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**“Women? they're all whores, subhuman animals”:
*Mapping gender-based harm on the Internet through a
qualitative study of incels' cyberspace***

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Content Advisory: This thesis includes direct quotations containing slurs, discriminatory language, and offensive speech that may be distressing to some readers.

Abstract

This thesis investigates gender-based online hate speech as an emanation of gender-based harm through qualitative content analysis of incels' communication patterns. Following high-profile violent attacks by self-identified incels, scholarly and public attention has surged towards the manosphere – a collection of anti-feminist online communities that engage in various levels of misogyny. The term “incel” is a portmanteau for “involuntary celibate”, and while originally used inclusively, has come to refer to mostly young men united by a feeling of rejection and rage towards women.

This research addresses how modern online communities and their coded communications patterns can inform the broader concept of gender-based online hate speech. It explores the extent to which freedom of expression safeguards need to account for modern challenges of online communities of the manosphere. Current approaches to hate speech may fail to address the coded language and seemingly marginal nature of communities like incels, creating a gap in recognising their contribution to broader ecosystems of misogyny.

Incels' communications embody hostile commentary that dehumanises, objectifies, and sexualises women. However, their spaces remain relatively marginal, potentially leading to considerations that their communications are too contextual and insufficiently mainstream to constitute hate speech. The identification of violent and hateful expressions is complicated by incels' coded language, including derogatory terms used to talk about women, e.g. "foids," "toilets," "holes," or "noodlewhores," alongside communications presenting beliefs about “female nature.”

Speech in incel cyberspaces may not always constitute hate speech yet still function as gender-based harm by contributing to digital ecosystems of gendered harm. Current approaches to protecting freedom of expression and hate speech struggle with the intersection of marginality and harm, failing to recognise how seemingly peripheral communities contribute to broader ecosystems of gender-based violence. Given the tension between freedom of expression and hate speech recognition, this thesis argues for more nuanced approaches to understanding online gender-based harm on the Internet and how gender-based online hate speech contributes to thereof.

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Table of Abbreviation

ACHPR – African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights

ACHR – American Convention on Human Rights

Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime – Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime concerning the criminalisation of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems

CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

CoE – Council of Europe

ECHR – European Convention on Human Rights

EU – European Union

ICCPR – International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

ICERD – International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

ICT – Internet Communication Technologies

QCA – Qualitative Content Analysis

UN – United Nations

UNHRC – UN Human Rights Committee

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Introduction

1.1. Background

In 2014, 22-year-old Elliot Rodger, in a semi-organised attack, murdered six people and injured 14 others in Isla Vista, California, USA, before taking his own life. Before the attack, he uploaded a video and 137-page manifesto detailing his hatred toward women who had rejected him. In 2018, Alek Minassian drove a van into pedestrians on a busy Toronto sidewalk, killing 10 people and injuring 16 others. Prior to the attack, he posted about “the Incel Rebellion” and its start, referencing Rodger as an inspiration. In 2021, Jake Davison shot and killed five people, including his mother, in Plymouth, UK, before shooting himself. Reportedly, Davison had participated in incel-related online forums and had posted videos discussing his frustrations about his inability to form relationships with women.¹ Those incidents, while not the only ones among many other attacks, brought attention to the so-called incel ideology as well as, broadly speaking, misogynist terrorism. Due to the high publicity, the mainstream media and the public found out more about the profile of the perpetrators that were connected to incel community. It soon became clear that it is the online sphere that we need to investigate to find more information about those ideologies, their followers and their impact.

The fast growth of the Internet Communication Technologies (ICT) and social media in the past decades allowed for the creation of various types of cyber-communities and online networks across the world. Cyberspaces, although important arenas for public self-expression or participation in public discourse, have become places that could facilitate exclusion and hatred, disseminated in a context of anonymity. This is the case with the so-called manosphere - toxic and (self)destructive web-based misogynist movements focused on “men’s issues” in loosely connected networks.²

This master’s thesis aims to delve into the characteristics of one of the most known communities from the manosphere – incels – through qualitative content analysis (QCA). By scrutinizing its selected

¹ See: ‘Full Coverage: Isla Vista Killings near UC Santa Barbara’ (*Los Angeles Times*, 24 May 2014) <<https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-isla-vista-shooting-near-ucsb-stories-storygallery.html>> accessed 5 July 2025; ‘Toronto van Attack: Minassian Guilty of Killing 10 People’ (3 March 2021) <<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-56269095>> accessed 5 July 2025; Steven Morris, ‘Plymouth Shooting: Burst of Savagery That Began with an Attack on a Mother’ *The Guardian* (20 February 2023) <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/feb/20/plymouth-shooting-eight-minutes-of-savagery-inquest-jake-davison>> accessed 5 July 2025.

² The term originates from a blog entry in 2009, as it served to describe an online network of men’s interest communities. It was popularized by Ian Ironwood, porn marketer and pseudonymous author of the self-published *The Manosphere: A New Hope for Masculinity*. See: Debbie Ging, ‘Alphas, Betas, and Incels: Theorizing the Masculinities of the Manosphere’ (2019) *22 Men and Masculinities* 638, 641.

content, this study seeks to shed light on how the analysis of the content published by members of incel community could inform the understanding of gender-based harm on the Internet, specifically gender-based online hate speech. It seeks to explore whether the extent to which freedom of expression safeguards need to account for modern challenges and nature of closed communities of the manosphere and their coded communication patterns.

1.2. State of the art

The term "incel" – short for "involuntary celibate" – has entered public discourse and academic research in recent years. It literally refers to someone who desires but cannot establish romantic relationships. Incel community has been described as a group, of mostly young men, united by a strong feeling of rejection and rage toward the opposite sex.³ Originally, the term represented an inclusive support network for people to discuss their experiences of social exclusion.⁴ Overtime, it started to be widely associated with violence, misogyny, alt-right ideology as well as anti-feminist movements.⁵

The increased awareness about incels is mainly due to violent attacks that happened in the United Kingdom, Canada or the USA. Thanks to the diffusion of this information to public discourse, we became more conscious of the entirety of manosphere. It is usually described as a collection of anti-feminist online communities that engage in various levels of misogyny or targeted violence. The cyberspaces they use could be largely understood as having four distinct groups: Pickup Artist, Men Going Their Own Way, Men's Rights Activist, and Incels. All of them have their distinct features, including the uniquely coded language and ideologies, however it seems that one common thing is their (gendered) perception of the world, in which women's behaviour or their "nature" are central.

The existing scholarship acknowledges the diversity of the manosphere, with most of the literature focusing on the understanding of incels and "inceldom."⁶ Understandably, this is caused by the influence of the attacks carried out by self-identified incels. Incel-focused literature must, however, be further

³ See: Manoel Horta Ribeiro and others, 'From Pick-Up Artists to Incels: A Data-Driven Sketch of the Manosphere' [2020] ArXiv 3.

⁴ See: Allysa Czerwinsky, 'Misogynist Incels Gone Mainstream: A Critical Review of the Current Directions in Incel-Focused Research' (2024) 20 Crime, Media, Culture 196, 197–198.

⁵ December Maxwell and others, "'A Short Story of a Lonely Guy": A Qualitative Thematic Analysis of Involuntary Celibacy Using Reddit' (2020) 24 Sexuality & Culture 1852, 1853.

⁶ See: Ging (n 2); Sylvia Jaki and others, 'Online Hatred of Women in the Incels.Me Forum: Linguistic Analysis and Automatic Detection' (2019) 7 Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict 240; Maxwell and others (n 5); Sarah E Daly and Shon M Reed, "'I Think Most of Society Hates Us": A Qualitative Thematic Analysis of Interviews with Incels' (2021) 86 Sex Roles 14; Czerwinsky (n 4); Julia R DeCook and Megan and Kelly, 'Interrogating the "Incel Menace": Assessing the Threat of Male Supremacy in Terrorism Studies' (2022) 15 Critical Studies on Terrorism 706.

nuanced.⁷ The manosphere, particularly incels, tend to be treated homogenously and some of their views – as unique forms of “extreme misogyny”, rather than ideology that is part of broader societal problems of long-standing male supremacy, misogyny as well as white supremacy or homophobia.

1.3. *Why study the manosphere?*

The manosphere offers a lens through which to study the complex interplay between online communication patterns and the broader conceptualisation of gender-based harm on the Internet in contemporary digital environments. Although, there is no single definition or understanding of hate speech in human rights law, it may be described as expressive conduct that disseminates, spreads, promotes or justifies violence, hatred or discrimination based on specific personal characteristic.⁸ It is characteristically hostile, and contributes to humiliation, intimidation, discrimination, degradation and the like.⁹ Prohibiting hate speech, under specific conditions,¹⁰ is an accepted measure limiting freedom of expression in human rights law.¹¹ In certain scenarios, sanctioning forms of expression that spread, incite, promote or justify hatred is necessary.¹² In principle, countering the ideas of hatred requires nuanced approach, rather than implementing criminal measures only, especially in the context of structural and historical inequalities.¹³ Freedom of expression applies equally online and offline, so the approach to hate speech extends to digital platforms. However, online environments amplify speech differently, affecting its reach, impact, and audience.

Online hate speech's global reach and persistent availability may amplify its capacity for harm. Through the exposure to hateful and hostile attitudes, the members of online communities, even if originally not

⁷ Czerwinsky (n 4).

⁸ See: Council of Europe, Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16 to Member States on Combating Hate Speech (adopted by the Committee of Ministers, 2022)

⁹ See: Louise Richardson-Self, ‘Woman-Hating: On Misogyny, Sexism, and Hate Speech’ (2018) 33 *Hypatia* 256.

¹⁰ See: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (adopted 16 December 1966, entered into force 23 March 1976) 999 UNTS 171, art 19(3); European Convention on Human Rights (opened for signature 4 November 1950, entered into force 3 September 1953) ETS 5, art 10(2); American Convention on Human Rights (adopted 22 November 1969, entered into force 18 July 1978) 1144 UNTS 123, art 13.

¹¹ See, for instance: Toby Mendel, ‘Does International Law Provide for Consistent Rules on Hate Speech?’ in Michael Herz and Peter Molnar (eds), *The Content and Context of Hate Speech: Rethinking Regulation and Responses* (Cambridge University Press 2012).

¹² See: International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (adopted 21 December 1965, entered into force 4 January 1969) 660 UNTS 195, art 4; *Savva Terentyev v Russia* App no 10692/09 (ECtHR, 28 August 2018)

¹³ See, for instance: UN Human Rights Council, ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, Rita Izsák’ (5 January 2015) UN Doc A/HRC/28/64, para 60; UN General Assembly, ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, Frank La Rue’ (10 August 2011), UN Doc. A/66/290, para 83.

engaged, may normalise and internalise those views, creating pathways to radicalisation.¹⁴ Given the complexity of identifying sexist and misogynist speech online, it is important to distinguish between content requiring criminal measures or removal, and speech that reinforces harmful gender stereotypes or patriarchal beliefs. While the latter can also create problematic behaviours and increase women's vulnerability online, it may not always warrant criminal or moderation responses. Relatedly, it remains a question whether, once such measures are applied, it is effective and sufficient approach in countering misogynistic and sexist beliefs.

In the context of the focus of this thesis, it must be further recognised that speech identified in incel's cyberspaces may not always constitute online hate speech per se, yet can still function as gender-based harm. There is a growing need to approach incel community with a more nuanced perspective. The speech present in those cyber environments is not only an emanation of online gender-based harm toward women, but it also shows how the experience of social exclusion facilitates self-destructive attitudes of (mostly) men that create this content. The manosphere and its communities are rarely conceptualised through human rights lenses. By applying a human rights focus in this research, this study aims to build upon the existing research on the manosphere, with specific focus on incels, and provide a new lens to the concept of gender-based harm on the Internet, governed by the understanding of the competing interests of freedom of expression safeguards and regulation of online hate speech.

1.4. Research Aims and Outline

The main aim of this thesis is to answer the following research question: *“How does the content from incels’ cyberspace inform the understanding of the concept of gender-based harm on the Internet, specifically online gender-based hate speech?”* This question is supported by the following sub-questions: *“Does the coded language and communication patterns in incels’ spaces complicate the identification and classification of harmful speech?”* and *“To what extent does the framework of freedom of expression and hate speech address the specific challenges of the studied content produced in the incel cyberspaces?”*

Since the main research inquiry of this thesis focuses on human rights framework, this thesis employs an interdisciplinary mixed-method approach. While QCA is applied in the analysis of empirical data, legal doctrinal method is employed in the process of laying down legal and theoretical frameworks of freedom

¹⁴ See: Hussam Habib, Padmini Srinivasan and Rishab Nithyanand, ‘Making a Radical Misogynist: How Online Social Engagement with the Manosphere Influences Traits of Radicalization’ (2022) 6 Proc. ACM Hum.-Comput. Interact. 450:1.

of expression and online hate speech. As far as the latter is applied, it provides an overview of relevant human rights law provisions, specifically the ones governing freedom of expression and hate speech, with a focus on United Nations human rights framework. Doctrinal research is a text-based approach that focuses on reading and analysis of the primary and secondary materials.¹⁵ It provides a systematic exposition of the rules governing a particular legal category, analyses the relationship between rules and explains areas of difficulty.¹⁶ In this thesis, doctrinal approach is utilised to present the theoretical and legal frameworks, that later on will be considered as a backdrop for qualitatively examined incels' communication. This mixed-method approach allows for enriched and problem-oriented approach to the present research. Considering that the analysis of empirical data requires detailed explanation of the gathered sample, the application of QCA in this thesis is explained in Chapter 4.

