces are supposed to be angular and sharp. The slightest bit of extra body fat (as low as 2 kg) can turn your sharp face into a plain flat shaded face, being the single biggest looks killer for men.*

*“Just have an ugly face (...) face is EVERYTHING”*

*“just my face is ugly as hell, cursed by the genetics of my mother”*

They believe that even though they have a fit body or are tall, they will never reach the status of a Chad, as the face is the most important feature:

*“I’m a gymcel who has a lean body, and very similar to Chad Bateman. I get zero pussy. Zero attention. No female gives a fuck about my arms, my abs, or anything. Face. Hight.”*

*“Guys with good bodies but ugly faces literally cannot find a single hook-up”*

They encourage each other to describe how unappealing they look, missing features, and how short they are.

Many Incels discuss suicide due to their loneliness, sexlessness and because they believe there is nothing to do to improve their situation. They have developed a specific slang for suicide (see Appendix I). Instead of acknowledging suicide as a result of mental health issues, they encourage each other to commit it as a proud way to get out of one’s miserable life.

Others encourage committing terror attacks such as mass shootings, before suicide, as an act of revenge. They refer to this as “E.R.”, short for Elliot Rodger, who shot and killed men and women because of sexual deprivation and his relation to the Incel-ideology (Maxwell et al., 2020; Witt, 2020). Elliot Rodger will be explained further in chapter 2.4 and Appendix II.

### *The Stacy and the Becky*

Incels’ views on women are complex. They construct women as superficial and evil for having sexual relations with Chads while feeling an entitlement to their bodies. The language about women overflows with misogyny and sexism. They construct women into two archetypes, the Stacy and the Becky. Stacies are twofolded. She is both beautiful, tall, blond, white, blue-eyed, and the classic “girl next door”:

*“I worked in a bar and all of the girls there were early 20s stacies with blonde hair and shit. All went to the gym”*

She is also considered sexually promiscuous and to like to be dominated by Chads. She takes advantage of Betas for their money and dresses to show a lot of skin. A Becky is the opposite; dull, a feminist, needy, and nerdy; qualities Incels dislike. Incels consider women biologically hardwired to mate with “strong men” who can protect them and reproduce healthy and attractive children. The foundation of the Red and the Black Pill is that feminism has made women choosy, as they now can earn their own money and are not dependent on a man to provide (Maxwell et al., 2020; Witt, 2020). When I started to research for this thesis, I believed women would be the most discussed topic in the Incel community. I realised that

they more often discuss themselves and the experiences of being an Incel, but always in *relation* to women.

## 2.3 Incels and social media

Incels communicate on social media such the Incel-focused sites Incels.co, lookism.ne, looksmx.me, Wizardchan, and more mainstream sites such as Reddit, 4chan, and 8kun (Ribeiro et al., 2020, p.1). The feminist writer Donna Zuckerberg analyses the far-right, the Manosphere, and Incels' use of social media. She writes:

Social media has led to an unprecedented democratization of information, but it has also created the opportunity for men with antifeminist ideas to broadcast their views to more people than ever before – and to spread conspiracy theories, lies, and misinformation. (Zuckerburg, 2018, p.3)

Social media, especially sites with low or no moderation, such as Reddit, 4chan, and 8kun, is used by Incels as they can write freely without censorship. This brings issues like echo chambers, where, as Zuckerberg writes, conspiracies and misinformation can be distributed. Incels use a heavily racist, misogynistic, and violent rhetoric, with neologisms of adjectives and acronyms (see Appendix I). The misogynistic, racist, and violence-promoting rhetoric led to a ban of the 41,000-strong Incel-community r/incels on Reddit in 2017 (Ribeiro et al., 2020b). A few hours after the ban, the user, SergeantIncel, created a new website for Incels to communicate. The website changes domain from Incels.co to Incels.is and incels.me. During the time of writing, it has changed from .co to .is. The administrator is also the creator of the Incel-forum Looksmx.me, where Incels can discuss how to improve their looks. Incels.co is described as “[A]n independent website offers its community flexibility and allows free speech in a way that would likely be censored on other forums, due to their politically correct speech. It features the Black Pill philosophy prominently” (Incels.is). After the Incel-community has been associated with violence and terror attacks, which will be outlined in the next chapter, the founder of the term Incel, “Alana”, has founded the organisation “Love Not Anger” which is “dedicated to pushing back against incel hatred by addressing the abject loneliness evident across these online forums” (Hoffman et al., 2020, p.578).

## 2.4 Incel-terror attacks and the importance of studying them

The British feminist author and founder of Everyday Sexism Project, Laura Bates, has researched the Incel community and states that over the past ten years, more than 100 people, primarily women, have been murdered or injured by Incels in different terror attacks (Bates, 2020, p.11). Scholars have analysed Incel-terrorism through four categories: The first is direct Incel-motivated terror, the second is terror-attacks with mixed ideological influence but primarily an Incel-inspired model. The third is attacks by self-proclaimed Incels who are not deeply involved in the community. These attacks are primarily against single individuals compared to the first two categories, which publicly attack larger groups. The fourth category is attacks made by men who do not identify themselves as Incels but are honoured by the Incel community and have inspired Incel attacks (Hoffman et al., 2020, p.569).

The Incel community became publicly known in 2014, as the first Incel related terror attack was committed that year by the self-proclaimed Incel Elliot Rodger, who shot 14 people and killed five before committing suicide. Before the attack, Rodger published a 137-page manifesto, *My Twisted World*. It describes his life in detail and seeks to justify the attack, which he called the Incel Rebellion. He named the day of the attack “The Day of Retribution” and writes that he was revenging women for refusing him sexual and intimate relations and good-looking men for stealing the women away from him (Rodger, 2014; Witt, 2020). Rodger was active on numerous Incel forums. Both Rodger and the attack are honored on websites such as 4chan, Reddit and Incels-sites, where he is called “Saint Elliot” and “The Supreme Gentleman”. The members on Incels.co uses his picture as avatars, they use his name as usernames, and when they are referring to the act of “taking revenge” they call it “E.R.”, the initials of Elliot Rodger. He is one of the most respected Incels in the community. After Rodger’s attack, several Incel-related terror attacks have been committed (see Appendix II). In January 2020 the Texas Department of Public Safety included Incels as an “emerging domestic terrorism threat” (Texas & Department of Public Safety, 2020). During the time of writing this thesis, in March 2021, the Danish Security and Intelligence Service published a report by the Center for Terror Analytics of Denmark’s most significant terror threats, where Incels appear for the first time (Center for Terroranalyse, 2021). Recognizing Incels as a terror threat is essential due to their history of terror and violence. The terror attacks are one of many reasons why Incels are essential to study and understand. When hatred moves from online forums to reality and the hurting and killing of people, the extremist culture is no longer an Internet phenomenon. I believe it is essential to understand

where this hatred comes from and how they encourage each other to sustain an ideology based on hate, violence, and misogyny.

# Chapter III – Theoretical outline

Incels construct their ideology within the new online anti-feminism, which produces masculinism, a theoretical concept of a masculinity which reproduces and reclaims conservative sexuality and power structures based on biological determination and hegemonic and hybrid masculinity. This thesis analyses these structures critically from a feminist poststructuralist epistemological tradition (Davies & Gannon, 2005).

[P]oststructuralist feminism breaks with theoretical frameworks in which gender and sexuality are understood as inevitable, as determined through structures of language, social structure and cognition. It also breaks with theoretical frameworks that define power as that which can be held by certain groups and individuals.  
(Davies & Gannon, 2005, p.318)

This thesis aims to challenge Incels' binary conception of man/woman and masculine/feminine, an approach inspired by the critical approaches and deconstructions of hegemonic gender norms informed by a Butlerian tradition. Furthermore, it aims to challenge the power constructions from a patriarchal and masculinist perspective. The theoretical framework of this thesis will be expanded by the secondary theories presented in the following chapter and by the primary theories which this chapter outlines. First, the chapter presents the new online anti-feminism, as I argue that anti-feminism is central to the Incel ideology. Online anti-feminist ideologies produce a new masculinity structure, masculinism, which is the foundation of Incels' construction of masculinity. This construction of masculinity merges hegemonic masculinity and hybrid masculinity. Further, I will discuss how these theories accommodate the analysis of Incels' construction of masculinity within the new online anti-feminism.

## 3.1 Theorising the new online anti-feminism

In 2012, Canadian professors Melissa Blais and Francis Dupuis-Déri claimed that only a little and not enough research is conducted on anti-feminism, "which consequently remains a poorly understood phenomenon" (Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2012, p.21). Since then, research on anti-feminist and anti-gender movements has accumulated. Communications scholars Debbie

Ging and Eugenia Siapera describe the distinction between anti-feminism and misogyny as such:

Clearly there are important distinctions to be made between misogyny and anti-feminism, the former usually understood as a more general set of attitudes and behaviours towards women; the latter implying a response to a distinct set of gender-political values that are not espoused exclusively by women.  
(Ging & Siapera, 2019, p.2)

Anti-feminism and misogyny can easily be confused as the same, but there are key differences. As The Danish historian of ideas, Mikkel Thorup writes, anti-feminism is an extension of misogyny and a part of the new history of hatred towards women (Thorup, 2020). Misogyny is an expression of disgust of *women*, while anti-feminism is the hatred towards the *feminist* (Thorup, 2020). In the quote above, Ging and Siapera explain anti-feminism as a response to gender politics, making it more ideology-based than misogyny. Ging studies the differences between offline and online anti-feminism. The former is where men organise in groups to fight concrete cases such as father rights, feminisation of education and the statistically high number of suicides by men. The latter is the *new online anti-feminism*, which works in cyberspace, on social media, and online chat forums and has “adopted a highly personalized style of politics that often fails to distinguish between feminists and women” (Ging & Siapera, 2019, p.2). Even though anti-feminism and misogyny are two different matters, they intertwine, especially in the online anti-feminism. The Manosphere is a result of online anti-feminism as they operate on blogs, YouTube, Twitter, Reddit, and other online forums (Ging & Siapera, 2019). The online anti-feminism has increased and normalized online angry and violent rhetoric towards women and feminists and is viewed not so much as “a backlash against as it is a facet of a digital gender politics” (Ging & Siapera, 2019, p.47). Online anti-feminism shares similarities to the period between feudalism and capitalism: the witch hunt. Ging and Siapera refer to Silvia Federici’s analysis of the witch hunt; even though they point out that online harassment cannot compare to the genocidal witch hunt, they are drawing lines between the two as they are grounded in the same hatred and violence aimed at women:

Of course, the scale and impact are nowhere near the same, as the genocidal witch hunt cannot be compared with the forms of misogyny we encounter in today’s digital environments. Yet the sexualized violence they evoke, the focus on women’s bodies, the spectacular online attacks against prominent women aimed at disciplining all women, the ritual sexual humiliation through revenge porn and videos of women

raped, the reduction of women to biological organisms with a reproductive function, their general degradation and dehumanization, all point to a similar dynamic at play. (Ging & Siapera, 2019, p.38)

Just as women once were (and still are) banned from specific public spaces because of their gender, they are today restricted, harassed, and have become victims of online violence. Ging and Siapera argue that misogyny and online anti-feminism and online anti-feminism stems from the same ideology:

[T]he libertarianism in the rape-gloss of 4chan and Reddit and the traditionalism of the alt-right, they ultimately express the same position: women's role in society is biologically determined by their reproductive functions. Hence men can be positioned towards them as either sluts and whores used for (men's) sexual gratification or as reproductive vessels ensuring the continuation of a pure white ethnocultural identity. There is no autonomy or full humanity afforded to them, and it is in this sense that the anti-feminism of the alt-right can be collapsed into misogyny, even if it is expressed in milder and less "transgressive" terms. (Ging & Siapera, 2019, p.31)

The anger and violent discourses towards women online are directed towards women in public and private spheres. Following Thorup, anti-feminism has to be contextualised and situated in two critical global phenomena: the growth of the far-right and neoliberalism as a national populist ideology (Thorup, 2020). Even though anti-feminism has roots in the far-right it does not mean all far-rights are anti-feminist, nor that all anti-feminist are far-rights. However, gap between them is narrow, just as it is between misogyny and anti-feminism. In Europe, the political landscape pushes towards the right, and with the previous president of the U.S., Donald Trump, the far-right discourse of misogyny, anti-feminism, anti-lgbtq+, and anti-immigration is increasing and increasingly normalised, which moves the phenomenon from a political sphere towards a normalised discourse in the general public, both offline and online (Thorup, 2020). In a society where online anti-feminists believe conservative gender norms are important to cherish, everyone who identifies as feminists becomes an issue for the online anti-feminist. When women replace their "biological" role in society; as mothers, housewives, as obsequious, dependent on a man, and as sexual oppressed, there is space for anti-feminism, resulting in dehumanisation for all who identify as women. The Incel ideology is a result of the new online anti-feminist ideology, which makes the theorisation of online anti-feminism essential to contextualise the formation of the Incel ideology.

## 3.2 Hegemonic and hybrid masculinity

The Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell is one of the pioneers of masculinity studies and introduced the term *hegemonic masculinity*. By theorising structural systems constructed for and around masculinity, she theorised how masculinity is a broad term with many facets and how all genders are affected by power structures where masculinity is the centre; “If we broaden the angle of vision, we can see masculinity, not as an isolated object, but as an aspect of a larger structure” (Connell, 1995, p.67). The term hegemonic masculinity constructs an understanding of a certain kind of masculinity built around structures, power relations, and hierarchies. As Connell puts it, it is not a “fixed character type” (Connell, 1995, p.76) but a concept that dwells everywhere and always. The term “hegemony” comes from the Italian philosopher, journalist, and communist Antonio Gramsci’s analysis of cultural dynamics and class relations and is used to understand a particular group’s claim and sustain a leading hierarchal position (Connell, 1995). Connell describes hegemonic masculinity as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (Connell, 1995, p.77). Although hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal violence are close, it is essential to emphasize that they are not the same. Patriarchal violence is structural while hegemonic masculinity is the cultural expression of this:

It does not imply that hegemonic masculinity means being particularly nasty to women (...). What it does imply is the maintenance of practices that institutionalize men’s dominance over women. In this sense, hegemonic masculinity must embody a successful collective strategy concerning women (Connell, 1987, p.185).

A biological construction of genders makes a patriarchal ideology function. Biological determination constructs women as “emotional” and men as “rational”. Its form is taken from the hunter-gather-idea of the 1970s, where men are the “provider” and is built around a masculinity that can be traced back to when men fought, killed, and when masculinity “vital to surviving” (Connell, 1995, p.45).

It is not only women hegemonic masculinity subordinates. Connell describes an intersectional hierarchy where sexuality, race, ethnicity, and gender play a role for hegemonic masculinity to function. It subordinates all genders, as “man” is not a fixed concept, and as hegemonic

masculinity builds on the idea of a “real man”; a normative masculine, dominant figure who is the patriarch of others. “‘Hegemonic masculinity’ is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities. (...) The interplay between different forms of masculinity is an important part of how a patriarchal social order works” (Connell, 1987, p.183).