The rest of this thesis is divided into the next four chapters. The second chapter establishes a theoretical framework, including relevant concepts and theories, through which the main research questions will be answered. The following chapter outlines the understanding of the manosphere, with a particular focus on incels. Subsequently, the fourth chapter provides background on the methodology, giving an overview of QCA and its suitability to this research. Lastly, the fifth chapter contains the discussion of the results, in which the data is analysed. The thesis ends with conclusions, that summarises the results and the fulfilment of objectives of the research.

¹⁵ Terry Hutchinson, *Researching and Writing in Law* (Thomson Reuters/Lawbook Company 2010) 7.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

Chapter 2: Gender-based online hate speech: laying down the theoretical and legal framework

2.1. Introduction

The aim of the following Chapter is to establish a framework of freedom of expression and online hate speech. This is followed by the examination of gender-based harm on the Internet and gender-based online hate speech – the concepts through which the main research question is explored. Laying down the theoretical and legal frameworks allows for the identification of the focal aspects and challenges underpinning those concepts. This further leads this research to identify the difficulties that communications qualitatively explored in this thesis, present to current understandings of hate speech in online environments and the proliferation of gendered harm through it.

2.2. Freedom of expression and hate speech

2.2.1. Freedom of expression

Freedom of expression and access to information is at the centre of democratic systems, a principle in modern constitutional law and a crucial aspect of international human rights law. It is widely recognised in both universal and regional human rights treaties.¹⁷ The normative dimension of this right has been the concern of notable scholars, both in earlier works and in modern literature. Previous works include John Stuart Mill's argument from truth (marketplace of ideas),¹⁸ the arguments grounded in the value of individual autonomy,¹⁹ as well as the arguments grounded in the value of free speech safeguarding democracy.²⁰ Certain literature followed on those reflections and applied them to more modern settings, developing and challenging general presumptions on freedom of speech, notably including feminist thinkers arguing against pornography.²¹ Over the years, the discourse shifted in the context of the Internet

¹⁷ See: ICCPR, Art. 19; ECHR, Art. 10; ACHR, Art. 13; African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (adopted 27 June 1981, entered into force 21 October 1986) (1982) 21 ILM 58, art 9.

¹⁸ John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (J W Parker and Son 1859).

¹⁹ See: Thomas Scanlon, 'A Theory of Freedom of Expression' (1972) 1 *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 204.; Ronald Dworkin, 'Is There a Right to Pornography?' (1981) 1 *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 177.; C Edwin Baker and C Edwin Baker, *Human Liberty and Freedom of Speech* (Oxford University Press 1989).; Richard Moon, 'The Scope of Freedom of Expression' (1985) 23 *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 331.

²⁰ Alex Meiklejohn, *Free Speech and Its Relation to Self-Government* (First edition, New York: Harper & Brothers 1948); Alexander Meiklejohn, 'The First Amendment Is an Absolute' (1961) 1961 *The Supreme Court Review* 245.; John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (Columbia University Press 1993).; Jurgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms* (MIT Press 1996).; Cass Sunstein, *Democracy and the Problem of Free Speech* (The Free Press, 1993).

²¹ Particularly: Catharine A MacKinnon, *Only Words* (Harvard University Press 1993).

and the accessibility of hateful and offensive speech, especially targeting religious and ethnic minorities.²²

Freedom of expression is commonly recognised in international human rights law. According to Article 19 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), everyone should have the right to hold opinions without interferences, including “freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media.”²³ The same or similar approach is also reflected in regional human rights treaties, like European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR),²⁴ African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR)²⁵ and American Convention on Human Rights (ACHR).²⁶ UN Treaty Bodies have emphasized the importance of freedom of expression and access to information in multiple contexts of human rights realisation.²⁷ It is an indispensable condition for the full development of an individual and essential factor for every free and democratic society.²⁸

In principle, restrictions of freedom of expression are exceptions to the norm of free flow of ideas and information.²⁹ According to Article 19(3) of ICCPR, freedom of expression may be restricted if it aims to protect the rights or reputation of others and for the protection of national security, public order, public health or morals.³⁰ These are narrowly defined exceptions and the burden to justify them is put on the authority restricting the speech. Freedom of expression could be restricted provided it is prescribed by law, pursues a legitimate aim and remains necessary and proportional to the aim.³¹ Legality criterion requires the laws to be precise, public and transparent, not giving the authority unbounded discretion to limit freedom of speech. The restriction should be justified to protect one or more of the legitimate

²² For an overview of the scholarship see: Paul Billingham and Matteo Bonotti, ‘Introduction: Hate, Offence and Free Speech in a Changing World’ (2019) 22 *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 531.

²³ ICCPR, Art. 19.

²⁴ ECHR, Art. 10.

²⁵ ACHPR, Art. 9.

²⁶ ACHR, Art. 13.

²⁷ See, for instance: UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, ‘General Recommendation No 35: Combating racist hate speech’ (2013) UN Doc CERD/C/GC/35, para 3; UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, ‘General Comment No 20: Implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence’ (2016) UN Doc CRC/C/GC/20, para 34; UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, ‘General Comment No 4: The right to adequate housing (art 11(1) of the Covenant)’ (1991) UN Doc E/1992/23, para 9.

²⁸ UN Human Rights Committee, ‘General Comment No 34 on Article 19: Freedoms of Opinion and Expression’ (2011) UN Doc CCPR/C/GC/34, para 2.

²⁹ *ibid.*, para. 21.

³⁰ See also: ECHR, Art. 10(2), ACHR, Art. 13(2).

³¹ See: *Handyside v United Kingdom* App no 5493/72 (ECtHR, 7 December 1976); *Compulsory Membership in an Association Prescribed by Law for the Practice of Journalism* (Advisory Opinion) Inter-American Court of Human Rights Series A No 5 (13 November 1985).

interests under Art. 19(3). Finally, the restriction must be demonstrated as necessary to protect the interest(s) and be the least restrictive means to achieve it.³²

In certain scenarios states are, however, obliged to prohibit specific kinds of speech. Article 20 of ICCPR obliges states to prohibit any propaganda for war and any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. The obligation to prohibit certain speech also applies to, i.e. incitement to genocide or terrorism as well as child sexual abuse material.³³ Further, Article 4 of International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) addresses racist hate speech and requires states to penalise dissemination of ideas based upon racial superiority or hatred; incitement to racial hatred; acts of violence against any race or group of persons of another colour or ethnic origin; and incitement to such acts.³⁴ Overall, prohibition of hate speech tends to be treated as an accepted measure to limit freedom of expression – this will be elaborated in the next section.

Two primary approaches underpin the value of freedom of expression in human rights contexts: individual autonomy and democratic safeguarding. The individual autonomy approach stems from the liberalist positions to freedom of expression. It argues that the development of a person is impossible without the ability to express their views and debate with others.³⁵ Accordingly, the free flow of ideas contributes to more informed choices and independence of individuals. Thus, the value of freedom of expression is its capability to lead to self-development and decision-making competences, notwithstanding the content of speech that is expressed.³⁶ The individual autonomy approach however does not support a blanket protection of freedom of expression – the restrictions of the right are acceptable when the exercise of free speech diminishes autonomy of others.³⁷ Rather than focusing on individuals, the democratic safeguarding approach, in turn, brings attention to the benefits of the freedom of expression to democratic processes.³⁸ Since access to information is a crucial element in political self-governance, citizens should be provided with the tools to stay informed. The free exchange of ideas

³² See: UN Human Rights Council, ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression’ (9 October 2019) UN Doc A/74/486, para 6.; HRC General Comment No 34 (n 28), para. 24-35.

³³ Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, Frank La Rue’ (n 13), para. 20-23, 32.

³⁴ ICERD, art 4. See: UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, ‘General Recommendation No 15 on article 4 of the Convention’ (1993) UN Doc A/48/18, para 3; CERD, General Recommendation No. 35 (n 27).

³⁵ TM Jr Scanlon, ‘Freedom of Expression and Categories of Expression’ (1978) 40 University of Pittsburgh Law Review 519.

³⁶ Moon (n 19).

³⁷ See: Alexander Brown, *Hate Speech Law. A Philosophical Examination* (Routledge 2015) 59–60.

³⁸ Meiklejohn, *Free Speech and Its Relation to Self-Government* (n 20).

should be facilitated, so that people could participate in democratic governance. According to Meiklejohn, “not everyone shall speak, but that everything worth saying shall be said.”³⁹ Individuals should be made aware of and have access to a variety of beliefs, including those that stir controversy, for the effective functioning of democracy and deliberative processes.⁴⁰ This is both in the interest of the public and the individuals. In that sense, this overlaps with the individual autonomy approach. While democratic safeguarding perspective primarily values political speech,⁴¹ it remains ambiguous what kind of speech is conducive to democracy.⁴²

While no human rights treaty or an international body explicitly have stated the main protective interests and aims of the freedom of expression, an amalgam of values is invoked when freedom of expression is at stake. UN Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) noted that freedom of expression is indispensable condition for the full development of the person and a foundation stone for free and democratic societies.⁴³ Similar approach may be visible in regional human rights courts’ jurisprudence.⁴⁴ This affirms the recognition of two main areas of interests when freedom of expression is invoked in human rights contexts – values to the individual dimension (the right to express oneself) and to the collective dimension (the right to access information).

Overall, safeguarding democratic processes appears to be a bigger consideration in assessing the core values behind freedom of expression.⁴⁵ Indeed, the assessment whether certain speech contributes to the public interest or debate is often part of the analysis of acceptable limitation of the freedom of expression. The ability of every person to contribute to discourse enables pluralism and diversity of information, making this right essential for anyone seeking representation in public debate. That ability is however substantially reduced for certain vulnerable groups, if they are limited in their capability to express their views. For this reason, right to equality and freedom of expression are closely interlinked.⁴⁶

³⁹ *ibid*, 25.

⁴⁰ See: Rawls (n 20); Habermas (n 20).

⁴¹ This is the focus of Meiklejohn’s theory.

⁴² See: Maria Sjöholm, *International Human Rights Law and Protection Against Gender-Based Harm on the Internet* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022), 104.

⁴³ HRC, General Comment No 34 (n 28), para 2.

⁴⁴ See, e.g.: *Handyside v. United Kingdom* (n 31), para 49; *Ivcher-Bronstein v Peru* (Merits, Reparations and Costs) Inter-American Court of Human Rights Series C No 74 (6 February 2001) para 146.

⁴⁵ See discussion on the ECtHR and the freedom of expression as mainly democratic in Helen Fenwick, Gavin Phillipson and Alexander Williams, *Text, Cases and Materials on Public Law and Human Rights* (4th edn, Routledge 2020).

⁴⁶ See: CERD, General Recommendation No 35 (n 27), para 39–42.

The emphasis put on free speech safeguarding democracy affects the scope of this right. Most notably, it affects the margin of appreciation given to states when they restrict certain kinds of speech. For instance, political and journalistic speech may be considered more valuable to democracy than speech that offends morals. Thus, the former will enjoy special protection.⁴⁷ This is considered a matter of public interest, since the audience's right to receive information is crucial in democratic systems. For this reason, the press and politicians may be afforded greater protection when it comes to their exercise of freedom of expression.⁴⁸ Non-journalists are however equally protected.⁴⁹ UNHRC noted that journalism is a function shared by a wide range of actors, including professional full-time reporters as well as those who engage in forms of self-publication in print, on the internet or elsewhere.⁵⁰ The special protection that the political speech is indeed afforded with, further comes with the wider acceptance of criticism toward public figures, including the tolerance of harsher and controversial statements specifically directed at people holding political offices.⁵¹ However, speech in the public interest should be distinguished from the speech that is interesting to the public (e.g. gossip).⁵² In sum, freedom of expression's role in safeguarding democratic values impacts the level of protection afforded to different kinds of speech, affecting the acceptability of potential state restrictions.

Lastly, freedom of expression is protected regardless of the medium used to exercise this right. This means that Internet is a vital place for people to share and impart information and ideas. While Internet was not popularised in the time of adoption of ICCPR, Article 19 still recognised the multiple mediums that facilitate free speech.⁵³ In the modern circumstances, there is no doubt that freedom of expression and access to information is realised through the usage of social media platforms and other venues on the Internet.⁵⁴

⁴⁷ See, e.g.: *Lingens v Austria* App no 9815/82 (ECtHR, 8 July 1986) para 42.

⁴⁸ See: *Toktakunov v Kyrgyzstan* UN Human Rights Committee Communication No 1470/2006, UN Doc CCPR/C/101/D/1470/2006 (21 April 2011) para 6.3.

⁴⁹ *Steel and Morris v United Kingdom* App no 68416/01 (ECtHR, 15 February 2005) para 89.

⁵⁰ HRC, General Comment No 34 (n 28), para 44.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, para 38.

⁵² See: *Von Hannover v Germany* App no 59320/00 (ECtHR, 24 June 2004) para 110.

⁵³ Similarly, see: ACHR, Art. 13.

⁵⁴ See: HRC, General Comment No 34 (n 28), para 12.