The interplay of masculinities is what Ging theorises with the term *hybrid masculinity*. Ging writes that hegemonic masculinity builds on other masculinities, hence hybrid masculinity. It contextualises online anti-feminist movements, aiming to continue dominating women, and the Manosphere, including Incels, as they construct a hierarchy of men based on hybrid masculinity (Ging, 2019, p.642). She argues that the masculinity constructed by online anti-feminist movements is a hybrid of a fluid, overlapping pattern of masculinity under constant development. Hybrid masculinity develops a hierarchy of masculinities that one fits into or is excluded from; Alphas, Chads, Betas, Incels, Subhumans (see chapter 2.2.2). Ging writes that “these hybrid masculinities symbolically distance men from hegemonic masculinity, while simultaneously compounding existing social and symbolic boundaries. In other words, they “work to conceal systems of power and inequality in historically new ways” (Bridges and Pascoe 2014, 246)” (Ging, 2019, p.642). Hybrid masculinities argues what Connell claims that not many men fit into the normative construction of a “real man”. Although the Manosphere, and Incels, recognise many masculinities, they are “mobilizing and reifying narratives of personal suffering to build affective consensus about an allegedly collective, gendered experience, namely men’s position in the social hierarchy as a result of feminism” (Ging, 2019, p.653). Even though many men do not fit into the embodiment of hegemonic masculinity, they still benefit from its hegemony, as they benefit from a patriarchal structure where men in overall benefit from the oppression of women (economic, political, sexual) (Connell, 1995). Men who benefit from the patriarchal dividend can, as Connell put it, be respectful towards their wives, moms, never be violent, do housework, and still be convinced that feminists are “bra-burning extremists” (Connell, 1995, p.79). Hegemonic masculinity is not by definition anti-feminist, although anti-feminism reproduces hegemonic masculinity. In correlation with online anti-feminism, masculinism, and hybrid masculinity, exists an entitlement to the power, the dominance, and the suppression of women and the feminist. The next chapter contextualises this by outline masculinism and the masculinity crisis.

### 3.3 Theorising masculinism and the current masculinity crisis

Melissa Blais and Francis Dupuis-Déri theorise that online anti-feminism issues a masculinity crisis founded on *masculinism*. “Masculinism asserts that since men are in crisis and suffering because of women in general and feminists in particular, the solution to their problems involves curbing the influence of feminism and revalorizing masculinity” (Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2012, p.22). Masculinism is not the opposite of feminism; feminism fights for equal rights for everyone, masculinism fights to perceive the rights men believe they are entitled to (Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2012). Masculinism is a counterreaction to feminism as the feminist, and the woman is viewed to control society and dominate men who view themselves as “victims of feminist struggles, which have resulted in the supplanting of patriarchy by matriarchy” (Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2012, p.23). The masculinist seeks to dominate women, detract the rights women have gained by feminists’ political struggles, and advocate defending a masculine identity in dissolution (Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2012). Masculinism connotes Incels’ online anti-feminist views, blaming feminism as the root of their oppression. Masculinism also connects to the Incel ideology as it is founded in biological determination. They perceive men and women from a normative construction of gender, where men are naturally aggressive, competitive, and hierarchical over women (Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2012 p.27). Masculinism correlates to the white masculinity crisis, which is central to online anti-feminism. As a result of women entering what masculinists view as men’s domain, men are “currently grappling with an ‘identity crisis’” (Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2012, p.23). As masculinists primarily are white, heterosexual men from the Global North (Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2012, p.23), the crisis is not only on masculinity but *white* masculinity. Mikkel Thorup is an active voice in the debate on online anti-feminism and misogyny. Thorup outlines the white man’s masculinity crisis in the context of online anti-feminism, hegemonic masculinity, and aggrieved entitlement. The new movement of various types or kinds of “man” confuses a men’s idea of what a “real” man is and how they should act in society on an existential level;

It is no longer as transparent as before how to be a real man. Banal concepts such as metrosexual or hipster register new male modes of expression (...) it is a liberation for some that there are a plurality of ways one can be a man, for others, it is hardly registered as anything other than that it is how it is, for some it is difficult and ambivalent, and for others, it is perceived as threatening, if not decidedly dangerous and wrong. (Thorup, 2020, p.38)

Thorup argues that women's identity, role, and gender have been studied, criticised, developed, and questioned throughout history, while men's identity hardly has been challenged. This is changing, which Throup identify as a collective identity crisis for the man. When a man cannot be "a real man" (based on hegemonic and normative constructions of masculinity), men feel their gender and role in society are under attack, and fear it will result in them becoming irrelevant (Thorup, 2020, p.53). Incels struggle with their identity as men, as they do not fit in the self-created hierarchy and a conservative idea of a "real man". Incels believe their role as men is becoming irrelevant and struggle to fit in the new gender roles, deconstructing conservative ideals. Irrelevance is one of the fundamental struggles, and instead of finding a homogenous solution to reinvent the idea of "man", hegemonic masculinity increases while misogyny and anti-feminism are rising.

I use masculinism as a theoretical frame for Incels' aggrieved entitlement to sexual relations and women's bodies, which the following chapter will outline.

### 3.4 Aggrieved entitlement

The American sociologist Michael Kimmel theorises *aggrieved entitlement*, which is the feeling of entitlement white, American men have who are under the impression that their rights are stolen from them (Kimmel, 2013). Aggrieved entitlement results from anti-feminist views in which the white American men feel set aside by society and where their masculinity is considered under "attack" from feminists, migrants, and socialists (Kimmel, 2013). Kimmel writes that aggrieved entitlement is founded in the illusion of the American Dream:

It is that sense that those benefits to which you believed yourself entitled have been snatched away from you by unseen forces larger and more powerful. You feel yourself to be the heir to a great promise, the American Dream, which has turned into an impossible fantasy for the very people who were *supposed* to inherit it. (Kimmel, 2013, p.18)

White, American men feel it is their right by birth to have great jobs, wives, children, wealth, and success. When this is taken away from them or they cannot live up to the promises, they blame others (feminism and women) and not themselves. Kimmel writes that hegemonic masculinity bonds them together, drawing on a conservative and traditional ideal of manhood

and masculinity based on physical strength and power inherited from former generations of men and passed to their sons. The entitlement they try to preserve is where the man is at the top of the hierarchy (Kimmel, 2013, p.15).

We have accepted an ideology of masculinity that leaves us feeling empty and alone when we do it right, and even worse when we feel we're doing it wrong. Worst of all, though, is when we feel we've done it right and still do not get the rewards to which we believe we are entitled. Then we have to blame somebody. Somebody else.  
(Kimmel, 2013, p.9)

Aggrieved entitlement unifies these men, as they feel someone promised them something, and someone else has taken it. The feeling of being unfairly treated creates, what Kimmel calls, the anger of entitlement; White American men are angry and believe their anger is entitled (Kimmel, 2013, p.15). Kimmel writes that even though white men are the most privileged group, American white men feel like victims, which comes with self-righteous anger, proving their privilege (Kimmel, 2013, p.17). When a group has nothing, they feel they deserve the same, while a group with everything believes they are entitled to it and more (Kimmel, 2013, p.24). "Revolutions are made not by those with "nothing left to lose", (...), but precisely by those *with* something to lose— and a fear that they are, in fact, about to lose it" (Kimmel, 2013, p.21).

The entitlement is taken away by gender and racial equality, which turns the anger towards migrants for "stealing *their* jobs" and women who "are beautiful, sexy, and sexually available—yet turn them down with contemptuous sneers" (Kimmel, 2013, p.17). The anger is turned to wives as well, which is another anger than that towards women, as they "keep men in harness as responsible breadwinners and providers, working in jobs they hate for bosses who are capricious morons, only to take them to the cleaners in the divorce, snatching the kids and leaving them penniless and childless" (Kimmel, 2013, p.17). The form of aggrieved entitlement used in this thesis's analysis establishes how Incels feel entitled to women's bodies. Incels reproduce the idea that a man is entitled to sexual relationships with a woman *because* he is a man, which he feels feminism has taken away from him, as it has made the woman equal to the man.

### 3.5 Summary

This chapter outlines the primary theoretical framework for this thesis. The theory of the new online anti-feminism is used as an umbrella theory for what it reproduces of masculinity. Incels are a result of online anti-feminism, and their ideology reproduces online anti-feminist ideological views. Within the frame of masculinity is masculinism, as this is a direct outcome of online anti-feminism and the origin of the masculinity crisis. Incels is also a result of the masculinity crisis, which creates new hybrid masculinities as the growth of feminism and gender equality deconstructs and reevaluates men's normative and conservative construction. Incels' construction of men and the hierarchy of attractiveness is based on hegemonic masculinity but moves within hybrid masculinities. As a result of the mentioned theories, which contextualise the Incel ideology, is the aggrieved entitlement towards women's bodies. The entitlement to women's bodies and sexual relations with women combines Incels' shared experiences of sexual deprivation. These theories make the foundation for the analysis combined with the previous research which the following chapter outlines.

# Chapter IV – Previous research

My interest in Incels, the Manosphere, and radicalised online movements started about four years ago. I began to research the field, both out of personal interest and academic purpose, realising that only a few academic papers were written about the Manosphere, Incels or anti-feminism. Lub.lu.se's search portal for academic peer-review research articles only showed a couple of journals about the Manosphere and fewer on Incels. However, during 2020 and 2021, the focus on the Manosphere and Incels as a movement has increased. Research on Incels locates within various fields, such as feminist studies, linguistics, masculinity studies, studies in conflict and terrorism, and political science. Previous research can be categorised as follows: Mapping and theorising the Manosphere and Incels; Discourse, narrative, and linguistic analysis; Analysis of violence; and analysis of Incels and the connection to far-right ideologies. This is the same order in which the following chapter will present the previous research. Furthermore, the final chapter presents which of the previous research is used as secondary theory for the analysis

## 4.1 Previous research on Incels

### 4.1.1 Theorising a new masculinity

Feminist media scholar Debbie Ging is the pioneer of research of Incels. Ging is researching masculinity and anti-feminism within different Manosphere groups, mainly focused on MRA and PUA on Web 2.0 (Ging, 2019). Ging's work engages the analytical terminology of hegemonic and hybrid masculinity in identifying how anti-feminist men position themselves within the Manosphere's discursive practices and look at the hierarchy of Alpha, Beta, and Zeta Masculinities (Ging, 2019). Drawing on masculinity theory by Connell and Messerschmidt, Ging unfolds the term of heterosexual and hegemonic masculinity and revisits the term hybrid masculinity as a more accurate term used for groups within the Manosphere (Ging, 2019). Ging's work is referenced intensively in the following research papers and is one of the central references to understanding Incels construction of masculinity.

### 4.1.2 Mapping the Manosphere

Using quantitative methods, Ribeiro, Blackburn, Bradlyn, De Cristofaro, Stringhini, Long, Greenberg, and Zannettou have mapped the different groups of the Manosphere (Ribeiro et al., 2020a; Ribeiro et al., 2020b). they argue that over the past 14 years, the Manosphere has grown from mainly PUA and MRA forums to the more extremists groups of MGTOW and Incels and that the two latter are the most active groups at the moment, where Incel-forums peaked in 2016 (Ribeiro et al., 2020a; Ribeiro et al., 2020b). By analysing 38M posts from 7 forums and 57 subreddits, their analysis shows that users from PUA and MRA forums migrated to the more extremist groups of MGTOW, TRP, and Incels (Ribeiro et al., 2020a). Alongside the development of the Manosphere, hate speech increased online, where Incels uses the most extremists language compared to other Manosphere groups (Ribeiro et al., 2020a).

### 4.1.3 Incel language, linguistics, and discourses

Another area of analysis is the study of Incel language, vocabulary, and communication strategies. Incels have created their own language where sexism, racism and violence are centred and normalised. Dynel (2020) researched Incels humorous practice functions in the subreddit r/IncelTears. Humour is central in how Incels communicate about life, sex, looks, and political topics (Dynel, 2020). Especially the use of memes has a primary function for creating humour and serves as bonding mechanism (Dynel, 2020). Digital platforms, such as social media, facilitate Incels to build a community to share experiences (Byerly, 2020). An unfavourable outcome of online communication is that anonymity and distance to other users increase violence, misogyny, sexism, racism, and other extremists discourses: “Internet forum users are more likely to resort to hate speech and even post direct threats towards their anonymous and, to some extent, abstract enemies and opponents” (Prazimo, 2020, p.16). Prazimo’s cognitive linguistics study focuses on the linguistic dehumanisation of women and non-Incel men and the hatred connected to non-Incels. Incel language varies from “innocent banter and self-pitying moaning, through derogatory and pejorative name-calling to direct threats against women, including the descriptions of elaborate fantasies which involve rape, torture and murder” (Prazimo, 2020, p.17). The normalisation of a language with discourses of violence and hate speech can lead to radicalisation and have societal consequences, as seen in the U.S. and Canada (Prazimo, 2020). As a growing number of mass shootings (in the U.S. and Canada) has connections to the Incel-community (see Appendix

II), Scaptura and Boyle (2020), working with an online self-report survey, analyse how radicalising Incel-language can affect young, heterosexual men in the age of 18-30 from the U.S. (Scaptura & Boyle, 2020). The study focused on the link between Incel traits, masculinity, sexual violence, and mass murder fantasies. They write that “most men are not “incels” and most “incels” are not mass murderers” (Scaptura & Boyle, 2020, p.289), although their results reveal that Incel-discourses can be a stepping-stone to execute violent fantasies. “Harmless” ideas of blaming women and superior looking men for one own misery can turn into “more extreme views such as sexual slavery, redistribution of women, and violence against feminists” (Scaptura & Boyle, 2020, p.279).

#### 4.1.4 Incels as a terror threat

Even though the number of Incel-related terror attacks on a global scale is low, it is argued that they pose a rising threat. Tomkinson argues that the history of gender-based violent attacks connected to the Incel-community is worth considering as a terror threat as they fit the criteria of violent extremism (Tomkinson et al., 2020). Hoffman, Ware, and Shapiro (2020) categorise Incel-terrorism into four different categories; “Clear incel-motivated terrorist attacks; Attacks with mixed motives that evidence incel ideological influences; Acts of targeted violence perpetrated by self-professed involuntary celibates; and, Ex post-facto incelism” (Hoffman et al., 2020, p.569). Clear Incel-motivated terror attacks are attacks dedicated to and for the movement. Hoffman, Ware, and Shapiro explain that Elliot Rodger, Alek Minassian, and Scott Beierle executed clear Incel-terror attacks because they are self-proclaimed Incels and directly and primarily attacked women or places where they believed there would be many women at once (Hoffman et al., 2020, p.570). Attacks with mixed motives count attacks without a clear political motive, although attackers identified themselves as Incels. They mention the three attacks by Christopher Harper-Mercer, William Atchison, Nikolas Cruz, who have been active on Incel forums and have been inspired by the Incel ideology. They all have described themselves as lonely, friendless, and virgins and have praised Elliot Rodger as a “saint” (Hoffman et al., 2020, p.571). The third category involves targeted acts of violence, both murders and assaults, by a person who identifies as an Incel, lonely and sexless but is not deeply involved in the ideology. The attacks focus on individuals instead of a vast public scene. There are three specific cases, although they estimate a more significant number of these kinds of attacks. The attacks seem to have a clear motive of sexual frustration rather than a political or ideological one (Hoffman et al., 2020, p.571-572).

The last category, Ex postfacto inceldom, is described as how attackers and terrorists have been lauded and sanctified by other Incels. This is both Incel-related attacks and attacks like the Columbine shootings and the anti-feminist attack by Marc Lepine, who murdered 14 women in 1989 (Hoffman et al., 2020, p.572). Hoffman, Ware, and Shapiro analysis unfold some Incels' relation to the far-right and neo-liberalist groups such as the neofascist militant group Proud Boys.

Not least, Hoffman, Ware, and Shapiro discuss how the group intertwines with racist, antisemitic, and homophobic ideas besides misogyny, sexism, and anti-feminism (Hoffman et al., 2020).

[I]ncels do not conform to the traditional model of terrorism. Because of the power of the Internet, social media, and other twenty first century communications platforms, terrorism is increasingly becoming a solitary venture, primarily perpetrated by lone actors operating outside formal organisations. (Hoffman et al., 2020, p.576)

They conclude that even though Incels are not as significant a terror threat as many other organisations, they are worth looking at as a terror threat and a threat towards a free society.

#### 4.1.5 Theorising loneliness

Not least, scholars discuss how loneliness and mental health problems are named as reasons to join the Incel community. Loneliness is one of the primary aspects for men to join Incel forums, as they find a community that centre on the status of being a lonely outcast, and within that solitude, they find unity. Hoffman, Ward, and Shapiro have analysed how the Incel community takes the shared experience of loneliness and converts it to hatred, anger, and violence (Hoffman et al., 2020, p.578). As Incels exist on the Internet, it is simple to access these groups where pain and loneliness is an easy way into radicalisation (Hoffman et al., 2020). Maxwell, Robinson, Williams, and Keaton (2020) have mapped and theorised Incel loneliness. They describe social connections as a basic human need, while loneliness, especially in childhood and young adulthood, can result in mental illnesses such as high anxiety, social abandonment issues, negative views of oneself, and externalizing personal distress (Maxwell et al., 2020, p.1853). The argue that social loneliness emerges into romantical loneliness, where young adults without romantic relationships can develop a low level of general well-being:

[Y]oung adults who identify as involuntarily single have higher levels of romantic loneliness than those in relationships or who identify as voluntarily single (...). Involuntary singlehood is also associated with higher levels of anxiety, insomnia, depression, and romantic loneliness when compared to those who identify as voluntarily single. (Maxwell et al., 2020, p.1854)

Incels' involuntary lack of sexual encounters can cause depression, despair, frustration, and loss of self-confidence. The feeling of being an outcast caused by not complying with societal construction to how much sexual encounter is normal can cause a lack of confidence and faith to improve their situation (Maxwell et al., 2020). The authors describe the double standard or paradox of Incels hierarchy of beauty standards as a way to stay in a depressed mindset. The normative ideal of masculinity and the acknowledgement of never being able to reach it (and thereby never to reach love from a high-standard woman) can manifest in anger and frustrations towards themselves, women, and other men (Maxwell et al., 2020). “[T]hese results demonstrate that members of the incel community feel misunderstood and rejected, which can contribute to a radicalized identity due to social isolation” (Maxwell et al., 2020, p.1866). The loneliness becomes deterministic and constantly reproduced and reified.

### *Outlining secondary theory*

As mentioned in the chapter's introduction, results and theoretical terms of the previous research is used as a secondary theory for the analysis. Ging's theory of hybrid masculinity is essential to understand the specific construction of masculinity within the Incel community and is used as an expansion of Connell's theorising of hegemonic masculinity. Furthermore, Hoffman, Ware, and Shapiro's research of loneliness and mental health issues contextualises the Incel communities rage and hatred and is useful when analysing Incels' connection to online anti-feminist ideology, the masculinity crisis, and their violent language and fantasies.

# Chapter V – Methodology, method, material, and ethics

The following chapter will outline the methodology, method, and material of this thesis. Furthermore, it will end with a chapter of ethical consideration and positioning. Scholar in sociology and women's and gender studies Andrea Doucet and scholar in social science Natasha Mauthner (2006) point out that feminist research should not only be *on* women but *for* women (Doucet & Mauthner 2006, p.40). Even though this research is not directly about women or research of women, it analyses gender constructions critically. Feminist research aims to challenge power structures and gender-based inequalities critically and focuses on oppressed groups' intersectional perspectives (Leavy & Harris, 2019). Incels is only one group that evolved from the growing anti-feminist movement, national conservatism, and the far-right (Thorup, 2020). Male-based ideologies are growing and promote racial segregation and queerphobia, reproduce gender-based violence, and are against gender equality, making them a feminist issue and a phenomenon I believe is vital to keep challenging and exposing how gender-related power structures are detrimental. Incels are interesting to research from a feminist perspective as their ideology opposes a diverse, liberal, and inclusive society as they encourage a gender-normative ideology and include racism, sexism, homo- and transphobia (Thorup, 2020; Mogensen & Rand, 2020). The following chapters will outline the methodical framework of feminist cyber-ethnography, netnography, immersive engagement, and the method of analysis, feminist content analysis. Further, the chapter will outline material and end with positioning and ethics.

## 5.1 Feminist cyber-ethnography, netnography, and content analysis

The following chapters will outline the methods of this thesis and the foundation for its creation. This thesis' method combines feminist cyber-ethnography and netnography. The former bases on classic feminist ethnography and digital research ethics, while the latter is by Professor of Journalism Robert V. Kozinets and is a digital research method. Furthermore,

the chapter will outline the immersive engagement on Incels.co and the method of feminist content analysis.

### 5.1.1 Outlining feminist cyber-ethnography

Professors of geography Morrow, Hawkins, and Kern emphasise a lack of development of feminist online methodology (Morrow et al., 2015, p.526). Furthermore, they express concern for the feminist online method to be viewed as “less” evidential than classic ethnography; “Online research methods are routinely critiqued for being too quick and dirty and lacking the depth (and truthiness?) that comes from face-to-face interactions” (Morrow et al., 2015, p.532). This observation is a viewpoint I experienced when writing former papers about the Manosphere. I experienced others’ opinions of online ethnography as less “academic” and less “credible” as the classic physical interactive ethnographic method. Although I believe online research is both crucial, academic, and an exciting way to research online communities such as Incels, as they do not function as a community or group in a physical setting.

Professor of Anthropology Sophie Bjork-James, who has specialised in racism, evangelicalism, and reproductive politics, emphasises that when offline and online cultures overlap, it creates a hybrid where the study of online cultures creates a better understanding of offline realities (Bjork-James, 2015). Humans create online cultures, and when gathering and treating online data, it is important to not treat it as neutral and disembodied, but as a human product of political cultures as people are “always already political” (Morrow et al., 2015, p.531). For feminist cyber-ethnography, it is essential to look at the political possibilities of online cultures. Feminist cyber-ethnography has no textbook or a one-to-one way to do research online but is a mix of classic ethnography and online research conducted by researchers and thereby can be copied. Bjork-James uses cyber-ethnography to research cybercultures and refers to Walstrom (2004), who suggests calling cyber-ethnographers’ participant-experiencer as one does not conduct face-to-face interactions (Bjork-James, 2015, p.117). Cyber-ethnography focuses on how people communicate (the use of words, phrases, slang, emoticons) to understand how the community conveys a social bond through online communication. Furthermore, videos, pictures, memes, and avatars are essential in understanding the online culture (Bjork-James, 2015).

### 5.1.2 Outlining netnography

Journalism scholar Robert V. Kozinets developed netnography for doing ethical and valuable research online. Instead of transferring methods directly from ethnography, anthropology, or sociology, Kozinets designed a new and more specific online research method. Netnography is based on social science methods of ethnographic research but combines online communication, participation and observation with data collection, analysis, and research representation (Kozinets 2015).

Netnography is a form of qualitative research that seeks to understand the cultural experiences that encompass and are reflected within traces, practices, networks and systems of social media. (...) It is a way of viewing data and thinking about how to understand the world. (Kozinets 2020, p.14)

The intention is the same as the classical social science methods: to study cultures and human interactions. Although traditional social sciences methods focus on fieldwork, in-depth interviews, and surveys, netnography focus on immersive engagement (online fieldwork), data collection (scraping), and data mining (analysis). Kozinets writes that online ethnography separates from classic ethnography, as the scholar uses the Internet as the research field and posts, comments, threads, pictures, or videos as their material instead of interviews and physical fieldwork. Social media and online forums can reveal how a collective group of people who share the same beliefs or ideology communicate, interact, and share narratives (Kozinets, 2011; Kozinets, 2015; Kozinets & Nocker, 2018). “The telling of stories, sharing of beliefs, passing along of powerful images and media; social media is filled with narratives whose importance requires deep analysis, identification, and (re)connection of meaning” (Kozinets, 2020, p.134). Netnography works on three pillars: Focal phenomenon, social media data, and immersive engagement (Kozinets, 2020). The following chapter outlines the immersive engagement, while the social media data is explained in the next chapter of material.

### 5.1.3 Immersive engagement

Kozinets describe immersive engagement as the netnographic version of ethnographic fieldwork. “Engagement means keeping a special type of netnographic fieldnotes in an immersion journal” (Kozinets, 2015, p.136). Bjork-James argues that engaging in the online community of topics is a way to understand the culture (Bjork-James, 2015), while Kozinets

writes that engaging will be ethically difficult, and one must only shadow the culture without engaging. Therefore, I have not conducted immersive engagement by engaging in the community, due to ethical issues (see chapter 5.3). The immersive engagement I have conducted has been shadowing, researching, reading, and watching content made by self-proclaimed Incels. Before and during writing this thesis, I have read comments on the biggest Incel website, Incels.co as well as Reddit, looksmax.me, lookism.net lookism.net, and Wizardchan regularly. I have spent a significant amount of time on the site to understand how Incels communicate: the language and words they use, the pictures they share, the meaning behind different memes, acronyms, abbreviations, cultural references, their idea of beauty, women, men, themselves, sexuality, violence, and suicide. I watched videos on YouTube by men who identify as Incels who discuss their lives and struggles, and I watched Elliot Rodger's videos he made before the dramatic Isla Vista shooting. Furthermore, I watched the police interrogation of Alek Minassian, which is available on Youtube. I read Elliot Rodger's 137-page manifesto *My Twisted World* and Christopher Harper-Mercer's manifesto *My Story*. Furthermore, I watched topic-related documentaries such as *The Red Pill* (2016) by Cassie Jaye which follow MRA's, and Simon Rawles' *Inside the Secret World of Incels* (2019), which follow several self-identified Incels. This has given an understanding of the communities told by themselves. I have listened to podcasts where experts discuss topics of and around Incels: The New York Times series *Rabbit Hole*; Cybernauterne's series *Cybernormer*; Big Sister Hotline with Clementine Ford's episode *S2E1 Feat. Laura Bates*; and Den daglige dosis' episode *Truer kvinder med drab og vold: sådan opstår incel-kulturen*<sup>4</sup>. It takes much time and effort to understand the Incel community as they have developed a language with words only used in the context of Incels. From this immersive engagement, I have built a broad understanding of the community, which has helped me during the writing of this thesis, the analysis, and has resulted in an Incel-language dictionary (see Appendix I) and a list of Incel-related terror attacks (see Appendix II).

#### 5.1.4 Feminist content analysis

Analysing themes and patterns in the dataset are the primary focus in netnography (Kozinets & Nocker, 2018). For this thesis, I use feminist content analysis to analyse the material. Feminist content analysis has been developed over the last 50 years and analyses cultural

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<sup>4</sup> English translation: The Daily Dose's episode *Threatens women with murder and violence: This is how the Incel culture arises* (my translation)

material produced by humans (Leavy & Harris, 2019). “Usually, the goals of content analysis are descriptive: to provide the concepts or categories which can describe the system, as well as to build a conceptual map of the phenomenon” (Kozinets, 2020, p.345). Feminist content analysis is “feminist” as it works within the feminist methodology, epistemology, and ontology (Leavy & Harris, 2019). Furthermore, it has to embroil positioning, contextualising the topic in a political structure, criticising power structures, and being transparent knowledge production. Feminist content analysis has various forms and approaches, although this thesis centres on the category Leavy and Harris call the *Internet or the blogosphere* (Leavy & Harris, 2019, p.175). As the data is collected and analysed by coding, the approach is qualitative. Qualitative content analysis is inductive, meaning “codes and themes developing out of a recursive process of data collection and analysis” (Leavy & Harris, 2019, p.181). The practical method of analysing the data was as follows: First, I read the dataset several times to get an overview of the most present themes in the context of the research question. These themes are hand-coded and organised in a table with fitting quotes from the data. This way, I made sure the themes were continuous and relevant. Furthermore, the themes are analysed in relevance with the theory. The following chapter will outline the material behind this thesis. It outlines the method and methodology behind the dataset created by Analyse & Tal and how the data used in this thesis has been narrowed down and filtered.

## 5.2 Material

Social media data is the main factor that distinguishes netnography from traditional social science methods. Netnography is the study of social media communication: “Netnography focus primarily on social media communications” (Kozinets, 2020, p.134) and has different approaches. This thesis began with the intention to web-scrape my own material from the website Incels.co to form a dataset by using the tools SelectorGadget and R Studio. However, I ran into several issues: The data I did manage to scrape was cluttered, the website would shut down for several days, the codes which Incels.co builds on would disagree with the codes used in R Studio, and it was a time-consuming process with the time limit of the thesis. By snowball method, I got in touch with several people who helped me perceive an already made dataset (Jennifer, 2002, p.142).

Through Instagram, I got in touch with the specialist in digital culture, online hate communities, and digital harassment Maia Kahlke Lorentzen who works at Cybernauterne, a

Danish research collective of experts who work with different fields of cyber-safety, algorithms, and social media. Lorentzen is the co-author of the book *Kan Trolld Tæmmes? – Trolling og debatkultur I den digitale tidsalder*<sup>5</sup> (2019) about trolling and online hate. Furthermore, she is the co-researchers and co-author behind the report *Under indflydelse – Veje ind I ekstreme digitale fællesskaber gennem køn og maskulinitet*<sup>6</sup> (2020), which maps the different extremist male-based groups and influencers in a Nordic context. She has been remarkably helpful in developing research ideas and forwarded me to a co-worker who specialises in software development and digital security. After an online meeting with them, they referred me to Asger Neesgaard, who, among other things, works for Analyse & Tal, who is behind the dataset for the report *The Angry Internet – A threat to gender equality, democracy & well-being* (2020). Neesgaard has been a tremendous help, as he granted me access to the dataset, which is the foundation of this thesis. The following section will outline the method and methodology behind the dataset, followed by a chapter of how it was cleaned and filtered to fit this thesis. Finally, a chapter outlines Reddit as a social media platform and the origin for making the Incel ideology mainstream.