2.2.2. The prohibition of hate speech as an acceptable limitation to freedom of expression

The concept of hate speech is a fundamentally contested concept.⁵⁵ Historically in the scholarship, authors have approached the topic from multiple perspectives. While in the 1990s, some thinkers challenged the notion of liberal favour of absolute free speech in the context of pornography, it was, *inter alia*, the wave of racism that followed e.g. the event of 9/11 in the USA which caused scholars to reflect on the assumptions behind the value of unconstrained freedom of expression.⁵⁶ Further, the regulation and prohibition of speech inciting to violence is rooted in the prevention of major human rights atrocities, specifically genocide.⁵⁷

The prohibition and regulation of hate speech in human rights law may be considered an accepted measure that limits freedom of expression.⁵⁸ This stems from the recognition that freedom of expression, while fundamental, must be balanced against other human rights, and that international law obliges states to prevent attacks on vulnerable communities, ensuring the equal and non-discriminatory participation of all individuals in public life.⁵⁹ Subsequently, states are able to utilise the limitations clauses in freedom of expression provisions to limit speech that constitutes hate speech. This often proves to be a complex process, as the concept of hate speech remains ambiguous. It is a very difficult phenomenon to define, largely due to competing interests and rights it touches upon. It is reliant on diverse legal traditions and jurisdictions as well as on different understanding of speech and its consequences; framed by conflicting assessments as to what considers hate and linked to identities of both the subject of speech and the speaker.⁶⁰ Hate speech could be understood as bias-motivated, hostile, malicious speech aimed at a person or a group of people because of some of their actual or perceived innate characteristics.⁶¹ Nevertheless, there is no universal definition, both in international law and in academic scholarship. The possibility of reaching a universally shared definition seems unlikely.⁶²

⁵⁵ Gavin Titley, Ellie Keen, and László Földi, 'Starting Points for Combating Hate Speech Online' (Council of Europe, 2014), 9-10.

⁵⁶ Billingham and Bonotti (n 22).

⁵⁷ See: Wibke Kristin Timmermann, 'The Relationship between Hate Propaganda and Incitement to Genocide: A New Trend in International Law Towards Criminalization of Hate Propaganda?' (2005) 18 *Leiden Journal of International Law* 257.

⁵⁸ See: ICCPR, Art. 19(3), ECHR, Art. 10(2), ACHR, Art. 13(2). See also: Mendel (n 11).

⁵⁹ 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression' (n 32), para 4.

⁶⁰ Titley, Keen and Földi (n 55) 9.

⁶¹ Raphael Cohen-Almagor, 'Fighting Hate and Bigotry on the Internet' (2011) 3 *Policy & Internet* 1.

⁶² Iginio Galliardone et al., 'Countering Online Hate Speech' (UNESCO, 2015), 8.

In human rights context, an understanding of hate speech could be interpreted from multiple international treaties, the international actors' authoritative interpretations of those treaties (e.g. General Comments of UN Treaty Bodies), as well as reports and studies adopted under the auspices of international organisations. The concept may be generally understood as incitement to discrimination and/or violence. ICERD and ICCPR put emphasis on dissemination of racist propaganda, advocacy and incitement of hatred.⁶³ As for the understanding of those terms, UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, defines “hatred” and “hostility” as a state of mind characterized as intense and irrational emotions of opprobrium, emmity and detestation towards the target group.⁶⁴ Further, “advocacy” should be understood as explicit, intentional, public and active support and promotion of hatred, while “incitement” refers to statements about national, racial or religious groups that create an imminent risk of discrimination, hostility or violence.⁶⁵

On a regional level, European Union (EU) law penalises public incitement to violence or hatred based on race, colour, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin.⁶⁶ Further, Council of Europe's (CoE) First Additional Protocol to the Cybercrime Convention obliges states to prohibit material that advocates, promotes or incites hatred, discrimination or violence based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, as well as religion if used as a pretext for any of these factors.⁶⁷ Soft law instruments offer definitions of hate speech too.⁶⁸ CoE's Committee of Ministers defined hate speech as “all types of expression that incite, promote, spread or justify violence, hatred or discrimination against a person or group of persons, or that denigrates them, by reason of their real or attributed personal characteristics or status such as race, colour, language, religion, nationality, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation.”⁶⁹ This example is notable as it encompasses variety of protected

⁶³ ICERD, Art. 4, ICCPR, Art. 20(1).

⁶⁴ UN General Assembly, ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression’ (7 September 2012) UN Doc A/67/357, para 44(a), 44(e).

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, para 44(b).

⁶⁶ Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA of 28 November 2008 on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law [2008] OJ L328/55. Recently, European Parliament took steps to extend the current list of ‘EU Crimes’ to hate crimes and hate speech. See: Nina Peršak, ‘Criminalising Hate Crime and Hate Speech at EU Level: Extending the List of Eurocrimes Under Article 83(1) TFEU’ (2022) 33 Criminal Law Forum 85.

⁶⁷ Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime, concerning the criminalisation of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems (opened for signature 28 January 2003, entered into force 1 March 2006) ETS 189, art 2(1).

⁶⁸ European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, General Policy Recommendation No 15 on Combating Hate Speech (adopted 8 December 2015) 3; UN Human Rights Council, ‘Rabat Plan of Action on the Prohibition of Advocacy of National, Racial or Religious Hatred that Constitutes Incitement to Discrimination, Hostility or Violence’ (11 January 2013) UN Doc A/HRC/22/17/Add.4, Appendix.

⁶⁹ CoE, Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16 (n 8).

characteristics, which were not included in the previous recommendation adopted in 1997, that focused on racist speech predominantly.⁷⁰ The inclusion of sexual orientation, gender identity and bodily diversity as protected characteristics was also recognised by Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.⁷¹

While certain human rights provisions simply allow states to restrict freedom of expression, some provisions oblige states to prohibit harmful speech. This is the case of Article 4 of ICERD, that addresses racist hate speech, which includes all the specific speech forms against groups denoted by race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin.⁷² Further, Article 19 of ICCPR allows states to restrict free speech, while Article 20 of ICCPR obliges states to prohibit the advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.⁷³ Additionally, human rights treaties tend to include provisions stating that protection is not afforded to activities that aim at the destruction of the rights and freedoms of the treaty.⁷⁴ In principle, this may encompass hate speech.

Overall, hate speech seems to be approached from the perspective of inducing social harm and a detriment to vulnerable groups' protection. The prohibition and regulation of hate speech commonly aim at ensuring equality and non-discrimination principles as well as the protection of dignity, safety and human rights of members of the vulnerable groups.⁷⁵ Hate speech can undermine the targeted group's human rights realisation, specifically it silences the free speech of the victims of hate speech.⁷⁶

In the academic literature, different normative positions to hate speech could be found. For instance, Brown contends that hate speech regulation is justified when shown that it can harm others by fostering the climate of hatred, leading to discrimination, violence and injustice.⁷⁷ Feinberg have argued that it is the offense principle that should be applied to hate speech, rather than harm principle. His key argument is that, while the harm principle justifies restricting actions that cause harm to others, the offense principle can sometimes justify restricting conduct that causes serious, wrongful offense even without

⁷⁰ Council of Europe, Recommendation No R(97)20 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on "Hate Speech" (adopted 30 October 1997).

⁷¹ Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 'Hate speech and Incitement to Violence against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Persons in the Americas' (31 December 2015) para 13.

⁷² CERD, General Recommendation No 35 (n 27), para 6.

⁷³ See also: ACHR, Art. 13(5).

⁷⁴ For instance, ICCPR, Art. 5, ECHR, Art. 17.

⁷⁵ See: 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression' (n 32) para 4.

⁷⁶ CERD, General Recommendation No 35 (n 27), para 28.

⁷⁷ Alexander Brown, 'The Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006: A Millian Response' (2008) 11 Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy 1.

demonstrable harm.⁷⁸ Other authors focus on the difference between “low-value” and “high-value” speech, drawn from Mill’s argument from truth. Since “high-value” speech engages people’s deliberative abilities, it deserves protection, whereas “low-value” speech, which encompasses many instances of hate speech, does not deserve protection, as it does not engage people’s deliberative capacities.⁷⁹ For Brown, the protection of human dignity requires the prohibition of abusive conduct like hate speech.⁸⁰ Waldron has argued that hate speech weakens equal public standing of individuals, their dignity and safety from violence.⁸¹ Nevertheless, critics of hate speech laws noted that they undermine individual autonomy and democratic values.⁸² The concept is flawed for some as it is considered that linkage between harm and speech is not supported empirically, and hate speech is not widespread enough to require its regulation.⁸³ Further, some claim hate speech regulation leads to increased intolerance.⁸⁴ In sum, there is no one normative approach to the phenomena of hate speech, it being fundamentally dependant on culture and social context.

Regarding the types of hate speech, the predominant focus is on speech that may cause violence. It is important to analyse the actual or intended effects of the speech, as incitement may be considered to carry more imminent risk than speech that “just” advocates, disseminates or promotes hatred. CERD Committee stated that, the notion of incitement as an inchoate crime does not require that the incitement has been acted upon, but the intention of the speaker, and the imminent risk or likelihood that the conduct desired or intended by the speaker will result from the speech in question, should be taken into account.⁸⁵ Under ICERD, the act of dissemination of hate speech is prohibited, covering not only explicit racist language, but also indirect language that disguises its targets and objectives.⁸⁶ According to UN Special Rapporteur on the Freedom of Expression, the most egregious forms of hate speech deserve prohibition, while speech that raises concerns in terms of tolerance and respect should rather be addressed through measures like education.⁸⁷ It should be noted that, in principle, offensive speech is covered by freedom of expression, while hate speech is not, however the line between them

⁷⁸ Joel Feinberg, *The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law: Harm to Others* (Oxford University Press 1984).

⁷⁹ See: Brown, *Hate Speech Law. A Philosophical Examination* (n 37).

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

⁸¹ Jeremy Waldron, *The Harm in Hate Speech* (Harvard university press 2012).

⁸² See, for instance: Eric Heinze, *Hate Speech and Democratic Citizenship* (Oxford University Press 2017),.

⁸³ John T Bennett, ‘The Harm in Hate Speech: A Critique of the Empirical and Legal Bases of Hate Speech Regulation’ (2016) 43 *Hastings Constitutional Law Quarterly* 445.

⁸⁴ James Weinstein, ‘Hate Speech Bans, Democracy, and Political Legitimacy’ (2017) 465 *Constitutional Commentary*.

⁸⁵ CERD, General Recommendation No 35 (n 27), para 16.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, para 7.

⁸⁷ ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression’ (n 32), para 24.

may not always be clear. It seems that some sort of incitement to violence is needed to categorise speech as hate speech, for instance in European Court of Human Rights's (ECtHR) jurisprudence.⁸⁸ Furthermore, while hate speech targets groups rather than individuals, speech that attacks a single person without attempting to incite hostility toward the entire group they belong to may fall outside of hate speech definitions. However, states can still restrict that speech based on the "protection of rights of others" clause generally found in freedom of expression provisions.⁸⁹

Hate speech provisions typically protect individuals based on specific protected characteristics. Racial and ethnic minorities have been historically the main groups considered when developing hate speech provisions. Titley et al. notes that in practice, legal definitions of hate speech have tended to place questions of race, ethnic origin and religion and philosophical belief in the foreground, with increasing reference to sexuality, but relatively little being paid to gender or disability.⁹⁰ The recognition of hate speech focused on race and ethnicity is rooted in the historical contexts, as certain minorities have been violently oppressed, with the aim of their elimination from the society. In that sense, incitement to violence and racist speech is a key factor in the process of leading up to major human rights violations, including ethnic cleansings or genocides. Hate speech based on sexism or misogyny is however different, as women, being the targeted group, are not numerically a minority in society. In early 2000s scholars have started to argue in favour of the recognition of sexist discourse as hate speech.⁹¹ Over the years, the focus shifted to the (fragmented) recognition of gender-based hate speech, as well as hate speech based on other protected characteristics.⁹²

As noted above, states are sometimes required to take action in the context of hate speech regulation. The obligation to criminalise the dissemination of racist hate speech is notably the most prevalent.⁹³ Relatedly, states may have positive obligation to combat hate speech.⁹⁴ Criminalisation will not always be appropriate measure and should be rather reserved for the most serious cases, while other cases may

⁸⁸ See, for instance: *Beizaras and Levickas v Lithuania* App no 41288/15 (ECtHR, 14 January 2020) para 125.

⁸⁹ 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression' (n 32), para 23.

⁹⁰ Titley, Keen and Földi (n 55) 10.

⁹¹ Donna L Lillian, 'A Thorn by Any Other Name: Sexist Discourse as Hate Speech' (2007) 18 *Discourse & Society* 719.

⁹² See section 2.3.3 in this Chapter.

⁹³ See: ICERD; ICCPR, Art. 20(1); Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA of 28 November 2008 on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law; Additional Protocol to the Cybercrime Convention.

⁹⁴ See: *Delfi AS v Estonia* App no 64569/09 (ECtHR, 16 June 2015) para 110.

be addressed through other means.⁹⁵ Civil law measures could be in place as well as counter-speech or education.⁹⁶

2.2.3. Online hate speech

As freedom of expression is applicable regardless of the medium used, the approach to hate speech should be equivalent both online and offline. In principle, general considerations referred to in the previous section will be applicable to online hate speech. Nevertheless, there are multiple features of the online world that make hate speech disseminated through Internet different than “traditional” hate speech. This section will outline the most notable aspects of online hate speech.