### 5.2.1 The dataset's methodology and method

The report *The Angry Internet – A threat to gender equality, democracy & well-being* (2020) by the Centre for Digital Youth Care has analytical data by Analyse & Tal. The report is produced on the Nordic Council of Ministers' recommendation to outline how the Manosphere and its sub-groups are organising on social media in the Nordic countries (Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland). It studies three social media: Twitter, 4chan, and Reddit, where threads and comments have been web-scraped through two steps of filter systems; a misogynistic and the Nordic search keys. They are:

[D]eveloped in collaboration with experts and representatives from the different Nordic countries over the course of several iterations. The two search keys contained words, phrases, terms, names, places, and neologisms stating a relation to the misogynistic ideology, and the manosphere or to Nordic countries respectively. (Centre for Digital Youth Care, 2020, p.7)

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<sup>5</sup> English translation: *Can trolls be tamed? – Trolling and debate culture in the digital age* (My translation)

<sup>6</sup> English translation: "Influenced - Roads into extreme digital communities through gender and masculinity" (My translation)

The Misogynistic search key list contains 242 words, formulations, and central figures in the misogynistic vocabulary such as “betamale”, “roastie”, “femoid”, “men’s rights”, and “gentlemen”. The Nordic search key list contains 379 words, formulations, and central figures in the Nordic countries such as “Stockholm”, “Mette Frederiksen”, “Riksdag”, and “feminatsi” (Centre for Digital Youth Care, 2020, p.81). The beneficial aspect of using misogynistic filtering is that Incels discuss several different subjects such as politics, loneliness, sex, guns, books, and religion. Misogynistic filtering separates the content of no relevance for the report analysis and results and increases the amount of data. The data is also filtered by manual coding, as the first two filtering keys left the data set with several false positives, as it could not be detected that a given user was from a Nordic country. 10% of the dataset, with threads from the three media, was qualitatively coded and categorised by hand (Centre for Digital Youth Care, 2020, p.82). Appendix III illustrates the methodological process of filtering and coding. Appendix IV shows a table of the total content of posts and comments from Reddit to be 140 million. Filtered by the misogynistic search showed 1.6 million, while the Nordic search key showed 5,107 posts and comments (Centre for Digital Youth Care, 2020, p.84). The data used for this thesis is from Reddit, and as 1.6 million posts and comments are excessive, the following chapter will outline how the data for this thesis is filtered.

### 5.2.2 The dataset used for this thesis

Asger Neesgaard sent me a list of subreddits from which he had web-scraped data. It was a total of 1,6 million posts filtered through a search-key of Incel-related terms such as “stacy”, “chad”, “supreme gentleman”. I selected the subreddits r/Braincels, r/lookism, r/Incelistan, r/incels and r/IncelsInAction as these included the word Incels or has Incel-related words in the name. First, Neesgaard filtered the threads with the misogynistic and the Nordic search key. Even though a Nordic focus would be interesting, I found the data limiting to answer the research question. Secondly, he filtered the data with only the misogynistic search key, which made it extensive. Therefore, Neesgaard filtered the data by only including posts or comments with a length of five words or more.

It resulted in a dataset of 110866 comments and submissions from the 26<sup>th</sup> of June 2017 to the 28<sup>th</sup> of June 2020, an excessive dataset for this thesis to further narrow the amount of data, I choose only to use content from the subreddit r/Braincels. I first filtered the content from 2019, which resulted in 31012 comments and submissions. The comments spanned

from the 16<sup>th</sup> of July 2019 to the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2019. The amount of data was still large (it would be 3467 Word-pages), so to reduce further, I selected comments and submissions from the first three days of the three months included in the dataset; the 16<sup>th</sup> of July, the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, and the 1<sup>st</sup> of September; resulted in 980 comments and 114 Word-pages. Of those 114 pages, some of the content is links, codes from memes or pictures, and emoticons. When a user comments on a former thread or comment, this is repeated under the new comment. I manually cleaned the dataset for these repetitions, together with links and codes that replaced a meme or picture. Finally, the dataset was reduced to 78 Word pages. It would seem logical to use data from 2020, as this is the newest data to analyse, but most of the comments from 2020 are people who do not identify themselves as Incels but who criticise the Incel community. 2019 is an exciting year to analyse, as the subreddit r/Braincels got banned on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2019 as a part of Reddit's moderation strategy against systematic harassment on the site (Mogensen & Rand, 2020). Even though three days seem as limited content for an analysis, the number of comments and submissions will be appropriate to answer the research questions. Furthermore, I did not choose the days based on any specifications; random-picking three days gives a general overview of what self-identified Incels discuss on a general basis. The following chapter will outline the social media Reddit of which the data is collected from.

### 5.2.3 Social media data – Reddit

After the Internet became mainstream in the late 1990s, The Age of Social Media rose through the 2000s (Kozinets, 2020). In January 2021, the Internet had 4,66 billion active users globally, 59.5 per cent of the global population (Statista a., 2021), and Reddit was number 15 of the world's most used social media platforms with 430 million active users (Statista b., 2021). Reddit is an American social media company founded in 2005 (Kozinets, 2020; Reddit). It is an open website; a person can search and post without registration. Reddit is an image-board where users, Redditors, posts comments, links, or images in different categories. These categories are called subreddits and vary from politics and societal issues to everyday gossip and tips. The content on Reddit is massive, with 330 million monthly users (Kozinets, 2020). Reddit has been under heavy criticism for its loose moderation, which resulted in shutdowns of several subreddits for illegal or too aggressive content by American laws. In 2017 they banned subreddits such as r/NationalSocialism, r/Nazi, r/whitesarecriminals and r/far\_right (BBC News a., 2017) and the 41,000-strong

subreddit r/ for being misogynistic and encouraging violence and rape of women (BBC News b., 2017). Reddit tightened its moderation to “systematic and/or continued harassment” (Mogensen & Rand, 2020). In 2019 they revisited their moderation and increased it also to include,

anything that works to shut someone out of the conversation through intimidation or abuse, online or off”, including “menacing someone, directing abuse at a person or group, following them around the site, encouraging others to do any of these actions, or otherwise behaving in a way that would discourage a reasonable person from participating on Reddit. (Mogensen & Rand, 2020)

Reddit is an excellent website for research because it is an open and mainstream site. I believe the use of Reddit instead of an Incel-only website as Incels.co (which was shut down for several months during writing this thesis) can clarify how broad the Incel-ideology are online. Even people who do not self-identify as Incel use Incel-related language or reflects and reproduce the Incel ideology. As with any method, collecting and treating data, one must consider ethical issues, which the following chapter will outline together with positioning of me as researcher.

### 5.3 Positioning and ethical considerations

Accordant to feminist standpoint theory, no production of knowledge is objective (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 2004). The producer of knowledge affects the research by choosing the topic, methodological and epistemological approaches, analysing the material, etc. Feminist objectivity, or situated knowledge, is one of the pillars of this thesis, as I, firstly, believe the “I” is essential to implement in the research, as this is the first step of making myself as a scholar visible, and second, believe transparency and positioning make research more legible, valuable, and more accessible. Feminist standpoint theory view challenges the “God Trick” or “God’s eye”, where the researcher claims to be nowhere while being everywhere and eliminate the body of knowledge (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 2004). It is crucial when doing feminist research to situate the researcher as transparent and constantly reflects the interpersonal, institutional, emotional, and personal position throughout the research (Harding, 1987; Doucet & Mauthner, 2007).

I first heard of Incels in 2017, in the context of research about the Manosphere, PUA’s, and extreme male-dominated online communities I have written about Incels and the Manosphere

on all occasions during my master's in gender studies. I have spent the past two years diving deeper into the community to learn how Incels communicate, which terms they use, whom they idolise, and how they structure their ideology. I choose Incels as the topic as they are the sub-group of the Manosphere with the most extremist language and incites violence the most (Ribeiro et al., 2020a) and have followed Incel-related terror attacks and lawsuits. I have observed how Incel-related words as "Chads", "Stacies", and "rope" has entered the mainstream on Facebook and in series and movies. Incels' construction of misogyny and anti-feminism is growing into a mainstream, explained by their growth on mainstream sites such as Reddit. Although, writing this thesis does not come without several ethical considerations.

### *Ethical considerations on doing netnography*

When conducting feminist cyber-ethnography and netnography, one first has to acknowledge that "the Internet exists within (and therefore reflects and reproduces at times) problematic social structures, including capitalism, patriarchy, and racism, among others" (Morrow et al., 2015, p.526). Engaging on the Internet is a privilege and can both exclude and include bodies. It can include voices who feel freer to speak their mind, as one on some websites can discuss anonymously. Furthermore, it can exclude voices as it takes money, access, and time to be involved in social media. Incels use an extreme language of misogyny, racism, homophobia, ableism, and violence. It is crucial to do ethical considerations of analysing and using data with extremist and violent language. As known from research, Incels' particular language can reproduce violent fantasies and actual violent terror attacks (Koller & Heritage, 2020). Furthermore, within a feminist poststructuralist epistemological tradition, discourses and language reproduce power relations and knowledge (Leavy & Harris, 2019, p.31). I have chosen to use Incels' uncensored quotes with violent language for three reasons: First, this is how they communicate, and their language is a part of what makes Incels relevant to research, as they radicalise each other by it. Second, it is crucial to show their discourses of violence to emphasise their radicalisation and extremism. And third, the thesis aims to present Incels' ideology which they create with and around violent language.

I am an unwanted person within the Incel community because I am an interracial woman with an academic background who identifies as a feminist; this makes me an object of hate. I have read countless threads with racist, homophobic, and misogynistic language, detailed discussions of violent fantasies and sincere hatred towards women and marginalised groups.

This material has a personal effect; it has been emotional and challenging to read and analyse, although it has been interesting and a part of the drive to make online anti-feminism visible.

### *Ethical consideration of using online data*

Even though the data and material have had an emotional impact on me, I have respected Incels' views as lived experiences while analysing them through a critical feminist perspective. It is crucial to handle online data with care and respect (Kozinets, 2009, p.185-186). Collecting data online from anonymous sites compared to face-to-face has different ethical considerations, although "gathering data from online spaces should not be treated as a neutral, disembodied process" (Morrow et al., 2015, p.533). Online data is lived experiences, human-produced, and similar to data from interviews or ethnographic fieldwork. Morrow, Hawkins, and Kern request a more transparent guide for ethically handling online anonymous data (Morrow et al., 2015, p.535). Online posts can seem private and securing the data's anonymity is vital (Bjork-James, 2015, p.118). Kozinets calls it "the consent gap" when the researcher cannot consent from the users to use the material (Kozinets, 2020, p.172-175). However, I justify using material without consent from the writers with three points. First, I consider that data from a public forum holds consent implicitly to be used as research material (Morrow et al., 2015, p.535). Second, Analyse & Tal granted me data from a report produced by the Nordic Council of Ministers' recommendation, validating the data's ethics. Final, the subreddit r/Braincels no longer exist on the Internet due to a shutdown by Reddit in 2019, making it difficult to track down the users behind the threads. Furthermore, I have chosen not to use usernames or an anonymous alias when quoting from the dataset. First, I had to delete usernames to clean the data because the usernames got cluttered with the threads when filtering the dataset. Second, a focus on the community and ideology is intensifying without usernames instead of focusing on individuals' sole opinions.

# Chapter VI – Analysis

*“Everytime I go outside, I see enough evidence that proves the blackpill to be true”*

Working with feminist content analysis, the analysis aims to answer the research question: “How is the new online anti-feminism manifested within the Incel community and ideology?”, together with the two sub-questions: “What expressions of masculinism and masculinity manifests in the Incel community and ideology?” and “How is aggrieved entitlement expressed within the Incel community and ideology?”. Even though the dataset only represents three days of content from the subreddit r/Braincels, it gives an insight into the general construction of online anti-feminism, masculinity, and aggrieved entitlement. The construction of this chapter is as follows: first, an analysis of online anti-feminism masculinism and feminism’s deconstruction of women. The second chapter analyses Incels construction of hegemonic and hybrid masculinity. The third chapter analyses how Incels discuss the entitlement towards women’s bodies. The final chapter analyses how these themes result in rage, anger, and violent fantasies. An analytical discussion completes every chapter of the analysis.

## 6.1 Online anti-feminism, masculinism, and hatred towards women

Online anti-feminism is a central theme in the analysed data. Incels originates from and builds its ideology on online anti-feminism. What is interesting about Incels is how they directly blame feminism for their experiences of oppression and crisis in society.

They consider feminism to corrupt the society and give women (they state it as “given” and not as fights women fought) benefits, which oppresses the man. Furthermore, Incels blame not only feminism or the feminist for their misery; they blame *all* women. The following chapter will analyse this with quotes from the dataset.

### 6.1.1 Online anti-feminism views within the Incel ideology

*“They’ll push whatever narrative they can to conform to social standards set by the misandrists known as feminists”*

This quote states that Incels believe in a misandrist society as they believe women secretly benefit from oppressing men. The quote shows how Incels believe women lie or manipulate, hence “push whatever narrative”, so they can change society to the benefit of women only. They compare feminism with misandrist, changing the meaning of feminism from a movement that aims for equality for all genders to a movement seeking to oppress men. Another user writes that women have their,

*“Brain destroyed by feminism”*

Feminism is viewed as the enemy and dangerous as it directly destroys how women think and act. As women move away from a conservative role as submissive and the care-giver, the man moves from his conservative role as the dominant, providing patriarchy.

Anti-feminist views presented in online settings are the primary pillar of the Red Pill-philosophy which Incels structure their ideology around. When taken, both the Red Pill and the Black Pill (see chapter 2.2.1) awaken a man to the reality that women secretly control society and oppress men. It is a conspiracy theory, as the following quote states:

*“Why on earth would a top-company like Google risk their reputation by stating: “Feminists are misandrists”?”*

The quote indicates that the misandrist society is secret, hence stated as a conspiracy. It is a conspiracy as regular people do not understand it unless they take the Red Pill. The theory is that women secretly control companies like Google and other prominent places in society, and therefore they would take a risk by “telling the truth”. Another quote continues the theory:

*“You’re a cuck if you don’t get one [vasectomy] with all you know about women and the gynocentric laws in this country”*

“Cuck” is slang for idiocy or a man who “lets” women take economic advantage of him, e.g., by marriage or having children. The quote states a classic MRA theory of women having benefits in divorce- and child laws because of their gender. One Incel writes about this:

*“She’ll get zero criminal consequences, because pussy pass”*

The quote states that women can get away with anything because of their gender. This understanding neglects that the laws are based on gender normative structures of women to be the primary or natural care-giver by staying at home and taking care of the children, while the men are in an economically privileged position. Thereby, the quote indicates that Incels believe in a gynocentric society that oppresses men and advantages women. Blais and Dupuis-Déri write: “Masculinists (...) see themselves as victims of women and feminists” (Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2012, p.23). Incels believe feminism makes women oppress men, which is their reasonability to view themselves as victims. In the extension of this chapter’s analysis of Incels’ explicit views on feminism, the following chapter will analyse how Incels construct their views on women and the feminist.

### 6.1.2 AWALT

In an extension of Incels’ views of how feminism oppresses men, they blame both the feminists and women for causing their experiences of oppression. One writes about his co-workers that they,

*“Were all really fucking toxic and superficial girls. SUPER rude and condescending”*

The analysed data contains several quotes with a violent hatred of women. Incels have various misogynistic terms for women (see Appendix I), but the common acronym to describe them is AWALT (All Women Are Like That) to underline how evil all women are to men. One quote state:

*“but of course even virtual foids are AWALT.  
Fucking hell...”*

“Foids” is a misogynistic term Incels use about women, while “virtual” means women in the gaming culture. The quote expresses how women are invading the gaming culture, which

some Incels believe is only for men, and even here, the women are evil. Another quote supports the claim:

*“my best friend moved across the country for a girl and she fucked another dude. It’s over AWALT”*

The quote indicates that all women are evil, as the best friend “moved across the country”; hence he “did everything for her”, and she still cheated and hurt him. It implies that even if men do everything for a woman, she will reveal the true nature of being mean towards men. During the immersive engagement on Incels.co, I read a thread by an Incel asking for help to hate his mother and sister, as he still loved them, despite knowing all women were evil. Other Incels answered that his mother should not have had children, as she is genetically responsible for his incelhood; hence he should hate her. Next, they answered that his sister was evil as she declined to have sex with him. The idea of women being evil exceeds a generalisation for all women, even the ones in their family, as this quote states:

*“Clearly, if you defend your family and don’t think AWALT, you are fucking cum swallowing cuck”*

Incels do not distinguish women from each other. To embody the Black Pill philosophy and realise the true nature of women, one must recognise that women do oppress men, and therefore Incels have to hate all women:

*“What part of ALL in AWALT don’t you understand?”*

It is not some women, or a particular type of woman, or only feminists, it is *all* women. I find Incels’ discussion of women presents not only their views on women, but moreover how they feel about themselves. They discuss women much throughout the dataset, but it always relates to their position and crisis.

Feminism is dangerous as it directly destroys how women think and act as one writes that women have their,

*“Brain destroyed by feminism”*

Feminism is viewed to move women away from a normative construction of what a woman is. Incels reproduces a construction that the woman must be feminine and follow certain

standards, especially concerning looks and actions, which resonance with a submissive and pious description.

The following quote is by an Incel who criticises his sister for being an “unattractive” woman:

*“[M]y sister is like 4/10 on a good day with make-up. (...) She doesn’t workout, she doesn’t shave her fucking legs, and she burps and farts and shit openly walking around the house like a slob. She forgets to brush her teeth. She smells like ass and doesn’t shower regularly”*

He describes his sister as a “slob” and lists non-normatively feminine features such as hairy legs, burps, farts, which gender-normatively are associated with men. It reproduces a gender-normative narrative where the woman must be clean and pretty while the man is allowed not to be. Thorup discusses how misogynists or anti-feminists describe the women they dislike with their “lack” of womanhood or femininity (Thorup, 2020, p.52). The phrase “doesn’t shave her legs” particularly connotes the generalisation of the slobby feminist who does not live up to normative standards of femininity. Masculinism is against the deconstruction of normative gender roles, which presents within the Incel community as the belief of feminism as making women more masculine.

### 6.1.3 Discussion

Former research has placed Incels within anti-feminism (Ging, 2019; Hoffman et al., 2020). However, these research do not identify Incels within the new online anti-feminism, which, compared to the offline anti-feminism, do not distinguish between women and feminists (Ging & Siapera, 2019). Thorup writes that anti-feminism is the hatred towards the feminist and not the woman (Thorup, 2020), however Incels’ views of women are intertwined with the feminist. As the quotes in this chapter shows, Incels believe feminism has destroyed *all* women. Therefore, the hatred towards the feminist is also hatred towards all women, hence AWALT. Kimmel argues: “Gender and racial equality feel like a loss to white men: if “they” gain, “we” lose. (...) Men are angry and restless because of what they experience as the erosion of their “rightful” privilege, and they have convenient targets for their rage” (Kimmel, 2013, p.16). Instead of viewing feminism as a gender equality movement, which benefits everyone despite gender, it is constructed as a movement that

replaces men with women; Feminism makes women superior to men. Incels construct feminism as equal to misandrist and gynocentric societies.

Online anti-feminism aims to reconstruct conservative and normative gender norms and roles as Incels blame feminism for giving women too many rights, which deconstruct men's normative role in society. Feminism is seen as guilty of moving women away from a conservative "biological" role as submissive and the care-giver, the man moves from his conservative role as the dominant, providing patriarch. These views construct Incels within masculinism. Their aim is to reclaim a patriarchal and dominating position in society and subjectify and pacify women. Masculinism idealises biological conceptions of genders and constructs men as aggressive, dominating and naturally hierarchical over women (Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2012; Ging & Siapera, 2019). Masculinism asserts a masculinity crisis resulting from feminism, so do Incels, as they scapegoat feminism to be the reason and responsibility for the crisis they experience (Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2012, p.25; Kimmel, 2013, p.24). The shared experiences of sexual deprivation are what bonds Incels together. They scapegoat the responsibility of their situation to women, their mothers, biology, and society as reasons for their experience of alienation and misfortune. "[W]omen's liberation is a threat to traditional ideas of femininity, against a woman's social role" (Thorup, 2013, p.23). As women's liberation changed women's societal role, Incels blame feminism for giving women the right to choose their own lives and replacing the man's role – in a conservative and heteronormative construction. It is the traditional woman feminism replaces (Kimmel, 2013). The deconstruction of the normative women is viewed as masculinisation of women. It is not only repulsing for Incels because of a conservative ideal of women; it also provokes men to feel emasculating, as women suddenly "cross the line" into their identity (Kimmel, 2013).

## 6.2 Hegemonic and hybrid masculinity within the Incel ideology

Ging theorises Incels' hierarchy of men within hybrid masculinity. Chapter 2.2.2 outlines the different archetypes of men; Chad, Beta, and Incel. These types of men are what I call the Incels' hierarchy of attractiveness. Incels claim this hierarchy exists due to their anti-feminist views, as feminism has deconstructed men's patriarchal position in society and replaced them without purpose (Thorup, 2020). Incels believe men's purpose before women's liberation was to provide for women; hence women had no expectations for choosing a partner besides

money. Money is viewed as something which one can gain easier than attractiveness, as attractiveness is biologically determined. The following chapters will analyse how Incels construct masculinity through hegemonic structures through the hierarchy of Chads, Betas, and Incels.

### 6.2.1 A man's worth is based on biology

The data shows how Incels claim that feminism and women's unrealistic expectations for men form the hierarchy of attractiveness. The following quote states what Incels call the "top 1% theory"; a theory where only one per cent of men fit into women's superficial expectations for a partner:

*"The 99/1 rule is in full effect. Women only want top 1% chad models with perfect faces and hairlines. If you are under 6'4", it's fucking over. If you don't have a minimum of a 7 inch dick, it's fucking OVER. Girls also like guys that are naturally ripped without going to the gym. So if you go to the gym and exercise or diet, you cannot have a girlfriend. Sorry! Chad can eat whatever he wants and maintain a 0% bodyfat face and jawline"*

The quote states how Chads become a supernatural ideal of the perfect man. He is constructed as hyper-masculine by the standards of external values; tall, big frame, strong jawline, the ability to grow a full beard, a complete set of hair. These features are the opposite of how an Incel is constructed. Memes abound the internet picturing the difference of how an Incel looks and walks compared to a Chad (see Appendix VI). For Incels, these external features equal success in sexual relations with women. These features are not something every man has, and it is not something one can gain, as Incels structure them as biologically determined.

*"Chad already has genetic advantages"*

As the quote states, Incels believe that Chads have a genetic advantage for success with women as women are biologically attracted to "good genes" that can be passed down to their children. The following quote elaborates:

*"He didn't say the baby would be a gigachad, just that he \*has\* gigachad genetics (which she wants), for her offspring. And that's true. He has them, and they would be part of her offspring if he got her pregnant"*

This quote exemplifies how the Incel ideology is based on a deterministic understanding of genetics and biology. Phrenology is another biological foundation on which they construct Chad, as the following quote states:

*“Chad tier super skull structure”*

The quote states how Incels refer to phrenology, a pseudo-science historically used to create a racist hierarchy, to describe men (see Appendix V). Their theory is that a Chad skull has conventional strong and masculine features and is viewed as superior to an Incel skull which is small and narrow. The theory connects to how interested a woman is in a man as the following quote states:

*“They don’t even have to see his face up close. They can spot the chad skull immediately.”*

The quote states that the skull, hence looks, is essential when a woman is choosing a sexual partner. Scholar of social psychology and evolutionary psychology Roy Baumeister and economist Kathleen D. Vohs has developed sexual economics theory (SET) (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004, 2012). The central tenet of SET is that sex is a female resource in which she trades for economic benefits from the man, creating a hierarchy of sexual market value for both men and women. The theory is created on biological determine gender constructions and anti-feminism. However, academic research validates Incels’ ideology of sexual deprivation, gender, sexuality, and masculinity, where sex is a female resource, they can withhold if the man has no economic benefits to trade. Together with the before mentioned external features of a Chad, the biological advantages resign the reason for Incels to be Incels to biology; hence something you cannot change.

### 6.2.2 The fear of the feminine man

In contrast to Chad, who is constructed as having traditional masculine traits, the Incel has small and feminine features. Connell writes that men who embrace hegemonic masculinity structures despise a feminine man or a man who is “too close to a woman” (Connell, 1995, p.78-79). The feminine man is critiqued to not be a “real man” but to be too close to womanness. Incels equate femininity to women making everything physically small equal to

femininity. It is a heteronormative construction of women as small and weak, and a man who embodies those features is deemed not manly or masculine enough. The following quotes are from descriptions of Incels:

*“Thin frames, weak chins”*

These quotes show how Incels describe themselves as having small features; hence feminine features, constructing them with a lack of masculinity.

Chads and Alphas originate from PUA’s who identify themselves as Alphas who can teach other men, Betas and Incels, to become as close to a Chad as possible by changing their looks and attitudes. The following quote states how some Incels believe they can “looksmaxx” to improve their looks and succeed with women.

*“Yeah but redpillers believe you can become chad through a change in personality. By acting more alpha you can mentally become chad. Blackpill believe chad is something purely physical. You are either born a chad, or you looksmaxx to become one. Both are fixated on one singular aspect, when in reality both matter to an extent. That said, the physical is obviously the more important aspect”*

Even though the quote states that one can “become more like Chad”, it declares that physical looks are most important. In extension to the analysis of the previous chapter of how Chad’s external looks is based on biological determination, the following quote underlines how one can never become more like a Chad, as a Chad is biologically destined to look as he does:

*“Some say if you’re not too hopeless and really looksmaxxx you can become chadlite. Not Chad bc Chad wouldn’t need to looksmaxx in the first place.”*

The quote states that Chad does not have to work for his looks, compared to a Beta or an Incel. One cannot make himself into a Chad. The biological advantage makes Incels insecure and jealous as they view their unattractive looks as biological deterrent too. As the quote above shows, it results in a theory that they can never “level up” to Chad’s standards.

### 6.2.3 Discussion

The masculinity crisis has grown out of the reconception of a man and his body in society. Men’s role as the provider, protector, sexually driven, and women’s role as obsequious is

changing, contesting conservative gender structures. Incels blames this change on feminism, as stated in chapter 6.1. Blais and Dupuis-Déri theory of the masculinity crisis arises in context with the fragile position in which Incels believe their identity as men due to feminism. Kimmel writes what bring online anti-feminists together is that “their sense of “men” is threatened” (Kimmel 2013, p.9). Kimmel continues, “[w]hat unites all these groups is not just the fact that they are men. What unites them is their belief in a certain ideal of masculinity. It is not just their livelihoods that are threatened, but their sense of themselves *as men*” (Kimmel, 2013, p.13).

New structures of gender hierarchies and gender roles make the man’s normative role unsure, which for some can lead to a masculinity crisis. Creating a determined hierarchy of different hybrids of masculinity (Alpha, Beta, Incel) where the values of their looks connect to their success in life, is a static generalisation of genders based on conservative gender stereotypes and biological determination (Ging, 2019). The hierarchy of attractiveness and the construction of hybrid masculinities are Incels attempts to reclaim the male position in society (Ging, 2019). Incels try to place archetypes into a system as they do not know where to fit into a new gender structure that dissolves conservative gender roles. The hierarchy makes it easier to understand a man’s position in society as it shows it due to easily manageable states of how he looks and acts. Incels believe the external values to be greater than the inner, which sustains a toxic perception of what a “real” man is. The fear of the feminine man is a result of a hegemonic masculine understanding of what a “real man” is (Connell, 1995, p.78). Not being a “real man” or not being “man enough” contextualises Kimmel’s discussion of the masculinist “fear to become like the woman” (Kimmel, 2013, p.8). Incels’ fear of feminine features is not only a fear of “becoming like the woman”; it is also a fear of not gaining success, both professional and with women, as they believe women only want men like Chads.

Blais and Dupuis-Déri write that “[a]ccording to masculinism, the male approach is all about natural aggressiveness, competition, and hierarchy” (Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2012, p.27), which is the foundation of hegemonic masculinity. A paradox and an error in the hierarchy of attractiveness are that it constructs around hegemonic masculinity structures. Hegemonic masculinity is, as Connell writes, not a “fixed” idea of masculinity but various (Connell, 1995). “Various” does not mean Incels’ hierarchy of attractiveness, but as a broad palette of identities where masculinity is not static or constructed within a normative form. Hegemonic masculinity fastens men in an ideal of being naturally aggressive, the patriarch, dominant. “If we broaden the angle of vision, we can see masculinity, not as an isolated object, but as an

aspect of a larger structure” (Connell, 1995, p.67). Hegemonic masculinity is a product of the historical and societal construction of the man to dominate women and society, the home, the workplace, and other men (Connell, 1995, p.77). Connell writes that hegemonic masculinity builds around a structure where certain men raise above others in a hierarchal power structure (Connell, 1995).

Incels construct Chad around hegemonic masculinity and blame him for benefitting from its structures. This could seem like Incels want to deconstruct the hegemonic masculine structure of men, although they yearn to have Chad’s life. It creates a paradox within the Incel community and ideology of their construction of masculinity and ideal for what a “real man” is. Incels could benefit from reconstructing the normative understanding of masculinity, as they view themselves as not living up to the standards but instead reproduce constructions of hegemonic masculinity to be the ideal. ‘The hierarchy of attractiveness is based on PUA’s ideas of Alpha and Beta men. It can be seen as Incels’ masculinity crisis is a result of the failed promises of PUA’s, as they promised a way to the top by optimising one’s looks.