Scholars have approached online hate speech with different emphases. For instance, Brown suggests that the thing that makes online hate speech different than its offline version is the Internet's instantaneous nature, encouraging spontaneous expressions.⁹⁷ The difficulty of defining and grasping the core aspects of online hate speech as well as coming up with strategies to effectively combat it remain a challenge.⁹⁸ S. Tom Tong proposes a “relational taxonomy of online hate”, consisting of two dimensions. First, it considers the perpetrator-to-target relationship, which can be one-on-one, many-to-one (similar to networked harassment⁹⁹) and group level. Second, it asks whether the hate speech is sent privately or publicly.¹⁰⁰ While this categorisation is not necessarily based on human rights law provisions, it displays the many layers of hate-based speech. The understanding of group level hate broadcasted publicly is the most similar to the current understanding of hate speech in the context of human rights. According to Tong, in group level hate perpetrators’ goals are to demean, degrade, and insult, or to raise concerns over existential threats posed by members of some social group. Race, religion, gender, immigration status, and categories alike are the ultimate targets of this kind of hate.¹⁰¹

In human rights context, multiple reports and publications about online hate speech have been published. Those include studies that analyse international conventions that could be used to address the

⁹⁵ See: Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16 (n 69); ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression’ (n 32), para 24.

⁹⁶ CERD, General Recommendation No 35 (n 27), para 12.

⁹⁷ Alexander Brown, ‘What Is so Special about Online (as Compared to Offline) Hate Speech?’ (2018) 18 *Ethnicities* 297.

⁹⁸ Alexandra A. Siegel, ‘Online Hate Speech’, in *Social Media and Democracy*, ed. Joshua A. Tucker and Nathaniel Persily, SSRC Anxieties of Democracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 56–88.

⁹⁹ See: Alice E Marwick, ‘Morally Motivated Networked Harassment as Normative Reinforcement’ (2021) 7 *Social Media + Society* 1.

¹⁰⁰ Stephanie Tom Tong, ‘Foundations, Definitions, and Directions in Online Hate Research’, *Social Processes of Online Hate* (Routledge 2024). 38.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, 42.

phenomenon,¹⁰² discuss the theoretical frameworks as well as strategies for effective combating of online hate speech.¹⁰³ This is coupled with the growth of the empirical evidence of the prevalence of online hate speech. There are variety of studies that examine the encounters and experiences of online hate speech.¹⁰⁴ While the lack of consistent approach to defining hate speech makes it difficult to specifically discern the prevalence and kinds of online hate speech, “the public and scholarly consensus is that online hate is a pervasive, global, and increasing problem.”¹⁰⁵

The characteristics of online communications and speech affect the application of traditional approach to hate speech. Since in evaluations of speech not only its content is taken into consideration, the usage of Internet is considerably an important facet of the approach to online hate speech. Indeed, the forum in which the speech is communicated, the audience and the extent of dissemination are considerable features. This means that the unique context of the Internet, particular website notably, should be assessed. As according to UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, “online hate speech often involves unknown speakers, with coordinated bot threats, disinformation and so-called deep fakes, and mob attacks”.¹⁰⁶

There are handful of features of online hate speech that make it unique.¹⁰⁷ Firstly, the scale and potential impact of the content, and its potential harm, posted on the Internet is significantly higher than the content disseminated through, e.g. the press. This is because of the accessibility of the Internet and its global outreach. In addition, one of the most valuable features of the online communications – the availability and instantaneousness of the spread of user-generated communications – makes it further capable of fuelling the scale of certain speech. This is especially the case when the content is shared and reproduced multiple times.¹⁰⁸ In that sense, the longevity of online hate speech is a particular struggle, that most notably contributes to the difficulty to remove it from cyberspaces.¹⁰⁹ The system-based cues in social

¹⁰² See: Cybercrime Convention Committee (T-CY), 'Mapping study on cyberviolence' (Draft prepared for consideration by the T-CY at its 19th Plenary, 9 July 2018).

¹⁰³ See: Gagliardone and others (n 62).; Titley, Keen and Földi (n 55).

¹⁰⁴ See, for instance: Ashley Reichelmann and others, 'Hate Knows No Boundaries: Online Hate in Six Nations' (2021) 42 *Deviant Behavior* 1100.; Siegel (n 98).

¹⁰⁵ Tong (n 100)., 44

¹⁰⁶ 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression' (n 32), para 40.

¹⁰⁷ For an overview see: Brown, 'What Is so Special about Online (as Compared to Offline) Hate Speech?' (n 97) 298–308.

¹⁰⁸ On the impact of sharing the content see, for instance: Tiana Gaudette and others, 'Upvoting Extremism: Collective Identity Formation and the Extreme Right on Reddit' (2021) 23 *New Media & Society* 3491.

¹⁰⁹ This was noticed by ECtHR in the case *Delfi v Estonia*, para 133.

media platforms, like the visibility of the number of users' followers or "likes", further affect observers' judgements of the content.¹¹⁰

Moreover, online hate speech can often be produced by unknown speakers.¹¹¹ While there are different levels of achieving and taking advantage of anonymity and pseudonymity on the Internet, the potential ease with which it may be reached is notable.¹¹² The perceived anonymity of the Internet may embolden people to be more hateful and obnoxious than in real-life circumstances, reducing one's sense of responsibility.¹¹³ While the identifiability of users of the Internet is becoming easier, especially for state authorities, the nature of perceived anonymity should be taken into account when considering the dynamics behind the production of online hate speech. Indeed, the (pseudo)anonymity can lead to a sense of suppression of individual identity and increase of group-level identity, which correlates with propensity for online hate participation.¹¹⁴

In online hate speech, contextual evaluations remain a problematic aspect. This has two dimensions. Firstly, the assessment of cultural factors of hateful speech are challenged with online hate speech not being bound to a specific geolocation. The potential global reach of online statements may lead to the need of reassessment of relativity of harmful content that cannot be perceived as purely local anymore. This obviously will be subject to exemptions as there are ways to restrict access to a material. It may be reasonable to consider the particular website's outreach, differentiating between highly visited mainstream platforms and cyberspaces with smaller readership.¹¹⁵ Indeed, "a statement released by an individual to a small and restricted group of Facebook users does not carry the same weight as a statement published on a mainstream website".¹¹⁶ Secondly, the possibility of understanding full context of online speech that conveys the intent of the speaker may be inherently flawed. Among identifiable challenges of online speech, one may list the lack of facial and tonal cues expressed by the speaker, the multimodal

¹¹⁰ Tong (n 100) 52.; See also: Stephanie Tom Tong and others, 'Too Much of a Good Thing? The Relationship Between Number of Friends and Interpersonal Impressions on Facebook' (2008) 13 *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 531.

¹¹¹ 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression' (n 32), para 40.

¹¹² See: Eric M Barendt, *Anonymous Speech: Literature, Law and Politics* (Bloomsbury Publishing 2016) 122–152.

¹¹³ Brown, 'What Is so Special about Online (as Compared to Offline) Hate Speech?' (n 97) 298.

¹¹⁴ Tong (n 100) 54.

¹¹⁵ See: *Savva Terentyev v Russia* App no 36892/03 (ECtHR, 10 July 2012) para 79.

¹¹⁶ 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression' (n 64), para 46.

digital means conveying meaning (e.g. memes, emojis, GIFs), the usage of slang and code-words or the usage of humour. Those features could often overlap.

The so-called paralinguistic digital affordances, that is cues that facilitate communication and interaction without specific language associated with the message, can facilitate diverse communication functions, including social support or acknowledgement, that are specific to online communications.¹¹⁷ Those cues could reveal basic information about users (e.g. the country of origin of a person could be deduced from the emoji of a flag), inform the audience of the popularity and importance of the content (so-called vanity metrics) as well as bolster community identity.¹¹⁸ Even when online forums lack paralinguistic digital affordances or system-based cues (e.g. upvotes, “likes”), members of online hate communities find possibilities to show their support through comments or manual sharing.¹¹⁹

Coded communications remain an important challenge in addressing online hate speech. While code-words have been used in hate speech before the development of Internet, especially in the context of racist speech,¹²⁰ the Internet has allowed for global mainstreaming of coded messages. In the simplest terms, coded communication could be described as the usage of specific language, symbols and context to convey meanings accessible only to specific in-groups, maintaining plausible deniability to outsiders. Most notably, humour is one way of coding hateful language. This is particularly common in cyberspaces, where it is prevalent to use laid back language that contains a lot of jokes, often disseminated through text, but also gifs or memes. The jokes may function as means of conveying stereotypes and promoting violence.¹²¹ Farrand notes that “the use of humour allows hate speech to hide in ‘in plain sight’ through ironic misdirection, presenting exaggeratedly distorted racist or misogynistic stereotypes that *could* potentially be seen as satirical but *could* equally be the position held by the author of the text or image.”¹²² For instance, the meme of “Pepe the Frog”, was adopted as a symbol by alt-right groups, used to spread racist sentiments from the position of “victims” of targeted groups.¹²³ The symbols and code-

¹¹⁷ Rebecca A Hayes, Carr, Caleb T. and Donghee Yvette and Wohn, ‘One Click, Many Meanings: Interpreting Paralinguistic Digital Affordances in Social Media’ (2016) 60 *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 171.

¹¹⁸ Tong (n 100) 52–53.

¹¹⁹ See: *ibid* 53.; Mathilda Åkerlund, ‘Influence Without Metrics: Analyzing the Impact of Far-Right Users in an Online Discussion Forum’ (2021) 7 *Social Media + Society* 1.

¹²⁰ See: John B McConahay and Joseph C Hough Jr., ‘Symbolic Racism’ (1976) 32 *Journal of Social Issues* 23.

¹²¹ See, for instance: Micheal Killig, ‘Humour and Hatred: The Racist Jokes of the Ku Klux Klan’ (2001) 12 *Discourse & Society* 267.

¹²² Benjamin Farrand, ‘“Is This a Hate Speech?” The Difficulty in Combating Radicalisation in Coded Communications on Social Media Platforms’ (2023) 29 *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research* 477, 480.

¹²³ See: Laura Glitsos and James and Hall, ‘The Pepe the Frog Meme: An Examination of Social, Political, and Cultural Implications through the Tradition of the Darwinian Absurd’ (2019) 23 *Journal for Cultural Research* 381.

words based on humorous ambiguities could function as a tool to avoid detection, but also allow for achieving a sense of exclusivity and mystery of certain community. As in the case of red pill community,¹²⁴ the metaphor from the movie “Matrix” is used to signal an awakening to hidden truths about gender dynamics, creating an insular worldview that simultaneously identifies members while excluding outsiders unfamiliar with the terminology. Individuals that are not familiar with the subtexts conveyed in the communications may potentially struggle to understand the hate in the messages. This causes problems for regulation of that kind of hate speech.¹²⁵

At the same time, one should note that cyberspaces are considered to be governed by other social norms and behaviour patterns than the offline world. Vulgarity and hateful sentiments might be much more prevalent in online spaces, thus leading to the lower persuasiveness of this content. Harmful speech may be notably exacerbated by the architecture of the Internet. As reiterated in the previous section, offensive speech, while sometimes controversial, is covered by the protection of freedom of expression. Consequently, the protection against hate speech may not be equal online and offline.

While the analysis of Internet companies and intermediaries’ obligations and the relation between them and states’ obligation is beyond this thesis’s focus, it has to be observed that the regulation of online hate speech poses several challenges that traditional hate speech regulation might have not carried. In that regard, it is the companies that perform the content moderation on their respective platforms, impacting the realisation of human rights. While social media companies do not have obligations that states do, their impact requires them to assess the same kind of questions about protecting freedom of expression.¹²⁶ Paradoxically, it remains an issue that the public debate and information exchange have been shifted to cyberspaces, which still remain fragmentarily regulated.¹²⁷ This has an effect both on freedom of expression and access to information, with Internet shutdowns or censorship practices (especially imposed on the companies by authoritative governments) and on effective implementation of the prohibition of hate speech, with certain responsibilities over that, being shifted to non-state actors.

¹²⁴ See: Chapter 2.

¹²⁵ Farrand (n 122).

¹²⁶ UN Human Rights Council, ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression.’ (11 May 2016) UN Doc A/HRC/32/38, para 87-88.; ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression’ (n 32), para 41.

¹²⁷ All companies in the ICT sector should apply Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, however they rarely do integrate human rights into their products by design and by default. See: ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression’ (n 32) para 42.

2.3. Gender-based online hate speech as an emanation of gender-based harm on the Internet

The following section provides an understanding of the approach to gender-based harm on the Internet and gender-based online hate speech. It examines gender-based online hate speech through a harm-centred approach. This focus is necessary as hate speech itself remains a contested concept, with disagreement over whether and when speech-based acts constitute actual harm. The contestation is more pronounced regarding gender-based hate speech, where the harmful effects may be questioned or minimised. Relatedly, the online context adds another layer of complexity, as harm perpetrated through digital platforms is frequently underestimated compared to offline harm.

The section begins with contextualising harm as it relates to speech-based acts within human rights frameworks. This provides the foundation for understanding how speech can constitute harm. The analysis then addresses gender-based harm on the Internet more broadly, before focusing specifically on gender-based online hate speech as a manifestation of this category of harm. This approach allows for positioning gender-based online hate speech within existing frameworks of gender-based violence and discrimination, while addressing the specific characteristics that emerge in online environments.

2.3.1. Contextualising harm of speech

The concept of harm is an object of multitude of academic disciplines, with countless theories on harm. For one, the concept of social harm is the research focus of zemiology, which originates from the critiques of criminology that traditionally studied only the notion of crime, criminals and criminal justice, without the inclusion of social harm.¹²⁸ In the legal context, harm is mostly the object of criminal law assessments and linked to the possibilities of governmental powers or state interventions. Notably, Mill's harm principle states that the only legitimate justification for society to interfere with an individual's liberty is to prevent harm to others.¹²⁹ This idea affected the development of the criminal law's theories on harm. Since it is mostly individual harm that has been the focus of legal theories, the analysis of group-based harm is relatively limited. There have been legal scholars however that advanced theories on harmfulness of assaultive speech – “words that are used as weapons to ambush, terrorize, wound, humiliate, and degrade.”¹³⁰ There is no single definition of harm, with the concept being relatively ambiguous. For

¹²⁸ See: Pamela Davies, Paul Leighton and Tanya Wyatt (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Social Harm* (Springer International Publishing 2021).