### 6.3 The evil woman and the entitlement to her body

Online anti-feminism and masculinism construct women as men’s oppressors and are founded on heteronormative, naturalising or biological constructions of women. Incels’ ideology is built on masculinism as they believe women have moved from their “natural” entering the “man’s domain” (Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2012). As discussed in chapter 6.1.3 Incels blame feminism for making women “more of a man” as she now can earn her own money, hence do not need a man to provide, and she can choose who and how many sexual partners she wants. The latter is critical in the Incel ideology, as they had constructed an idea that before feminism, women had to marry for money, making it more accessible for a man to find a partner. They argue that because of feminism, women do not need economic providing and therefore can find a partner using other criteria; hence they choose Chads because of their “good looks” and “genetical advantage”. The following chapters will analyse how these theories within the Incel ideology construct feminism to have made women superficial and therefore to dismiss Incels. Furthermore, it will analyse the paradox and constant friction within the community of hating women while considering entitled to their bodies.

### 6.3.1 The superficial and choosy woman

The following quote states how Incels believe women to be superficial when choosing a sexual partner:

*“They have plenty of opportunities, but none of them are Chad. Therefore they are “forever alone””*

Incels believe women complaining of being “forever alone” are superficial, as Incels are sexually deprived, and if women lowered their expectations for a man, the sexual deprivation would end. As the previous chapter stated, Incels believe women only want sexual relations with Chads. Incels reason this through biological determinisms as the following quote states:

*“Women may look different but they behave the same. It’s biologically driven. They are obsessed with status. They see Chad genetics as the highest status sperm because it gives her stronger children. Women like men driving nice cars because it means e’s probably working a great job making lots of money. This means he can buy her expensive things and take her nice places for vacations. It’s all about status and the social value. Now they also want a strong tall guy for protection and hopefully he has a big dick to please her. Yet still it’s also a status thing”*

With the phrase “stronger children”, the quote concludes how women are driven by biology as she needs healthy and good genes for reproduction. First, this generalises what “good genes” are. It reproduces a theory where Chads have “good genetics” for reproduction, constructing Incels as having “bad genetics”. It refers to what the previous chapter showed in relation to Chads as “true men” by being “masculine enough” and Incels to being “less of a man” due to their feminine traits; Chad has “good genetics” as he is a “true man”, reproducing the dangerous ideal of what a real man is. Second, the quote claims biology drives women, which reproduces a gender-normative structure of women to be biologically wired to reproduce instead of looking for other qualities in a partner, such as personality. It resonates of a theory of the biological determination of women to be controlled by nature (Thorup, 2020). Another quote strengthens the claim:

*“Women are less likely to use a condom when having sex with an attractive male”*

This quote sums up the idea of women being superficial and choosy when they look for a partner, as she is more likely to have unprotected sexual relations with Chad, as she wants to pass down “good genes” to her children.

Incels blame feminism for making women choosy and having superficial standards for men.

One writes:

*“Women in college today are all aflame with the fire of feminism so they just want to explore themselves, ie fuck as many chads as possible, even chadlite has no chance”*

This quote states how feminism, and sexual liberation, have allowed women to be able to have multiple sexual partners, and as Incel believe them only to choose Chads, Incels blame feminism for their sexual deprivation. The quote states that not even “chadlite”, meaning men who look as close to a Chad without being one, have a chance, showing how little an Incel, who is lowest in the hierarchy of attractiveness, stands a chance. Another Incel writes:

*“This is what female empowerment looks like. They will do anything, even murder their own children, to continue whoring themselves out to chad”*

The connection between “female empowerment” and the disgust of women with multiple sexual partners connects to jealousy towards the men with whom she has sexual relations and disgust of the woman acting as a “man” within a construction of the man to be hyper-sexual. A paradox within the Incel community creates friction regarding their views on women; Even though they despise women in general, they feel entitled to their bodies. The following chapter will analyse how the data show this.

### 6.3.2 Aggrieved entitlement towards women

A paradox abounds the Incel community; they both hate women and feel entitled to them. The entitlement manifests in different ways. The following quote expresses an entitlement constructed within the term “friend-zoned”:

*“She literally like like 4-5 beta orbiter males that she is friends with. A few of them are 5/10 or higher. She friendzones these guys that literally mog her and friendzones them for YEARS when they clearly like her”*

The concept of “friendzone” builds on aggrieved entitlement. To be “friend-zoned” is when a person wants a sexual or romantic relationship with a friend, but the friend wants a platonic friendship. The term is common in popular cultures, such as the 90’s sit-com tv-series *Friends*, where the character Ross is marked “friend-zoned” with his romantic interest Rachel. The term is often used for men who are friend-zoned by a female friend. The term connotes that a woman owes a man sex, as he feels entitled to her body or romantic affection as a trade for his friendship. It relates to Incels’ heteronormative construction that two of the opposite sex cannot be friends, which this quote says:

*“Learning about how men and women can never be friends. (...) Friends never work out or lead to something better unless you’re a cuck”*

Incels do not believe in friendships with the opposite sex as the man always will have a sexual interest – if that is not happening, it is because the woman has friend-zoned the man due to his unattractiveness and her shallowness. Another Incel write:

*“I remember that feeling, met my dream oneitis on day 1 at university, type of cute shy little nerd girl who I thought I would only ever meet as a student. “Thanks but I’d rather we were just friends.” I didn’t take it well. In my final year I saw her in the arms of the most ludicrously handsome, built chad you could imagine, and all the healing I thought I’d done was immediately undone, I was a mess all over again”*

The writer behind the quote explains how a woman chooses another man over him. When she “friend-zones” him, he “didn’t take it well”, but when he realises, she is in a relationship with another man, he gets upset all over again. It can seem like a heartbreak, which it probably was, but he constructs his relationship to the woman as if he was entitled to her. If another man can be in a relationship with her, why could it not be him? To take for granted that she owes him love and her body, is the problematic aspect of Incels in general, as they do not feel sad by rejections; they feel angry. Anger comes from not getting what they believe they were entitled to.

The feeling of entitlement towards women’s bodies contextualises how some Incels romanticise conservative and heteronormative gender structures. Incels believe that if only they could control women’s choices of sexual partners, they could end the sexual deprivation they experience. One user writes:

*“But the whole concept of Asian countries considering the man to be the boss and the woman to be the servant and/or maid is pretty reasonable”*

Besides being structured on racist generalisations and stereotypes, the quote defends conservative and patriarchal gender structures. The romanticising of women to be submissive and men to be dominating connotes a violent and dangerous view on both genders. Another incel writes within the same subject of racist generalisation of gender roles:

*“As I understand for muslims they are forced to marry with someone. That generally means the ugliest get the ugliest and the hottest get the hottest and everything in between. For white people this works differently cause we have a chad that bangs all hos and leaves nothing over for us incels, which is not fair”*

The quote has several issues to unpack: First, the stereotype that all Muslims are married by force builds on a generalising and racist conception of Islam to be misogynist and oppressive. Second, to romanticise forced marriages neglects its horror for the people who experience it. Last, the line “which is not fair” resonates with aggrieved entitlement. The quote uses forced marriage as a resolution for the sexual deprivation Incels experiences as if society inserts forced marriage, it will obligate women to contract relationships with Incels. Women owe Incels sex, intimacy, and attention *because they are men*.

### 6.3.3 Discussion

This chapter outlines how Incels construct women to become superficial in their choice of sexual partners due to feminism and how they hate women even though they feel entitled to their bodies. Ging and Siapera discuss how online misogynists and anti-feminists blame sexual liberation for giving women free choices to how many and whom she has sexual relations (Ging & Siapera, 2019, p.29;37). It makes Incels jealous, as they live in celibacy, and hateful as women cease the construction of piety. Thorup writes that “[W]omen’s liberation is a threat to traditional ideas of femininity, against a woman’s social role” (Thorup, 2013, p.23), which contextualises the online anti-feminist views on women which Incels reproduces of feminism as the reason for Incels’ sexual deprivation. Incels logic goes as if only feminism had not given women equality, or as many Incels believe, more rights than men, Incels would not have issues finding a partner. Constructing women to be superficial and deselecting Incels as sexual partners turns the unfairness and anger towards men and feminism. But as the former chapter states, Incels also feel entitled to women’s

bodies. Kimmel has developed the term aggrieved entitlement which can be viewed as a result of what Blais and Dupuis-Déri theorises as the masculinity crisis (Kimmel, 2013; Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2012). Kimmel states how men feel an entitlement to jobs, careers which migrants and refugees often are blamed for “stealing” (Kimmel, 2013, p.15). Online anti-feminism states the same entitlement towards women. Incels think women owe them sexual relations because they are men.

Their sexual deprivation equalises a feeling of oppression. Incels believe society oppresses them, which turns to anger (Kimmel, 2013, p.17). The anger arises from the belief that something (sexual relations) which is promised or owed is snatched away. Kimmel relates the entitlement to The American Dream as his theory focuses on the U.S. Although, Incels are a global phenomenon, an Internet phenomenon, their entitlement towards women comes from historical and structural gender inequalities, where men have benefitted from society by oppressing women. It is a counter-movement to feminism and women’s rights, as men fear losing their identity – the fear of losing identity is a result of the masculinity crisis. Incels have not revisited their position in society; they do not know how to act within a society where women move into areas that have been reserved for men for a long time. Instead of seeing feminism as a fight for equality, it is viewed as misandry where women oppress men. Kimmel writes that men feel they are promised to be superior. Incels feel entitled to the promise of being superior to a woman and controlling her body, and when he fails, he turns to anger, hate, and violence. The following chapter will analyse the construction of hate, anger, and violence in the data.

## 6.4 Violence, suicide, and violent fantasies towards women

The feeling of unfairness for being the lowest in the hierarchy of attractiveness and the entitlement towards women’s bodies result in extreme hate and rage. Incels are not one homogenous group, as some are more extreme than others. Some only complain of bad experiences with women or their insecurity in their looks. Others are more extreme and discuss different ways to violently bring revenge on women for deselecting and rejecting them. I have included a chapter on violence and rage in the analysis, as I believe it to be essential to analyse the way in which Incels construct these feelings as Incels have been related to several terror attacks (see Appendix II). I also include the chapter as it ends and combines the previous chapter’s analysis.

### 6.4.1 The fantasies of dominance and re-enslaving women

Some Incels have extreme violent fantasies about women for feeling unjustly treated and being sexually deprived. One write:

*“Marriage is just a trap in modern gynocentric societies. Any society that allows divorce and doesn’t recognize wives as their husband’s property, which can be kept in line with discipline if needed, is one where marriage has ZERO benefit to the. Man. Never even consider marriage no matter who you are or what shes like. Chad, incel, normie, Do. Not. Even. Consider.”*

The quote declares that divorce is a part of the conspiracy of the gynocentric society as if it was not as such, women would be men’s property to control and “discipline”; hence they could never be divorced, and consequently, women would not have free choices or equal rights. The following quote expands the theory:

*“Fuck off cuck. The solution is to re-enslave women. “Just be passive and accept feminism bro”. No. Reinstate patriarchal ownership of women. Make Cunts Property Again”*

The violent fantasy of re-enslaving women and reinstating patriarchal ownership of women is anti-feministic and has roots in masculinism. The phrase “re-enslave women” connotes the Incel-terrorist Elliot Rodger (see chapter 2.4 and Appendix II). It references Elliot Rodger’s manifesto, *My Twisted World*, where he outlines the “ideal world” as follows: “The first strike against women will be to quarantine all of them in concentration camps. At these camps, the vast majority of the female population will be deliberately starved to death. That would be an efficient and fitting way to kill them all off” (Rodger, 2014, p.136). This reflects how the Internet radicalises an ideology as Incels’, as they inspire each other. Elliot Rodger is the primary inspiration and reference for violent fantasies:

*“Was legit torture. Every single day I worked there I thought about going E R on all of the Stacies. (...) Was actually pure ragefuel every single day. Had to hold myself back a few times from literally just going full out fucking E R in the middle of a shift.”*

The quote is from an Incel who describes his workplace as torture because of the female co-workers, as they were “superficial Stacies” who, by his belief, earned more tips because of their looks. He considered doing an “E R”, meaning a mass shooting. Knowing that Rodger

inspired many Incel-related terror attacks after his attack in 2014, it is a concern how many Incels idolise his actions. The violent fantasies are many. Another Incel writes about violent fantasies:

*“This Monday I was playing fortnite (...) then I get ted by a foid who has YT in her name. (...) That’s when I thought if companys start to make controllers which can detect female and male skin cells and electrocute upon making contact with skin cells then it can shock them started elecuting foids for the whores they are they will get burned”*

The quote states a fantasy of installing shock-detectors in controllers to shock female players. This is another aspect of how Incels believe women to “enter” their territory and take men’s places, as gaming is viewed as a male hobby. The hatred often has its origins in jealousy and entitlement towards women as another quote states:

*“I can’t help but feel rage deep down when I see a foid in public, part of it being “I have no chance” and “she’s probably a fucking slut that would cheat in a heartbeat”*

The rage and violent fantasies towards women are connected to the aggrieved entitlement of women’s bodies. The quote states that he believed himself to have no chance with women, and as he experiences women together with other men, it makes him hateful and angry. The quote about the shock-detector also stated:

*“I defintly deserved a female like that”*

It shows how Incels feel defeatist, and as they do not know where to place their feelings, it turns into hatred and anger. The anger and violent fantasies are not only towards women but also towards Chads and the men who can have sexual relations with women. The following quote states a violent fantasy towards men:

*“I go to the gym so that one day I might find myself in a dark alley with a Chad, and at that point ik im strong enough to make justice...”*

The fantasy of violence expands to men as well, as Incels feel injustice from everyone. To “make justice” is another term for revenge, and revenge is an ongoing theme in the Incel

community. These quotes show a fantasy of violence, while the following show claims of physical violence towards women.

#### 6.4.2 Claims of physical violence towards women

Some Incels claim to conduct actual, physical violence towards women. Even though it cannot be known if these claims are valid, they show a feeling of pride in claiming or bragging about hurting others. An Incel writes how much he hates women and how he turns his hate into action:

*"I wake up every morning and my first thoughts are "How am I going to show foids I hate them so much today?" (...) I just hate them on so many ways. Ways you can't even imagine. I get out of my bed, I absolutely do not take a shower and I wear the same socks I did for the last 3 months.(...) Next thing I do is I touch myself. I cum all over my hands and I don't wash them afterwards. I just take my money and go to store to foodmaxx. There's this cashier foid (...) but I realized I can fight her off with my smell and hands full of cum. (...). I always make her have to take money from my hands instead of just putting them on her desk"*

He gains a feeling of power by humiliating the woman in the store, whom he hates. To take revenge upon women makes him feel superior. He continues:

*"Come with me brocels, hate em as much as I do. It's fun, lovely and empowering. I absolutely love it"*

Incels encourage each other to do violent acts and take revenge against the people they feel oppressed by. The violence is not only towards strange women but also women within the family. Another Incel writes that he hates his mother and sister after his father left them:

*"... which made me so angry that I literally beaten up both of them, when they made fun of me. Even once gave a foid a fist punch in a bar, because she haressed me and my friends"*

He explains how he has beaten up his mother and sister and punched a woman in a bar. Even the pronouncing and promoting of violence has a dangerous effect. Another aspect of Incel violence is directed towards themselves, as Incels often discuss suicide. The following chapter will analyse how Incels construct suicide as a solution to their distress.

### 6.4.3 Encouraging suicide

Many Incels discuss the fantasy of violent revenge, although they also discuss the failure they experience. It leads to discussions of suicide as the only solution to end their distress. It states as the following quotes show:

*“I think of sui a lot”*

*“Was actually sui fuel.”*

The talk about suicide is reproducing the feeling of failure Incels experience by being Incels. Instead of giving each other uplifting advice they encourage each other to commit suicide:

*“You’re not too young to be giving up on life, younger have already given up & will give up.”*

During the immersive engagement on Incels.co I found a similar thread, where an Incel wrote he would commit suicide later the same night. Instead of talking him out of it, the comments overflowed with support and discussions on ways to carry it out and encouragement to do it in public while killing others at the same time.

### 6.4.5 Discussion

Kimmel writes how the Internet radicalises the tone and makes people write more extreme statements, as they can hide behind anonymity and are less unlikely to be identified and held accountable:

The Internet provides just such a man cave, a politically incorrect locker room, where you can say whatever you feel like saying without having to back it up with something as inconvenient as evidence and still hide behind a screen of anonymity so that no one knows that you’re the jerk you secretly think you might just be. That’s a recipe for rage. (Kimmel 2013, p.115)

“The locker room”, meaning misogynistic talk, has shifted from the private sphere to the public and become more extreme in the process. As Incels only communicate online, their tone is nonchalant when it comes to violence. Prazimo has researched the interconnection of violent language on the Internet and radicalisation and terror attacks in the U.S. and Canada

(Prazimo, 2020). As many terror attacks have been linked to the Incel community (see Appendix II), the language Incels use has real-life consequences. Furthermore, Scaptura and Boyle's research shows how Incel-discourses can be a stepping-stone to execute these violent fantasies of which Incels write about (Scaptura & Boyle, 2020). The violent fantasies of re-enslaving and dominated women are founded on masculinist ideas. "Masculinism asserts that since men are in crisis and suffering because of women in general and feminists in particular, the solution to their problems involves curbing the influence of feminism and revalorizing masculinity" (Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2012, p.22). Incels blame feminism for precluding women's roles from fitting in Incels' worldviews. As one writes in one of the quotes mentioned above, society needs to "reinstate patriarchal ownership" of women. Feminism is to be blamed for deconstructing the man's right to own a woman. As Incels believe themselves to be less of a man than, e.g., Chads, they want to reclaim masculinity and their role as men by restricting feminism and women's liberation and controlling women in general.

The online discussion of suicide within the Incel community is, as with the violent fantasies, a stepping-stone to real-life actions. Believing looks are biological deterrent make Incels conclude there is nothing else to do than "LDAR" – short for "lay down and rot", a metaphor for giving up, committing suicide or "cope", meaning they must accept their fate. The hierarchy of attractiveness reproduces low self-esteem, where they validate each other in feeling unattractive and encourage each other to sustain the feeling of being unwanted. Incels find a community in shared experiences of loneliness and feeling like an outcast for not having sexual relations. Social loneliness turns to romantic loneliness, creating severe mental health issues (Maxwell et al., 2020). "This deep level of social isolation led to many members of the Incel community expressing thoughts of suicide and wondering if anyone would miss them if they were to commit suicide" (Maxwell et al., 2020, p.1864). The hierarchy of attractiveness becomes a paradox, a depressed mindset in which Incels have placed themselves within a hierarchy where they never can change for the better. Incels have been involved in several terror attacks where the person has taken his own life or committed suicide by cop.

The previous analytical chapters have analysed the data and concluded with a discussion. The following chapter will sum the findings into a conclusion and discussion and ends with a proposal for future research.

# Chapter IX – Findings and conclusion

To start this thesis, I present the quote: “Men are afraid that women will laugh at them. Women are afraid that men will kill them” by Margaret Atwood. I believe it sums up the essence of the Incel ideology; Incels feel oppressed, mocked, even ridiculed by women and feminists; and as with the many Incel related terror attacks, women are targets for violent and deadly attacks by Incels. I have analysed threads and comments from the subreddit r/Braincels with feminist content analysis and the theoretical framework of online anti-feminism, hegemonic and hybrid masculinities, masculinism, and aggrieved entitlement. Through the analysis, I have analysed the most central themes of the Incel community and ideology, focusing on how online anti-feminism manifests within the ideology and the expressions of hegemonic and hybrid masculinity structures, and the feelings of aggrieved entitlement.

## 7.1 Findings

Through the analysis, I look at how Incels thematically construct their views and ideology within online anti-feminism, hegemonic and hybrid masculinity, and aggrieved entitlement. Through a feminist poststructural approach, the analysis brings findings of how Incels construct genders and sexuality, which the following chapter outlines.

### 7.1.1 Findings of the manifestation of online anti-feminism within the Incel ideology and community

Online anti-feminism theorises as an ideology where a group or community create their personal political views, which cannot separate the hate towards the feminist and the women, resulting in hate towards them both. The analysed threads from r/Braincels show that Incels manifests their ideology on online anti-feminism, as Incels do not only hate the feminist or women but both equally. They find a community hating women and blaming feminism for their misfortune. The shared experiences that feminism through a secretive misandrist and gynocentric society oppresses men make the feminist the catalyst for their sexual deprivation. I found that the Incel community embraces the online anti-feminist views so that the Incel ideology is constructed on online anti-feminism. The growth of online anti-feminist views

can be viewed as one of the reasons Incels can exist. Incels are a unique community that originates from social media and do not organise in real life. They usually communicate on websites with low or no moderation; they have developed an ideology of extreme hatred towards women and violent fantasies without consequences. The immersive hatred towards women, an ongoing theme within almost every discussion, is created because they operate online. The Incel ideology is an Internet phenomenon where views, statements, and language radicalise easier and faster because they are anonymous and rarely get consequences for their statements. The ideology is grown out of and constructed on the back of violent language and statements resulting from online anti-feminism.

### 7.1.2 Findings of hegemonic and hybrid masculinity within the Incel community and ideology

Masculinism is a branch of online anti-feminist views, as masculinists believe women to control and dominate men and place themselves as victims of feminism. Through the analysis, I found that Incels' construction of hegemonic masculinity has a paradox to it. Not only do Incels construct the hierarchy of attractiveness on hybrid masculinity, but they also endorse hegemonic masculinity structures (by idolising Chads), while at the same time identify as victims for being placed lowest in the hierarchy, as an Incel do not live up to these hegemonic structures. It is a catalyst for a circle of low self-esteem and the feeling of being unfairly treated by society; society is blamed as they believe women control the society, which is, as Incels believe, why the hierarchy of attractiveness exists. Hegemonic masculinity builds on biological determination, an ongoing theme for Incels' construction of gender and sexuality. Through the analysis, I found that Incels create Chad through a hegemonic masculine structure based on biological determination. It constructs Chads with genetic advantages as phrenology and external features that one cannot change; height, jawline size, and vocal cords. This construction moves the reason for Incels' sexual deprivation from themselves to something unchangeable; biology. As a result of the hierarchy of attractiveness, Incels believe women only choose the genetically advantaged Chads for sexual relations. Women are also constructed within biological determinism and are known by Incels to only have sexual relations with Chads, as she chooses a sexual partner for reproduction and prefers Chad's "good genes". As a result of women choosing Chads as sexual partners over Incels, they are viewed as superficial and evil. Incels feel demasculinised when women favour Chads over them. During the analysis, I found a paradox from these findings. Even though Incels

despises Chads for living up to hegemonic standards of masculinity, they seek to get the same advantages as they seek sexual relations with women. To seek sexual relations with women is another paradox, as they show immersive hatred towards women. The findings of the friction of hating and wanting women are outlined in the following chapter.

### 7.1.3 Findings of aggrieved entitlement towards the hated woman's body

Aggrieved entitlement originates from anti-feminism, in which men feel their rights given by historical patriarchal structures eliminated because of feminism. I believe this is one of the most exciting findings from the analysis of online anti-feminism; how Incels feel entitlement towards the female body, even though they express extreme hatred and misogyny. They do not only hate the women who reject them or the feminists who demasculinise them but *all women*. The aggrieved entitlement towards women's bodies results from their online anti-feminist views of gendered power structures. Incels feel entitled to sex and romantic relations, and when they realise, they are not receiving it, they get angry, leading to violence. The shared hate towards women and the shared experience of sexual deprivation is the foundation for why they self-identify as Incels. They share experiences of being alone and sexless but find a community because of it. Their ideology gets validated in these communities, as they share experiences with others who share their experiences and beliefs, making their conspiracies valid. The anti-feminist ideology supports their entitlement to women's bodies, as they believe it is their *right* because they are men. They feel women owe them sex, and they get frustrated when they realise that women reject them. All this intertwines to blame feminism for every reason of their sexual deprivation: They blame feminism for giving women the freedom to earn their own money, so they do not need a man to provide economically; They blame feminism and sexual liberation for giving women the freedom to choose how many and whomever they have sexual relations with; They blame feminism for deconstructing the heteronormative and conservative ideal of a woman; They blame feminism for women deselecting Incels, and they blame feminism for oppressing men. The findings through the analysis of structures of masculinity, the hatred towards women, and the entitlement towards their bodies all come from online anti-feminist structures, conspiracies, and ideologies.

## 7.2 Final conclusion

There is a general tone within the Incel community that I find interesting. Even though they feel marginalised, oppressed, ridiculed, they also feel superior. They feel superior towards the other men who have not realised the “true evil nature of women” and feel superior for “having figured out the truth about society”. Again, there is a paradox within the ideology. The feeling of being superior can result in violent acts. Elliot Rodger felt superior and wanted to start the “Incel Rebellion”, which Alek Minassian and Chris Harper-Mercer continued. I find the development of looking for a community out of loneliness to find a community that radicalises one’s views, which result in extreme hatred and sometimes terror attacks, to be incredibly important and interesting.

During the writing of this thesis, the self-proclaimed Incel Alek Minassian got sentenced to a lifetime penalty of 10 counts of first-degree murder and 16 counts of attempted murder. Furthermore, only a week ago, the most violent shooting in Britain in ten years happened by a young man who had been active on Incel sites. The dataset of this thesis is only three days of content, and it still managed to show how radicalised, hateful and violent Incels are. Furthermore, Incels are only one sub-culture with online anti-feminist views. This thesis’s findings are vital to feminist research on how the new online anti-feminism threatens gender equality.

### *Suggestions for further research*

I believe future research of interest could be the following:

More advanced research of online anti-feminism within the Incel ideology and across cultures of the Manosphere. Research of how academic scholar’s theories, such as sexual economics theory, validates the Pill philosophy and Incels’ hierarchy of attractiveness. Furthermore, an interesting angle to approach online anti-feminism could be how groups as Incels get radicalised through algorithms and echo chambers. At last, it could be interesting to research how Incels could benefit from an intersectional, deconstructivist, feminist ideology, where gender and hierarchies are fluid and not as categorised as Incels believe them to be, which upholds their experiences of oppression.

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# Appendixes

## Appendix I

The schema below presents some terms regularly used in the Incel community. Most of the terms reproduce racial and gender-based violence as they have extremist misogynist, racist and homophobic connotations.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Alpha-male or Alpha	The opposite of a beta-male, a man who is higher in the hierarchy of looks and confidence
AWALT	Short for "All Women Are Like That"
Becky	An average-looking woman
Beta or Beta-male	A man who is not an "Alpha", or not a Chad. A man who has little to no chance to date a Stacy, although still a medium-good-looking man
Blackpill	The idea of that there is no solutions for the systematic problems that is and always will be against men. Mostly used as an Incel-term, as this is the state of "wokeness" where the Incel accept his fate as an Incel and accept the fact that nothing can be done to get out of his inceldom
Bluepill	Still living in denial and has not awoken
Chad	A good-looking man who can get women whenever he wants.
Chadlite	A man who can lookmaxxx himself to look closer to a Chad, although a Chad is born

	good-looking, and a Chadlite will never become a “true” Chad
Cuck	A man whose wife or girlfriend is cheating with another man. Also used as slang for idiocy or being an imbecile
ER	Short “Elliot Rodger” – short for mass-shooting
Femoid or Foid	Shorts for ”female humanoid”. Indicates that women are not truly or fully human. Women are sometimes also referred to as “it” to further dehumanizing
Fuel	Suicide
Gigachad	A chad who is a 10/10
Gymcel	An Incel who cope by working out
LDAR	Short for ”Lay down and rot”
Looksmaxx	When trying to ”improve” a person’s look by working out, buying nicer cloths, eat healthier or as more extreme, doing surgery.
Mogs, Mog, and Mogged	The the act of dominating another person
Normie	A term for the “regular” or “normal” man, who has not awakened to the pill-philosophy
Oneitis	When a man think a woman is special, and think he is in love – which is understood as a lie, as “all women are mean and the same”
Redpill	Awoken to see society as it is. Awoken to understand how women and feminism are oppressing men
Roastie	A woman who has had sex with multiple men, and who’s labia looks like roast beef as a result of that

Rope	Suicide
Stacy	A good-looking woman who only wants to date a Chad
Subhuman	A Subhuman is lower in the hierarchy than a beta-male. Incels describe themselves as subhumans as they have no value in life or society
Sui	Suicide
Suifuil	Suicide
Tyrone	A chad who is a man of colour

## Appendix II

This list outlines the most prominent Incel related terror attacks.

### **May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014 – Elliot Rodger, 22:**

In Isla Vista, California, Rodger stabbed his two roommates and their friend to death in their shared apartment. After he drove to a chosen sorority house and shot three women, two died, as he could not get into the house as planned. Following this, he drove into people injuring a total of 14 and killing a total of six. He killed himself afterwards. Beforehand, he uploaded a video titled “Elliot Rodger’s Retribution” on Youtube. He named the day of the attack “The Day of Retribution”. The video shows Rodger in a car talking about how much he hates women and how he is finally going to take revenge. He also emailed a 137-page manifesto, *My Twisted World*, to his friends, family and therapist. It describes his life from when he was born until the day of the suicide, where he outlines traumas, rejections from women, family and friends. Furthermore, it shows a narcissistic young man, who believes himself to be a God, and he describes a utopia society with women in concentration camps and men who can live freely without women. He had been active on several Incel forums and identified himself as one.

### **June/July 2014 – Ben Moynihan, 18:**

In Portsmouth Stabbings, Moynihan stabbed and injured three women. Beforehand, he sent a letter to the police where he wrote: “All women need to die”. He was planning to kill women as revenge for him being 17 with no sexual experience. He did not self-identify as an Incel, although his motives are related to the ideology.