¹²⁹ Mill, *On Liberty*.

¹³⁰ Mari J. Matsuda, ed., *Words That Wound: Critical Race Theory, Assaultive Speech, and the First Amendment*, New Perspectives on Law, Culture, and Society (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1993), 1.

Feinberg, harm is not synonymous with hurt and could be defined as a “wrongful set-back of interest.”¹³¹ In principle, harm is to be differentiated from taking offence as well as from temporary discomfort or pain. Human rights law is influenced by the above as well, with the objective of protecting individuals against harm that reaches a certain threshold of severity.¹³² While there is no one approach to what constitutes harm, generally both physical and speech-based conducts may generate it. However, it is not always that clear if and in what way the harm principle covers psychological harm, especially when it is framed as a social harm to the well-being of an entire group of people. This is a matter of objection when it comes to the harm of speech, that is often considered to only cause psychological harm.

The harm of speech is difficult to contextualise, both with respect to individual and social harm dimension. As indicated, the value of speech has been considered to be the foundation for the free flow of information, safeguarding the individual autonomy and democratic values. From the perspective of liberalist approaches to freedom of expression, speech cannot cause harm whatsoever, or if it is acknowledged that it may, the value of speech trumps this nevertheless. This is not necessarily the approach in human rights context.

The assumptions behind the speech-based harm will be often countered with assumptions about physical harm. The difference in duration and intensity could be invoked. However, this is not fully accurate, as psychological effects of both harmful speech and conduct may last for long periods of time. Relatedly, intensity is a subjective category depending on the circumstances.¹³³ Psychological symptoms experienced by victims of hateful speech may include panic, fear, anxiety, intimidation or denigration.¹³⁴ Furthermore, incidents of hate speech could have harmful effects on those who identify with the victim, especially if the community the victim belongs to has been systematically oppressed.¹³⁵ The impact of the harm of speech is arguably more difficult to measure. This is why the harmfulness of hate speech is contested by scholars claiming there is not enough empirical evidence.¹³⁶ Further, it may be considered that individuals are able to control their emotional reactions, in contrast to physical reactions. Thus, harm caused by words may be easily exaggerated.¹³⁷ In that regard, the responsibility of experiencing harm is

¹³¹ Feinberg (n 78) 35–36.

¹³² For an overview see: Sjöholm (n 42) 92–99.

¹³³ *ibid* 84.

¹³⁴ Matsuda (n 130).

¹³⁵ See: Brian Mullen and Joshua M Smyth, ‘Immigrant Suicide Rates as a Function of Ethnophaulisms: Hate Speech Predicts Death’ (2004) 66 *Psychosomatic Medicine* 343.; Jerome Neu, *Sticks and Stones: The Philosophy of Insults* (Oxford University Press 2007).

¹³⁶ See: Bennett (n 83).

¹³⁷ *ibid*.

put on the listener of certain speech, rather than on the speaker.¹³⁸ The effects of speech-based harm is therefore relative to the context of the individual. There are multiple situational variables that affect the impact of speech, e.g. the vulnerability of the person, the words used as well as the relationship the target of speech has with the speaker.¹³⁹ However, the experience of physical harm relies on some level of relativity as well. Indeed, experiencing pain is dependent on multiple factors, including the pain threshold, the individual's psychological state, cultural background, past experiences with pain, or the perceived meaning or purpose of the pain. Like speech impact, the subjective experience of physical harm varies between individuals based on both internal and contextual factors.

International human rights law is premised on protecting individuals against harm that reaches certain level of severity. While human rights approach to harm stemming from speech is broader than liberalist approach to freedom of expression, the assessment whether speech is harmful is dependent on contextual factors as well.¹⁴⁰ Even when one assert that speech may cause harm, it remains contentious whether certain types of speech will be harmful, e.g. pornography. This is related to the perceived severity of the harm assigned to this type of speech. Notably, it will be the degree of harm that affects the process of balancing of interests when a conflict between rights happens. For instance, in the context of freedom of expression, the legitimate aim of protecting the rights of others, the balancing may require the assessment of the severity of the harm of speech. This will dictate the decision whether the right was violated. In principle, physical harm is treated with greater seriousness than speech-based harm in human rights law. In a case *Söderman v. Sweden*, ECtHR made the distinction between physical acts of sexual abuse and non-consensual intimate image abuse.¹⁴¹ The case involved 14-year-old at the time, who discovered that her stepfather had secretly attempted to film her naked in the bathroom. ECtHR asserted that this was a violation of the right to privacy, however “the act in question did not attain the seriousness of the grave acts in the case-law [of the Court] which concerned rape and sexual abuse of children.”¹⁴² Furthermore, harm of speech is often not considered to be grave enough to limit freedom of expression, especially in the context of political speech.¹⁴³ The problem of causality may further impede the recognition of certain

¹³⁸ Susan J Brison, ‘Speech, Harm, and the Mind-Body Problem in First Amendment Jurisprudence’ (1998) 4 Legal Theory 39.

¹³⁹ Timothy Jay, ‘Do Offensive Words Harm People?’ (2009) 15 Psychology, Public Policy, and Law 81, 97.

¹⁴⁰ Sjöholm (n 42) 92–93.

¹⁴¹ See: *Söderman v Sweden* App no 5786/08 (ECtHR, 12 June 2014) para 86.

¹⁴² *ibid.*

¹⁴³ See: *Patrício Monteiro Telo de Abreu v Portugal* App no 44923/19 (ECtHR, 7 December 2021).

forms of speech-based harm.¹⁴⁴ Thus, in human rights context, the hierarchy of different kinds of speech may be observed.

As for the harmfulness of hate speech specifically, it is social and group-based harm that is usually the principal consideration.¹⁴⁵ This is because this speech targets a member or an entire group of people, because of their belonging to a group that is particularly protected. Hate speech may lead to social harm by reinforcing societal and institutional prejudices, depriving groups of rights and powers enacting or perpetuating forms of subordination, oppression and political powerlessness, or support and maintain a background of social norms that can make it more difficult for groups to engage in effective counter-speech.¹⁴⁶ For this reason, hate speech has an inegalitarian effect. It may be even considered that hate speech not only contributes to discrimination and inequality, but constitutes it.¹⁴⁷ However, since hate speech is a contested concept, there is not a lot of agreement on that assertion. The empirical evidence on the contribution of speech to the climate of hatred has been limited,¹⁴⁸ however this is changing with the increase of research on online hate speech specifically. While some contend that hate speech's harm does not outweigh the value of free speech, it has been noted that hostile expressions are not valuable to the free flow of ideas, as hate speech undermines the position of vulnerable groups or having the potential to radicalise.¹⁴⁹ The harm of hate speech may be considered to be exacerbated by the Internet.

2.3.2. Gender-based harm on the Internet

After the general information on harm have been laid down, the following considerations will focus on gender-based harm specifically, with the focus on online environments. While it is the concept of gender-based violence that is most often used in human rights law,¹⁵⁰ soft-law instruments and human rights-based literature,¹⁵¹ the concept of gender-based harm may be considered to capture the spectrum of

¹⁴⁴ See: Sjöholm (n 42) 94.

¹⁴⁵ Bennett (n 83) 446.

¹⁴⁶ Alexander Brown, 'The "Who?" Question in the Hate Speech Debate: Part 2: Functional and Democratic Approaches' (2017) 30 Canadian Journal of Law & Jurisprudence 23, 10.

¹⁴⁷ Sjöholm (n 42) 285.

¹⁴⁸ Brown, *Hate Speech Law. A Philosophical Examination* (n 37).

¹⁴⁹ See: Waldron (n 81) 4–5.; Habib, Srinivasan and Nithyanand (n 14).

¹⁵⁰ See: Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (opened for signature 11 May 2011, entered into force 1 August 2014) CETS No 210; Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (adopted 9 June 1994, entered into force 5 March 1995); Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (adopted 11 July 2003, entered into force 25 November 2005).

¹⁵¹ CEDAW Committee noted that gender-based violence „takes multiple forms, including acts or omissions intended or likely to cause or result in death or physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, threats of such acts, harassment, coercion and arbitrary deprivation of liberty”. See: UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against

disadvantages stemming from systemic and historical gender inequality, including structural discrimination and human rights violations. This includes gender-based violence as one of the most harmful disadvantages, but also other harms that affect women.

As a preliminary consideration, one should contend that the Internet is not a neutral sphere gender-wise. According to Sjöholm, “Internet architecture, including its end-to-end design, user anonymity, the principal role of Internet intermediaries and its transboundary nature, exacerbates gender-based harm and undermines effective regulation.”¹⁵² The development of Web 1.0 (e.g. websites, dial-up internet, emails etc.) brought attention to crimes committed via new tools, with much consideration of cybersecurity, financial crimes, fraud or terrorism.¹⁵³ On the other hand, the development of Web 2.0 (Wi-Fi, wireless computing and social networking websites and applications) brought the diversification of social interactions and democratisation of the Internet in general, which effectively took us to the examination of harms of the dialectic between gender and techno-social landscape of the Internet.¹⁵⁴ It quickly turned out that Internet is influenced by gender relations in the offline world just as any other medium.¹⁵⁵ This led to the inevitable reproduction of social power hierarchies. In that regard, both women’s Internet access and gender-based online abuse should be considered as effects and perpetration of non-neutrality of Internet.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, there is growing recognition of gendered power imbalances that are rooted in business models that govern technology companies.¹⁵⁷

Feminist legal perspectives call for contextual and socially conscious interpretations of rights.¹⁵⁸ Throughout the years, they have argued that women experience particular harms that are gendered in nature, which historically were dismissed and not recognised.¹⁵⁹ The notion of gender-based harm is a way of recognising that women’s injuries have both social and individual dimension – “people suffer harm not just because they are individuals but also because they are part of a particular class, group, race

Women, 'General recommendation No 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No 19' (2017) UN Doc CEDAW/C/GC/35, para 14.

¹⁵² Sjöholm (n 42) 5.

¹⁵³ Marie Segrave and Laura Vitis, *Gender, Technology and Violence*, Routledge Studies in Crime and Society 32 (Abingdon New York: Routledge, 2017), 2.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 2.

¹⁵⁵ For an overview of see: Nicola Henry and Anastasia Powell, ‘Embodied Harms: Gender, Shame, and Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence’ (2015) 21 *Violence Against Women* 758, 760–62.

¹⁵⁶ Sjöholm (n 42) 54–68.

¹⁵⁷ See: UNFPA and Wilson Center, ‘Global Symposium on Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence Results: Building a Common Pathway’, (2022), 22.

¹⁵⁸ Catharine A MacKinnon, *Women’s Lives, Men’s Laws* (Harvard University Press 2005) 87.

¹⁵⁹ See, for instance: Robin West, ‘The Difference in Women’s Hedonic Lives: A Phenomenological Critique of Feminist Legal Theory’ (1987) 15 *Wisconsin Women’s Law Journal* 149; J Conaghan, ‘Gendered Harms and the Law of Tort: Remediating (Sexual) Harassment’ (1996) 16 *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 407.

or gender. [...], their membership of that particular class, group, race or gender can significantly shape the nature and degree of the harm they sustain.”¹⁶⁰ Gender-sensitive approach requires the recognitions of harm that is exclusive to the experiences of women.¹⁶¹ While over the years this has been addressed in human rights law context by, *inter alia*, the adoption of specific treaties on women’s human rights, the question of harm of certain forms of speech remains contested. Most often it is related to questioning of pornographic speech or sexist and/or misogynistic speech. Considering that gender functions as a construct, being a spectrum rather than a predefined category,¹⁶² gendered harm unproportionally affect not only women and girls but also includes gender-diverse individuals.

Gender-based harm is exacerbated by the Internet. The risks stemming from online offences as well as their nature have been noted by several international bodies within human rights context.¹⁶³ UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences noted that the consequences and harm caused by online violence are specifically gendered, given that women suffer from particular stigma in the context of structural inequality, discrimination and patriarchy.¹⁶⁴ GREVIO noted that technology used in online and digital environments amplified or facilitated gender-based violence.¹⁶⁵ New online forms of this violence should be placed on a continuum of gender-based violence.¹⁶⁶

The effects of online gender-based harm are mostly psychological. While people experience harmful acts in different ways, the psychological harm is much more relative to the specific individual. Thus, online harm can have variety of consequences, both in the context of individual and group-based harm. The psychological effects of gender-based online harm include depression, anxiety or fear. It may also lead to physical harms, especially in the case of sharing of non-consensual intimate images on websites advertising prostitution or sharing the victims’ home address. Economic harm can be induced when, e.g. explicit images of the victim are posted or when defamatory speech about them is shared widely.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁰ Conaghan (n 154) 408.

¹⁶¹ See: Maria Sjöholm, *Gender-Sensitive Norm Interpretation by Regional Human Rights Law Systems* (Brill | Nijhoff 2018).

¹⁶² Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge 1990).

¹⁶³ See, for instance: A Van der Vilk, ‘Cyber Violence and Hate Speech: Study’ (European Parliament’s Policy Department for Citizens’ Rights and Constitutional Affairs 2018).; UN Women, ‘The Dark Side of Digitalization: Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women in Eastern Europe and Central Asia’ (2023); UN Women, ‘Violence against Women in Online Space: Insights from a Multi-Country Study in the Arab States’ (2021).

¹⁶⁴ UN Human Rights Council, ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Its Causes and Consequences on Online Violence against Women and Girls from a Human Rights Perspective’ (18 June 2018) UN Doc A/HRC/38/47, para 25.

¹⁶⁵ Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), ‘General Recommendation No 1 on the Digital Dimension of Violence against Women’ (2021) para 10.

¹⁶⁶ Liz Kelly, ‘The Continuum of Sexual Violence’ in Jalna Hanmer and Mary Maynard (eds), *Women, Violence and Social Control* (Palgrave Macmillan UK 1987).

¹⁶⁷ ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women’ (n 164), para 27.

Women may resort to retreating from the Internet in fear of experiencing the abuse.¹⁶⁸ Group-based harm may include the overall transformation in perceiving women – Nussbaum notes that specific properties of the Internet allows for creation of a world, in which an objectified version of the person replaces the real person, which could be disseminated widely and rapidly.¹⁶⁹ While women in general are disproportionately affected, gendered harm intersects with other identities that women have, including race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, gender identity and expression. This can result in more severe consequences. Women that are active on public arenas could be particularly affected.¹⁷⁰

As indicated, there is a hierarchy between physical harm and speech-based harm. As Internet is predominantly a textual medium, this hierarchy is particularly visible in the context of online speech, since cyberspaces and the activities that take place there are perceived as less severe.¹⁷¹ This is related to the assertion that the Internet remains as a disembodied sphere, with the lack of recognition of embodied harms.¹⁷² The harmfulness of speech-based harm on the Internet is often trivialised or undermined.¹⁷³ Some argue that since in cyberspaces there is a distance between the perpetrator and potential victim, the fear is not that well-founded and the victim can simply choose to use other sites to avoid specific content.¹⁷⁴ This, however, does not recognise group-based or social harm induced by, e.g. online hate speech. Indeed, the concept of ambient sexism suggests that if sexist attitudes are prevalent in a certain environment, this will be considered harmful regardless of an individual being targeted.¹⁷⁵ The trivialisation of harm of gender-based offences online could be conceptualised through, what a criminologist scholar T. Raymen, calls “the assumption of harmlessness”. As his theory is based on the concept of social harm against the backdrop of zemiology’s literature and the analysis of liberal capitalism’s influence on the contemporary society, he contends that the acknowledgement of harm of certain phenomena tends to be quickly followed by a series of defensive caveats, resulting in dismissal

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.*, para 25, 29; See, also: Emma Jane, ‘Feminist flight and fight responses to gendered cyberhate’ in: Segrave and Vitis (n 153).

¹⁶⁹ Martha C Nussbaum, ‘Objectification and Internet Misogyny’ in Martha C Nussbaum and Saul Levmore (eds), *The Offensive Internet: Speech, Privacy, and Reputation* (Harvard University Press 2010).

¹⁷⁰ ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women’ (n 164), para 28-29.

¹⁷¹ *ibid.*, para 68.

¹⁷² Henry and Powell (n 155).

¹⁷³ Sjöholm (n 42).

¹⁷⁴ See, for instance: Fernne Brennan, ‘Legislating against Internet Race Hate’ (2009) 18 *Information & Communications Technology Law* 123, 127.

¹⁷⁵ Jesse Fox, Carlos Cruz and Ji Young Lee, ‘Perpetuating Online Sexism Offline: Anonymity, Interactivity, and the Effects of Sexist Hashtags on Social Media’ (2015) 52 *Computers in Human Behavior* 436.

of claims to the inherent harmfulness of a given practice.¹⁷⁶ Relatedly, misogynistic and sexist speech is recognised as a harmful practice that contributes to inequalities, however when it is countered with legal systems' thresholds established for the classification of hate speech and multitudes of necessary evaluations, it seems like its declared harm is slowly decreasing. While understandably legal theorisations define unlawful behaviours in a strict manner, feminist criminology acknowledge the continuum between unlawful and non-criminal harms along with social arrangements of power.¹⁷⁷ Nevertheless, this is not to say that every offensive speech based on sexism or misogyny should be countered with, e.g. criminal measures, however the assumption of its harmlessness and alleged lack of consequence of the commonness of gendered harms on the Internet should not go unnoticed.

2.3.3. Gender-based online hate speech

There are various ways of defining harmful online hate speech, that is gender related. Within human rights context, the terminology varies, including: “sexist hate speech”, “cybermisogyny”, “cyber incitement to violence or hatred”, “hate speech against women”, “online gender-based hate speech” or other.¹⁷⁸ This variety also applies to describing the phenomenon. For instance, European Institute on Gender Equality has defined online gender-based hate speech as content posted and shared through ICT means that is hateful towards women and/or girls because of their gender, or because of combination of gender and other factors, and/or spreads, incites, promotes or justifies hatred based on gender, or because of a combination of gender and other factors.¹⁷⁹ What is common in the definitions is the reference to gender or sex as a basis of the speech that incites, promotes, spreads or justifies violence or hatred. Depending on the specific approach, the content that could fit within the given definitions may include objectification, sexualisation, body-shaming, “slut-shaming”, degrading comments, threats of sexual

¹⁷⁶ Thomas Raymen, ‘The Assumption of Harmlessness’ in Pamela Davies, Paul Leighton and Tanya Wyatt (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Social Harm* (Springer International Publishing 2021).

¹⁷⁷ Henry and Powell (n 155).

¹⁷⁸ Organization of American States, 'Online Gender-Based Violence against Women and Girls: Guide of Basic Concepts, Digital Security Tools, and Response Strategies' 16; Council of Europe, Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on preventing and combating sexism (27 March 2019) 9; UN Human Rights Council, 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Privacy' (16 October 2019) UN Doc A/HRC/40/63 para 73; Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence [2024] OJ L; Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament, 'Cyber violence and hate speech online against women' (2018) 45; European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), 'Combating Cyber Violence against Women and Girls' (Publications Office of the European Union 2022) 54; UN General Assembly, 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, Irene Khan' (30 July 2021) UN Doc A/76/258, para 68.

¹⁷⁹ EIGE, 'Combating Cyber Violence' (n 178), 54.

violence offensive comments on appearance, sexuality, sexual orientation or gender roles.¹⁸⁰ Gender-based hate speech, whether offline or online, is predominantly grounded in misogyny/sexism. The acts of violence that are based on misogynistic views might be directed at women (that are disproportionately affected), but also at men (e.g. those who are too “feminine”) or at other gender diverse individuals.¹⁸¹

As indicated, historically racist hate speech has been given the biggest attention in the human rights context. Indeed, once racist hate speech is identified as such, it almost automatically qualifies as hate speech. Identifying hate speech against women may be more complex and challenging.¹⁸² In 2007, D.L. Lilian argued for recognising sexist discourse as hate speech. She noted that gender-based hate speech often goes unrecognized because women's situation does not directly mirror other protected groups' standing. Hate speech directed at other groups, such as racial or ethnic minorities, may advocate and even lead to mass murder, genocide or apartheid. Such measures are unlikely to be taken against women, since the society is predominantly based on the unit of heterosexual couples.¹⁸³ Nevertheless, even if the goal of gender-based hate speech is not the commitment of those crimes, “irreparable harm of other kinds can be wrought by sexist and anti-woman hate discourses and that these forms of harm should be recognized and challenged.”¹⁸⁴ While certainly, Lilian’s call for recognition of gender-based hate speech has been increasingly addressed in human rights, this is somewhat fragmented. The lack of definitional certainties and the contested nature of hate speech in general may be one cause of that. According to Sjöholm, non-recognition of gender-based hate speech in human rights laws is related to its pervasiveness and normalisation, it not being recognised as particularly harmful.¹⁸⁵ While there is no obligation to prohibit it, she notes that non-discrimination provisions are being linked to the protection against gender-based hate speech. This indicates increased willingness to develop the concept.¹⁸⁶ Relatedly, it is the growth of online speech, that was based on sexism and misogyny, that has prompted the increased attention to the phenomenon.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁰ See: Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy, ‘Combating Sexist Hate Speech’, 2016.

¹⁸¹ See: Louise Richardson-Self, ‘Cis-Hetero-Misogyny Online’ (2019) 22 *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 573.

¹⁸² Katarzyna Sękowska-Kozłowska, Grażyna Baranowska and Aleksandra Gliszczyńska-Grabias, ‘Sexist Hate Speech and the International Human Rights Law: Towards Legal Recognition of the Phenomenon by the United Nations and the Council of Europe’ (2022) 35 *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law - Revue internationale de Sémiotique juridique* 2323.

¹⁸³ Lillian (n 91) 732.

¹⁸⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ Sjöholm (n 42) 312.

¹⁸⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ Debbie Ging and Eugenia and Siapera, ‘Special Issue on Online Misogyny’ (2018) 18 *Feminist Media Studies* 515, 517.

Gender-based online hate speech overlaps with other online gender-based offences and is an emanation of gender-based harm on the Internet.¹⁸⁸ What is however difficult to determine is the delineation between speech on the Internet that is deserving of being classified as hate speech and speech that, despite being harmful, does not reach that threshold. In that regard, the challenges identified in the previous sections remain an obstacle, including the nature of online speech, especially coded communications as well as the hierarchy between speech-based harm and physical harm and the influence of this difference on human rights law. The problems with contextual evaluations further complicate the issue.¹⁸⁹

As indicated, hate speech is often limited to speech that incites or advocates discrimination, hatred or violence. Those terms, however, are not always clearly defined. According to Richardson-Self, “sexist speech” should be differentiated from “misogynistic speech”, with the former being not hateful and the latter amounting to hate speech due to its violent and hostile nature.¹⁹⁰ She acknowledges that “sexist speech” is oppressive to women, however it is not inherently violent and therefore it should not amount to classification as hate speech. The boundaries between those two may be blurred and could easily overlap. It is argued that sexist speech that embodies harmful patriarchal beliefs should be clearly distinguished from hateful and violent speech that reaches the level of hate speech, as “lumping together sexist speech and sexist hate speech poses a risk of too extensive limitations to free speech, but also [...] to the attempts to counteract discrimination against women.”¹⁹¹ However, it remains valuable to also wonder whether “only” oppressive sexist speech and the acceptance of its wide presence in cyberspaces is not a crucial element of sustaining patriarchal oppression, that eventually makes people produce the content that will be classified as hate speech, thus creating a vicious cycle. On the other hand, sexist speech may be considered an issue countered with the help of gender equality and anti-discrimination frameworks, rather than anti-hate speech frameworks.¹⁹² For instance, harmful speech based on gender stereotyping could be addressed with the help of Article 5 of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) – a provision requiring state-parties to modify social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women which are based on ideas of inferiority or superiority or on stereotyped roles.

¹⁸⁸ Anastasia Powell and Nicola Henry, *Sexual Violence in a Digital Age* (Palgrave Macmillan UK 2017) 159–160.

¹⁸⁹ Sjöholm (n 42) 314.

¹⁹⁰ Richardson-Self (n 9).

¹⁹¹ Sękowska-Kozłowska, Baranowska and Gliszczynska-Grabias (n 182) 2328.

¹⁹² *ibid.*

The root causes of gender-based hate speech precede the Internet, however this speech is exacerbated online.¹⁹³ It is important to consider it against the backdrop of broader context of political and social reality of online communications. The prevalence and development of gender-based online hate speech should be linked to the context of hegemonic masculinity, maintaining its position of power by the subordination of other forms of masculinities and all forms of femininities¹⁹⁴ as well as the normalisation of hypersexualised and violent language, coupled with user anonymity in online environments, and gaps in legislative frameworks.¹⁹⁵ Ideologies as extreme nationalism, fundamentalism or conservatism provide a platform for the growth of misogyny and anchoring of patriarchal beliefs.¹⁹⁶ Accordingly, anti-women and/or anti-feminist online networks, functioning as both sources and perpetuation of those ideas, deserve particular attention. Further, gendered disinformation, a form of online gender-based violence,¹⁹⁷ is closely related to gender-based online hate speech. It aims at portraying women as weak, incompetent and sexualized, pushing women and gender nonconforming individuals out of public spaces and silencing those that do not comply with the gender norms; and relies on false information and existing gender narratives “to achieve its social and political goals, including maintaining the status quo of gender or creating a more polarized electorate.”¹⁹⁸

Gender-based online hate speech has the same effects as other forms of gender-based violence.¹⁹⁹ In principle, gender-based online hate speech targets may withdraw from the public platforms, decide to post less or tone down their language, especially those that have a presence in public life.²⁰⁰ There is a growing empirical evidence of the harms and effects of gender-based online hate speech.²⁰¹ The impact of spaces on the Internet that are centred around hate towards women, even when women themselves are not part of those communities, remain difficult to assess. The individual harm is not necessarily

¹⁹³ ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women’ (n 164), para 20.

¹⁹⁴ RW Connell and James W Messerschmidt, ‘Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept’ (2005) 19 *Gender and Society* 829.

¹⁹⁵ Sjöholm (n 42) 305.

¹⁹⁶ ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, Irene Khan’ (n 178), para. 14

¹⁹⁷ See: UN General Assembly, ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, Irene Khan’ (7 August 2023) UN Doc. A/78/288, para 10.

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.*, para 13, 15.