### **October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015 – Chris Harper-Mercer, 26:**

At Umpqua Community College, Harper-Mercer killed nine and injured seven. He compared himself to Elliot Rodger, whom he had been in contact with through social media. He also published a manifesto, inspired by Rodger, where he shortly outlines his life. He described himself as “the most hated person in the world” and was revenging women for rejecting him throughout his life. He was attacking Christian people, making them stand before he shot them.

**July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2016 – Sheldon Bentley, 38:**

In Edmonton, Canada, a former security guard killed a homeless man due to the frustrations of his involuntary celibacy.

**December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – William Atchison, 21:**

Atchison attacked Aztec high school, killing two students and himself. In 2016, the FBI questioned him after using Elliot Rodger as a pseudonym and calling himself “Supreme Gentleman”. Atchison convinced them that he was a harmless “troll”.

**February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018 – Nikolas Cruz, 19:**

Cruz killed 17 and injured 17 at Stoneman Douglas High School. Besides being active online with racist, misogynist, homophobic, and anti-Semitic content, he claimed to be the next big school shooter and praised Elliot Rodger online.

**April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2018 - Alek Minassian, 25:**

Minassian drove a rented cargo van through one of the busiest streets in Toronto, Canada, killing ten and wounded 16. Minassian had planned the attack a month in advance, and he only stopped when a drink splattered on the front window. Before the attack, Minassian posted on Facebook: "The Incel rebellion has already begun! All hail the Supreme Gentleman Elliot Rodger!". He was planning to die by suicide by cop. Minassian got arrested, and on March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2021, he got sentenced to a lifetime penalty of 10 counts of first-degree murder and 16 counts of attempted murder. During the interrogation, which is online on YouTube, Minassian confessed his crimes, and to the question of how he felt about killing ten and injuring 15, he answered: "I feel like ah I accomplished my mission". He admitted being in contact with both Elliot Rodger and Chris Harper-Mercer online, planning the Incel Rebellion.

**November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018 - Scott Beierle, 40:**

Beierle killed two people and injured five before killing himself at a yoga studio in Tallahassee, Florida. He self-identified as a misogynist and had a violent history against women. He was active online and had posted racist and misogynist videos on YouTube where he praised Elliot Rodger and criticised interracial relationships.

**June 3rd, 2019 - Alexander Stavropoulos, 25:**

Stavropoulos stabbed a woman multiple times and injured her baby in Sudbury, UK. He admitted to the police being after white women for rejecting him sexually. Stavropoulos self-identified as an Incel and had Alek Minassian as inspiration for his attack.

**February 24th, 2020 - Unnamed minor, 17:**

The minor stabbed two women, murdering one, in Toronto, Canada. He was charged with terrorism as he was connected to the Incel community.

**June 2nd, 2020 - Cole Carini, 23:**

Carini told the police he accidentally had bombed off his hand. Although, when the FBI searched his apartment, they found a letter that asserted a terror attack by suicide-bombing against "hot cheerleaders". The letter also claimed the attack to be a statement like Elliot Rodgers.

**December 15, 2020 - Gabrielle Friel, 22:**

Friel has a violent background of stabbing a police officer with an attempt of murder. He was charged with having weapons, including a crossbow, fifteen crossbow arrows and a machete, and a bulletproof vest in his home and in different places in Edinburgh, Scotland. It was not proven that he was preparing for a killing spree or had connections to the Incel community, although he gave evidence to his own defence saying a mass shooting was a fantasy of his, and he had empathy for Elliot Rodger.

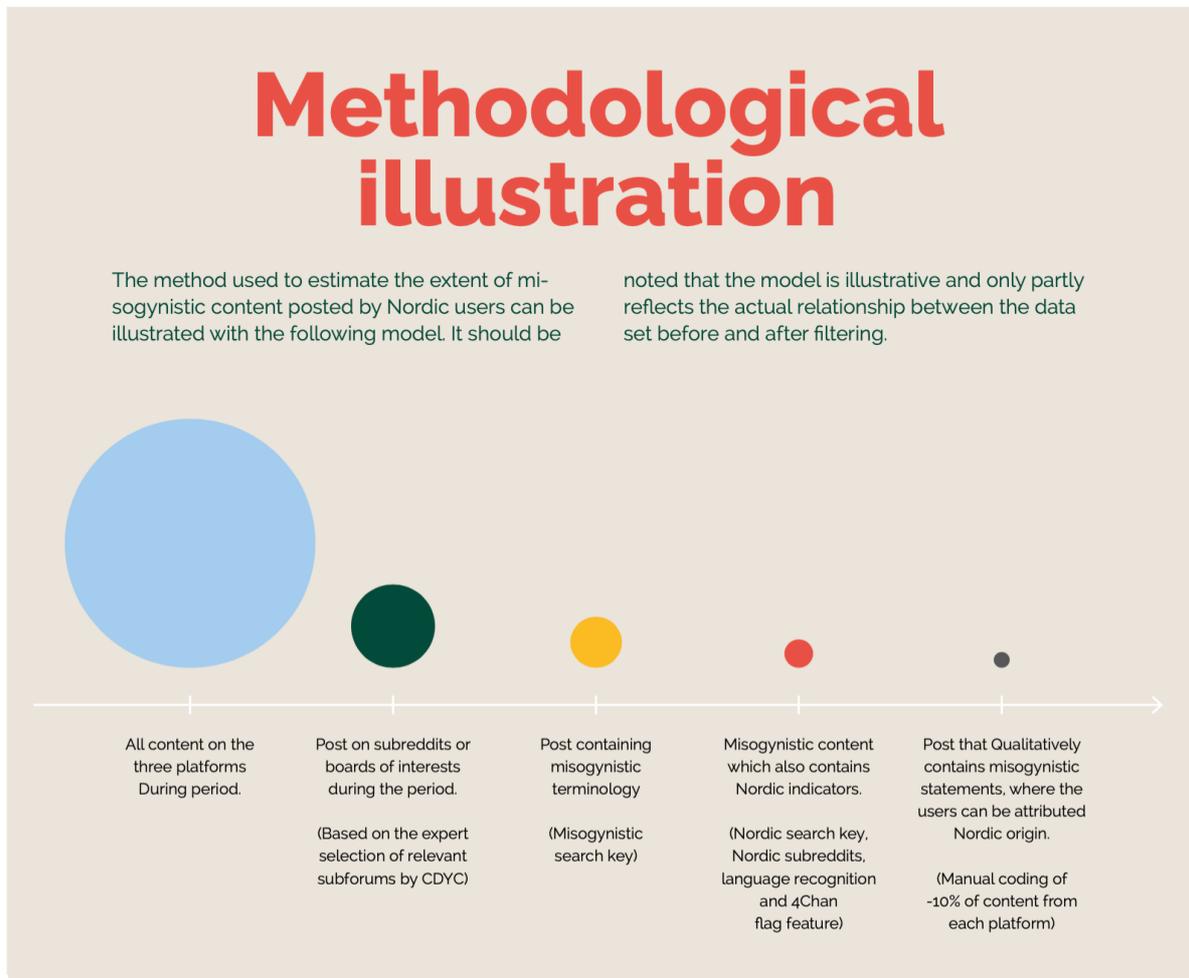
**13th August, 2021 - Jake Davison, 22:**

Only a couple of days before the hand in of this thesis, an Incel-related shooting happened in Plymouth, UK. Davison killed five, including a child of three, and himself, by suicide. It is the worst shooting in Britain since 2010. Davison had posted hate-filled rants online about his mother and used Incel-related terms in videos he posted online.

*(Jamieson et al., 2018; Mascia, 2019; BBC News, 2020; Cecco, 2020; Brunt & Taylor, 2021; BBC News, 2021)*

## Appendix III

Methodological process of filtering and coding the dataset from Analyse & Tal



*(Centre for Digital Youth Care, 2020, p.82)*

## Appendix IV

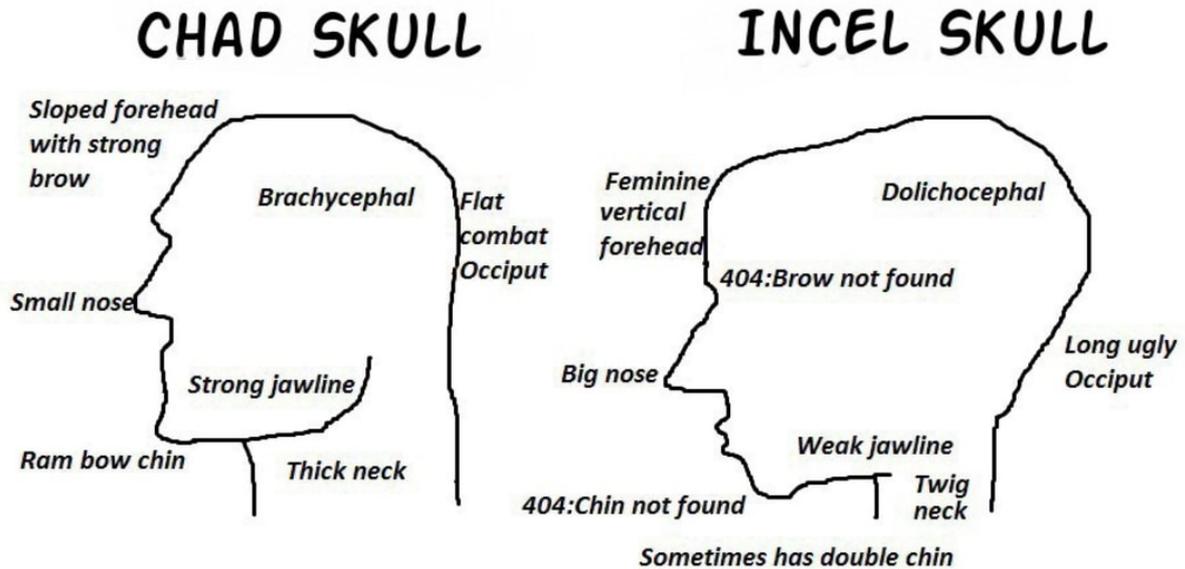
The table show the content of posts and threads from Reddit, 4chan, and Twitter although this thesis only focus on the content from Reddit.

	 <b>Reddit</b>	 <b>4chan</b>	 <b>Twitter</b>
<b>Optimization of search keys</b>	Through three iterations, the search keys were developed and optimized in close collaboration with CDYC and the Nordic advisory group. To support this qualitative exploration, a quantitative cluster analysis was made on Reddit data to identify any relevant misogynistic keywords that may have been overlooked.		
<b>Selection of subforums</b>	204 Subreddits related to the misogynist environment or the Nordic countries were selected.	Twitter does not use subforums. Instead, the Nordic search key was supplemented with the handles of the names of known actors in the gender debate to include a focus on online harassment.	Four boards related to the misogynist environment were selected.
<b>Data collection</b>	An integration to Pushshift's Reddit API was developed, which allowed collection of all posts and comments from select subreddits. Pushshift's API was chosen seeing as Reddit's own API does not contain data from banned subreddits.	An integration to Twitter's Premium API was deployed, which allowed the purchase of tweets and retweets based on the two search keys and language criteria.	Historic content was downloaded from five public 4chan archives. Further, a scraper was built and used to collect recent content that had not yet been made available in the archives.
<b>Identifying potentially misogynistic content</b>	From the selected subforums, all posts and comments that contain at least one word from the misogynistic search key were identified.		
<b>Identifying potential Nordic content</b>	Content was classified as potentially Nordic if it 1) appeared in a Nordic subreddit or 2) contained any word from the Nordic search key	Content was classified as potentially Nordic if 1) Twitter had classified it as Nordic or 2) it contained any word from the Nordic search key	Content was classified as potentially Nordic if it 1) was recognized as Nordic by the language recognition AI, 2) contained any word from the Nordic search key, or 3) was tagged with a Nordic country flag (only /pol)
<b>Size of the filtered data set</b>	5,107 posts and comments	55,293 posts and comments	43,073 posts and comments
<b>Manual coding</b>	A representative sample of 10% of the filtered posts were read and classified, and annotated them as true or false based on a normative definition of misogyny and estimation of Nordic origin.		
<small>3 The following codes were used <a href="https://desuarchive.org">https://desuarchive.org</a>, <a href="https://archive.4plebs.org">https://archive.4plebs.org</a>, <a href="https://thebarchive.com">https://thebarchive.com</a>, <a href="https://archiveofsins.com">https://archiveofsins.com</a>, and <a href="https://archived.moe/">https://archived.moe/</a></small>			

(Centre for Digital Youth Care, 2020, p.84)

## Appendix V

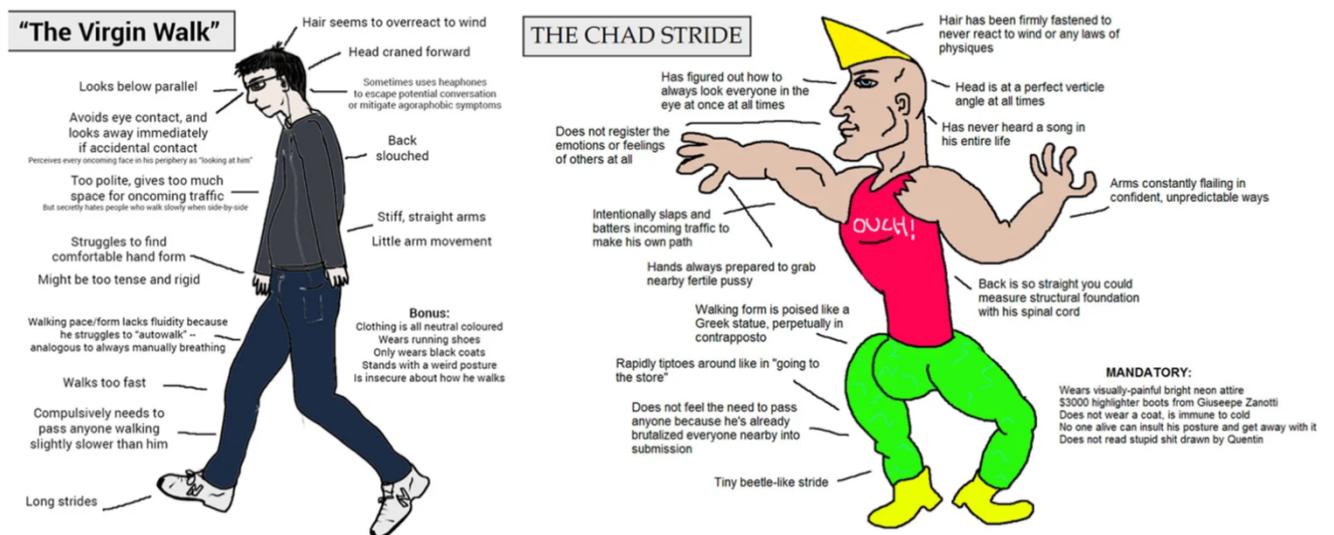
Incels use Phrenology to describe the differences of a Chad and an Incel



(Source: Reddit.com)

## Appendix VI

The differences of the Incel (the virgin) and the Chad



(Source: Reddit.com)