¹⁹⁹ See: Daniele Cangemi, ‘Combating Sexist Hate Speech The Work of the Council of Europe: The Work of the Council of Europe’ in Giuliana Giusti and Gabriele Iannàccaro, *Language, Gender and Hate Speech A Multidisciplinary Approach* (Fondazione Università Ca’ Foscari 2020) 151.

²⁰⁰ ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women’ (n 164), para 28-29.

²⁰¹ See, for instance: Sergio Andrés Castaño-Pulgarín and others, ‘Internet, Social Media and Online Hate Speech. Systematic Review’ (2021) 58 *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 101608, 4. Amnesty International, ‘Toxic Twitter - Triggers of Violence and Abuse Against Women on Twitter, Chapter 2’ <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/03/online-violence-against-women-chapter-2-3/>>.

observable, while group-based or collective harm may be assessed in the context of the potential exposure of the content. It is important to assess the potentiality of this speech transcending the boundaries of those communities and going to “common” cyberspaces and eventually to offline environments. The next chapter will look closely into the dynamics of such an online community.

Chapter 3: Studying incels and incelism

3.1. Introduction

The following chapter establishes the general understanding of the manosphere, with a particular focus on incels and their identity. Laying down the current approaches in academic scholarship will allow for the subsequent analysis of incels' communications in Chapter 5. Firstly, the chapter provides a literature review on the academic scholarship focusing on the broad understanding of the manosphere and the groups within. This serves for further elaboration on the subgroup of incels, whose identities and philosophy are elaborated on in the latter part.

In the social sciences, the manosphere has been mostly theorised in the masculinity studies, with the emerging body of research in linguistics and computer modelling.²⁰² There is scarcity of research that would approach the topic from legal or human rights perspective. Thus, the literature review focuses on the masculinity studies as the main source of academic research on the manosphere.

This chapter will refer to code-words and stand-ins for certain expressions that are used in the manosphere. For this reason, glossary of terms was developed and included in the Annex.

3.2. The manosphere

3.2.1. Conceptualising the manosphere

Broadly speaking, the manosphere could be described as a loosely connected network of anti-feminist cybercommunities, mostly consisting of men, who discuss issues around masculinity, gender relations and sexuality.²⁰³ The term originates from a blog entry in 2009, serving to describe an online network of men's interest communities. It was later popularized by Ian Ironwood, porn marketer and pseudonymous author of the self-published *The Manosphere: A New Hope for Masculinity*.²⁰⁴ In principle, the manosphere is an umbrella-term used to delineate "a vast range of realities that differ from each other,

²⁰² Pauline Hoebanx, 'Hegemonic Masculinity and Beyond: An Overview of Social Science and Interdisciplinary Research on the Manosphere' in Anne Wagner and Sarah Marusek (eds), *Handbook on Cyber Hate: The Modern Cyber Evil* (Springer International Publishing 2024) 545.

²⁰³ See: Manoel Horta Ribeiro and others, 'The Evolution of the Manosphere Across the Web' [2020] ArXiv; Shawn P Van Valkenburgh, 'Digesting the Red Pill: Masculinity and Neoliberalism in the Manosphere' (2021) 24 *Men and Masculinities* 84; Matteo Botto and Lucas Gottzén, 'Swallowing and Spitting out the Red Pill: Young Men, Vulnerability, and Radicalization Pathways in the Manosphere' (2024) 33 *Journal of Gender Studies* 596; Ging (n 2).

²⁰⁴ Ging (n 2) 641.

but which have also a lot in common.”²⁰⁵ Two issues that the manosphere’s groups focus on could be identified: the critique of feminism and its association with a feminised society and the need to reclaim a vision of masculinity perceived to be under siege.²⁰⁶ The demographics of the manosphere are difficult to establish, as those communities are predominantly online, with much of the users staying anonymous even in interactions between one another. Nevertheless, scholars have noted the potential intersectional dynamics of the manosphere.²⁰⁷

As is with most phenomena heavily tied to the interception of the Internet, the emergence of the manosphere and its ideologies is not clear. While the term itself can be traced back to 2009’s blog entry and Ian Ironwood, academic scholarship traces the origins of the manosphere’s philosophy to men’s liberation movements that emerged around 1970s,²⁰⁸ which were formed in response to second-wave feminist movements, specifically in Anglophone world. Originally, men’s liberation movements were committed to feminist criticisms of oppressive understandings of masculinity,²⁰⁹ however they eventually split into pro- and antifeminist sections, as they disagreed on the status of male privilege adversely affecting women.²¹⁰ Antifeminist fraction embraced conservative language on gender roles, arguing that modern society had become feminised and emasculating.²¹¹ Scholars note that the growth of movements like the manosphere is related to the disturbance of white male privilege and embody a specific backlash against feminism and social justice movements.²¹² Toxic technocultures, such as the manosphere’s groups, have been explained to be driven by economic insecurity, as late 1970s-1980s saw economic, political and social changes, which dismantled labour markets and economic reality.²¹³ According to Marwick and Caplan, the contemporary men’s rights movement is a “reaction to diminishing social status of cisgender white men, and the emergence of feminist and multicultural activism as a mainstream

²⁰⁵ Maddalena Cannito and others, ‘Doing Masculinities Online: Defining and Studying the Manosphere’ (2021) 10 *AG About Gender I*, 4.

²⁰⁶ See: Sarah Banet-Weiser and Kate M and Miltner, ‘#MasculinitySoFragile: Culture, Structure, and Networked Misogyny’ (2016) 16 *Feminist Media Studies* 171.

²⁰⁷ Cannito and others (n 200) 7.

²⁰⁸ See: Micheal Messner, ‘The Limits of “The Male Sex Role”’: An Analysis of the Men’s Liberation and Men’s Rights Movements’ Discourse’ (1998) 12 *Gender & Society* 255.; Michael A Messner, ‘Forks in the Road of Men’s Gender Politics: Men’s Rights vs Feminist Allies’ (2016) 5 *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy* 6.

²⁰⁹ See: Tim Carrigan, Bob Connell and John Lee, ‘Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity’ (1985) 14 *Theory and Society* 551.

²¹⁰ Messner, ‘Forks in the Road of Men’s Gender Politics’ (n 208).; Alice E Marwick and Robyn Caplan, ‘Drinking Male Tears: Language, the Manosphere, and Networked Harassment’ (2018) 18 *Feminist Media Studies* 543.

²¹¹ See: Michael Kimmel (ed), *The Politics of Manhood: Profeminist Men Respond to the Mythopoetic Men’s Movement (and the Mythopoetic Leaders Answer)* (Temple University Press 1995).

²¹² Ging (n 2).

²¹³ Messner, ‘Forks in the Road of Men’s Gender Politics’ (n 208). Marwick and Caplan (n 210).

political force.”²¹⁴ It is not clear how many groups could be identified within the manosphere, or which groups are the biggest, as this changes overtime, with migration between one group and another. Scholars have identified the following: Men’s Rights Activists (MRA), Pick Up Artists (PUA), Red Pill Community, Incels, Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW) as well as Alt-Right movements.²¹⁵

The groups of the manosphere have developed a subcultural language made up of acronyms and code-words, with much reference to the “pill jargon” as well as genetic determinism and evolutionary psychology used to explain male and female behaviours.²¹⁶ The “pill jargon” is central to the politics of the manosphere, most notably the concept of the “red pill.” It is an analogy from 1999’s film *The Matrix*, in which the protagonist has to make a choice of taking either a blue pill or a red pill. Taking the blue pill means continuing the life of ignorance, while taking the red pill allows for one to become enlightened to the “truth” about life. Red pill philosophy allows for purported awakening of men to feminism’s brainwashing, being a key concept uniting the communities.²¹⁷ It is an amalgam of concepts and ideas that promote male supremacy and aim to awaken men from supposed gynocentric and misandrist society.

The pill jargon is closely related to popularised pseudo-scientific forms of evolutionary psychology and genetic determinism.²¹⁸ The underlying theme is that evolution has created gender relations in a way, in which women and men have different reproductive and mating strategies.²¹⁹ Women are considered to be hypergamous, only desiring the most attractive men with the highest social status. The rise of feminism, the liberation of women, sexual revolution and recently online dating exacerbated this purported nature of women.²²⁰ For this reason, only a small fraction of men benefits from the system – so-called “Alphas” or “Chads”, that have the highest sexual market value.²²¹ Manosphere’s understanding of evolutionary psychology is related to neoliberal economics. Indeed, Van Valkenburgh notes that red pill philosophy is grounded in economised sexuality – “it privileges scientific rationality and integrates common economic discourses involving meritocracy, rationalization, quantification, and market-based exchange into its seduction ideology.”²²²

²¹⁴ Marwick and Caplan (n 205) 4.

²¹⁵ See: Cannito and others (n 205); Ribeiro and others (n 3); Hoebanx (n 202).

²¹⁶ Ging (n 2) 12.

²¹⁷ *ibid* 3. See: Van Valkenburgh (n 203).

²¹⁸ Ging (n 2) 12.

²¹⁹ Van Valkenburgh (n 203).

²²⁰ Botto and Gottzén (n 203) 597.

²²¹ See: glossary of terms in Annex.

²²² Van Valkenburgh (n 203) 99.

Although theorising the manosphere is a difficult task, what remains clear is that its ideologies, philosophies and terminology, despite different names of the groups, intersect with one another and share core beliefs, especially about “women’s nature”. According to Ging, the most striking thing about the manosphere is the fact that ostensibly contradictory masculine formulations “can coalesce around any number of contentious issues or flash point events when the common goal is to defeat feminism or keep women out of the space.”²²³

3.2.2. Manosphere’s groups

Precisely identifying all manosphere groups online is challenging, as these categorisations shift over time depending on when the research is conducted. For one, Ging framed incels as belonging to gamer/geek culture,²²⁴ however the latter literature rather treated them as a distinct group.²²⁵ This section will briefly elaborate on Men’s Rights Activists (MRAs), Pick-up Artists (PUAs) and Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW) as those groups are relatively the most distinct and given attention in the scholarship. This is to contextualise the existence of incel community, the examination of which will follow after this section, within particular manosphere’s cyberspace.

MRAs focus on men-related social issues and institutions, which they claim are discriminatory towards men.²²⁶ They are often viewed as the continuation of antifeminist fraction of men’s liberation movements from 1970s,²²⁷ however it is not the only interpretation of the historical developments.²²⁸ They are mainly present online, on blogs or social media platforms. While a lot of their political interests centre North American context, scholars have noted their presence in different places.²²⁹ In the manosphere, MRAs focus on questions of sexuality, harassment and sexual violence, particularly rape allegations.²³⁰ Hoebanx notes that this is a shift from the previous emphasis of the 1970s’ movements, like marriage, parenthood or divorce.²³¹ MRA-related websites are considered to encourage divisive gender relations and attacks

²²³ Ging (n 2) 16.

²²⁴ *ibid.*, 13.

²²⁵ See, for instance: Lisa Sugiura, *The Incel Rebellion: The Rise of the Manosphere and the Virtual War Against Women* (Emerald Publishing Limited 2021); Jaki and others (n 6); Maxwell and others (n 5); Daly and Reed (n 6).

²²⁶ Ribeiro and others (n 3).

²²⁷ Messner, ‘Forks in the Road of Men’s Gender Politics’ (n 208); Michael Kimmel, *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era* (Public Affairs 2017).

²²⁸ See: Hakim Ben Salah, Jean-Martin Deslauriers and René Knüsel, ‘Proposing a New Approach to the Research on Men’s Organizations’ (2017) 25 *The Journal of Men’s Studies* 92.

²²⁹ Hoebanx (n 202) 546–547.

²³⁰ See: Lise Gotell and Emily Dutton, ‘Sexual Violence in the “Manosphere”: Antifeminist Men’s Rights Discourses on Rape’ (2016) 5 *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy* 65.

²³¹ Hoebanx (n 202) 546.

on feminism, likely attracting disempowered individuals and drawing them to antifeminist rhetoric.²³² While certain claims made by MRAs voice legitimate concerns about men's situation, they position themselves as victims of feminism and their underlying tone tend to be misogynistic, derogatory and hateful.

The goal of the PUA community is to strategise seduction techniques. It is built around “game”: strategies and mindsets that help “pick up” women (hence the name).²³³ In practice, this often entails objectification, harassment or even sexual violence of targeted women.²³⁴ PUA-related online forums are the oldest in comparison to other manosphere's groups.²³⁵ Seduction is perceived as a skill that anyone can learn, with romantic and intimate relations being framed in terms of market logics and entrepreneurialism.²³⁶ What makes this online community distinctive is that they have incorporated transactional services by offering training courses, advices or physical meet-ups with their followers.²³⁷ While the popularity of PUA's forums was on the rise in the late 2000s and early 2010s, in the past decade it decreased.²³⁸ This may be connected to the increase of the popularity of red pill philosophy within online environments that cater to men. Accordingly, red pill presents an alternative reality referring to pseudo-science, while PUAs' techniques aspire to teach men how to operate within gender relation without deeper theories on evolutionary psychology.

Similarly to MRAs, MGTOW contend that the society is prejudiced against men and for this reason they endorse and aspire to abandonment of any relations with women or even the entire society.²³⁹ Thus, they want to “go their own way” in accordance with the name of the community. They avoid relationships with women and rather focus on self-improvement and personal growth.²⁴⁰ Similarly to Incels, they were mostly present on the social media platform Reddit until their group was banned in 2021, leading them to move to a dedicated website.²⁴¹ Academic scholarship contest the declared separatist stance of the

²³² See: Rachel M Schmitz and Emily Kazyak, ‘Masculinities in Cyberspace: An Analysis of Portrayals of Manhood in Men's Rights Activist Websites’ (2016) 5 *Social Sciences* 18.

²³³ See: Ribeiro and others (n 203).

²³⁴ Hoebanx (n 202) 550.

²³⁵ Ribeiro and others (n 203) 4.

²³⁶ Hoebanx (n 202) 550.

²³⁷ For an extensive study of the participants and trainers see: Rachel O'Neill, *Seduction: Men, Masculinity and Mediated Intimacy* (Polity Press 2018).

²³⁸ Ribeiro and others (n 203) 4.

²³⁹ See: Ribeiro and others (n 3) 2.

²⁴⁰ See: Jie Liang Lin, ‘Antifeminism Online: MGTOW (Men Going Their Own Way)’ (Urte Undine Frömmling and others eds, transcript Verlag, 2017); Scott Wright, Trott, Verity and Callum and Jones, ‘“The Pussy Ain't Worth It, Bro”: Assessing the Discourse and Structure of MGTOW’ (2020) 23 *Information, Communication & Society* 908.

²⁴¹ Hoebanx (n 202) 553.

community²⁴² and claim that, despite its narrative, MGTOW's central goal is a hostile attack on women's emancipation and a defence of men's patriarchal privilege.²⁴³

3.3. Incels' as a distinct community

3.3.1. Who are incels?

Simply put, the term “incel” is a portmanteau for “involuntary celibate”, which in literal sense means a person who desires, but is not able to enter a romantic and/or sexual relationship. There is no one definition of incel community and the notion of incelism, i.e. the state of involuntary celibacy. Academic scholarship's contextualisations often clash with definitions reported by incels themselves. The first incel-related forum was reportedly created in the late 2010. The community picked up the momentum in mid-2016 and grew to become the most active in the manosphere on social media platform Reddit in 2017 until it was banned on that platform.²⁴⁴ However, the community continued to prosper on different fora, including incels.is – the website created shortly after the ban.²⁴⁵

The term “incel” originated from the blog “Alana's Involuntary Celibacy Project” created in 1997 by a Canadian woman Alana Boltwood.²⁴⁶ According to her, incel used to mean anybody or any gender who was lonely, had never had sex or who hadn't had a relationship in a long time.²⁴⁷ Initial usage of the term treated it as a temporary life circumstance, rather than an identity. Relatedly, an early 2001 study by Donnelly et al. examined involuntary celibacy as a self-identified life situation among subjects of diverse genders, races, sexual orientations, and life circumstances.²⁴⁸ While early understanding of incelism was relatively gender-neutral, this has shifted overtime. Since then, the term has gone through a reconceptualisation and has come to represent a community or a movement,²⁴⁹ of mostly men, which have been described as “united by a strong feeling of rejection and rage towards the opposite sex.”²⁵⁰

²⁴² See: Wright and Jones (n 240).

²⁴³ Anna Maria Górska, Karolina Kulicka and Dariusz Jemielniak, ‘Men Not Going Their Own Way: A Thick Big Data Analysis of #MGTOW and #Feminism Tweets’ (2023) 23 *Feminist Media Studies* 3774, 3776.

²⁴⁴ Ribeiro and others (n 203) 5.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Hoebanx (n 202) 548; Lisa Sugiura, ‘An Introduction to Incel’, *The Incel Rebellion: The Rise of the Manosphere and the Virtual War Against Women* (Emerald Publishing Limited 2021).

²⁴⁷ ‘The Woman Who Founded the “incel” Movement’ (29 August 2018) <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-45284455>> accessed 5 July 2025.; ‘Love Not Anger – Beyond Involuntary Celibacy’ <<https://www.lovenotanger.org/>> accessed 5 July 2025.

²⁴⁸ Denise Donnelly and others, ‘Involuntary Celibacy: A Life Course Analysis’ (2001) 38 *The Journal of Sex Research* 159.

²⁴⁹ See: Maxwell and others (n 5); Bruce Hoffman, Jacob Ware and Ezra Shapiro, ‘Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence’ (2020) 43 *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 565; Sugiura (n 244); Daly and Reed (n 6); DeCook and Kelly (n 6).

²⁵⁰ Ribeiro and others (n 3) 2.

While linking incels and incelism to the concept of community or a movement is the current approach of academic scholarship on the topic, incels themselves, within the cyberspaces they use, do not define themselves in the same way. According to incel wiki, a website created by incels, involuntary celibacy is understood as “adverse life circumstance” and “it is not confined to a single political movement or online subculture.”²⁵¹ Further, according to the section “Introduction to Incels” available on their popular forum, incel is:

a person who wants to be in a loving relationship but is unable to find a partner despite his best effort. [...]. Being ‘incel’ is a state of being, not an identity. It is not a movement, ideology, or behavior, and there is nothing political about it.²⁵²

Meanwhile, who qualifies as an incel on the forum is highly contested with, e.g. certain incel theories suggesting that a person with specific features cannot be an incel. In practice the community itself does not have a clear response to the question of “who is an incel?” either.

Among the manosphere’s groups, incels are the only one that are so comprehensively researched not only by academic scholarship, but also by other actors. For instance, EU’s European Commission has commissioned a report on incels to assess the challenges for practitioners in prevention and countering of violent extremism.²⁵³ Academic scholarship is a rich source of information about incels, with the field growing remarkably since the first publications appeared around 2019.²⁵⁴ Vast number of academic research on incels focuses on violence linked to the community. This is related to high-profile violent attacks, that have been related to them. This includes Elliot Rodger who in 2014, murdered six people and injured 14 others in Isla Vista, California, USA, before taking his own life. Before the attack, he uploaded a video and 137-page manifesto detailing his hatred toward women who had rejected him. While Elliot Rodger did not describe himself as an incel, he was quickly claimed as one by the community. Furthermore, other high-profile attacks have been associated with incels: Alek Minassian who drove a van into pedestrians on a Toronto sidewalk, killing ten people and injuring 16 others, posting about “the Incel Rebellion” and its start prior to the attack; Jake Davison who killed five people, including his mother, in Plymouth, UK, reportedly had participated in incel-related online forums and had posted

²⁵¹ ‘Incel’ (*Incel Wiki*, 31 March 2025) <<https://incels.wiki/w/Incel>> accessed 5 July 2025.

²⁵² ‘Introduction to Incels’ (*Incels.is - Involuntary Celibate Forum*, 18 January 2018) <<https://incels.is/threads/introduction-to-incels.15406/>> accessed 5 July 2025.

²⁵³ See: RAN European Commission, ‘Incels: A First Scan of the Phenomenon (in the EU) and Its Relevance and Challenges for P/CVE’ (2021).

²⁵⁴ In 2022 Czerwinsky identified more than 1300 articles on incels, that span disciplines of computer science, linguistics, gender studies, criminology, sociology, military studies and terrorism studies. See: Czerwinsky (n 4) 199.

videos about his frustrations. While there are other incidents that have been somewhat linked to incels,²⁵⁵ those mentioned notably brought much media attention to the movement. Nevertheless, it should be noted that a small number of incels have adopted murder as their modus operandi.²⁵⁶ It is very difficult to truly understand the prevalence of incel-related violence.²⁵⁷ Further, while most of the acts of violence happened in Anglophone part of the world,²⁵⁸ this does not mean that there is no incels outside of those regions. The community, due to its online nature, is indeed transnational. Although more research is needed on that, there is already some evidence stemming from existing literature,²⁵⁹ media reporting as well as observation of incels' forums.²⁶⁰

Incels are often framed as flagrantly misogynistic and uniquely violent community. This treatment of them and their views as exceptional form of extreme misogyny is somewhat of a misrecognition. This may be visible in retroactive classification of misogynistic acts of mass violence as incel-related, even if the perpetrator was not part of the community.²⁶¹ According to DeCook and Kelly, “much of the scholarship and popular commentary on incel communities tends to treat incels as unique, and to pathologize the misogyny of the misogynist incel movement, rather than treating it as a structural problem.”²⁶² The ideology presented by incels is part of broader societal problems of long-standing male supremacy and structural sexism, with anti-women sentiments observable throughout history despite the current exacerbation by new technologies.²⁶³ Recently, scholars have argued for more nuance in the reference to incels' identity. Notably, it has been noted that the term “misogynist incel” should be used to distinguish male supremacist ideology and movement from personal identification with the term.²⁶⁴ Czerwinsky notes that it may be reasonable to utilise specific terms that identify the facet of the studied

²⁵⁵ See the study conducted by Williams et al. that included seven self-identified incels who have attempted and/or successfully completed homicide. See: DJ Williams and others, ‘Wanting Sex and Willing to Kill: Examining Demographic and Cognitive Characteristics of Violent “Involuntary Celibates”’ (2021) 39 Behavioral Sciences & the Law 386.

²⁵⁶ *ibid* 387.

²⁵⁷ Czerwinsky (n 4) 205–206.

²⁵⁸ Mostly in USA, which is possibly related to the prevalence of gun violence in general.

²⁵⁹ See, for instance: Antonella Capalbi, ‘Le rappresentazioni audiovisive come strumento di indagine della manosphere. Joker, supereroe per gli Incel italiani?’ [2021] AG About Gender - Rivista internazionale di studi di genere V. 10 N. 19 (2021): Fare maschilità online: definire e indagare la manosphere.

²⁶⁰ The forum incels.is, while predominantly English-speaking, has a separate section, in which members communicate in different languages. Apart from English, there are three language categories: Spanish, Turkish and other. Among other languages, various languages are spoken, including: German, Russian, Hindi, French, Arabic, Polish and others.

²⁶¹ Czerwinsky (n 4) 206.

²⁶² DeCook and Kelly (n 6) 707.

²⁶³ See: Czerwinsky (n 4).

²⁶⁴ Megan Kelly, Alex DiBranco and Dr Julia R DeCook, ‘Misogynist Incels and Male Supremacism.’ (2021) New America.

community, e.g. self-identified incel(s), non-violent incel(s).²⁶⁵ This approach would reflect the diversity of beliefs and identities within the community, including the peripheral spaces.

3.3.2. Philosophy, theories and beliefs

While the previous section focused on current approaches to incels' identity in the scholarship, this section will present an overview of incels' most prominent and distinctive standpoints.

Incels' worldview, just as their identity, is difficult to conceptualise. On one hand, it is the incels' forums that may inform our understanding of all the theories. However, those cyberspaces may often present chaotic and contradictory standpoints, as well as possibly represent only a fraction of the community or the worldview. Indeed, existing empirical research focused on publicly accessible forums or interviews with a selected number of individuals. Internal disagreements on crucial aspects of different theories between incels themselves further complicate the above.²⁶⁶ Academic literature on incels also remain a field with some level of disparities among scholars. Earlier scholarship on incels focused on describing the basics of history and trajectory of the movement, bringing their theories into the academic discussions and connecting the worldview to the acts of violence.²⁶⁷ Later works have tried to bring more nuance into the field, calling for placing the "incel menace" into a broader picture of white supremacy and cisheteropatriarchy, rather than considering incels' views as uniquely violent misogyny.²⁶⁸

While incels' theories remain closely related to the way of thinking of other groups within the manosphere, they also form a unique set of opinions.²⁶⁹ This applies both to its content, but also to the form of its communication. Notably, incels have created their own Wikipedia-like website – "Incel-Wiki".²⁷⁰ It functions as a source of information about involuntary celibacy – it was created after incels' unsuccessful campaign to edit the official Wikipedia's definition of an "incel". Members of the community came together to create an alternative source of information around the same time as the incel forum was banned from Reddit. Incel-wiki outlines the definitions of the core terms and philosophies that incels refer to in their discussions. The website consists of huge number of entries, a lot of them

²⁶⁵ Czerwinsky (n 4) 212.

²⁶⁶ Angus Lindsay, 'Swallowing the Black Pill: Involuntary Celibates' (Incels) Anti Feminism within Digital Society' (2022) 11 International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy 210.

²⁶⁷ Stephane J Baele, Lewys Brace and Travis G Coan, 'From "Incel" to "Saint": Analyzing the Violent Worldview behind the 2018 Toronto Attack' (2021) 33 Terrorism and Political Violence 1667.

²⁶⁸ DeCook and and Kelly (n 6).

²⁶⁹ Beele et al. considers this worldview as having all the features of an extremist mindset. See: Baele, Brace and Coan (n 267).

²⁷⁰ 'Incel Wiki, the Encyclopedia of Incel Culture' (*Incel Wiki*, 21 June 2024) <https://incels.wiki/w/Main_Page> accessed 5 July 2025.

referring to cherry-picked and recontextualised scientific research, especially about biological determinism and evolutionary psychology. It functions as a “tool whereby contributors leverage the digital affordances of wiki software that are then used to curate, disseminate, and legitimise male supremacist ideology to a broad audience.”²⁷¹

Beale et al. contends that incel worldview is a “rigid three-tier social hierarchy exclusively based on physical appearance where a minority of ‘Alpha’ males (‘Chads’) and females (‘Stacys’) stand on top, a majority of average-looking ‘Betas’ (‘normies’) follow, and a minority of physically unpleasant ‘Incel’ individuals – exclusively males – is stuck at the bottom.”²⁷² While similar tropes could be seen in other parts of the manosphere, for incels this structure is immutable and no one is capable of escaping from this reality. Subsequently, the central theory that distinguishes incels is “blackpill” philosophy. According to Incel-wiki, it is “a pessimistic, nihilistic or defeatist version of the redpill, where one accepts the fate nature has bestowed upon them, and resigns themselves to the fact that the world is naturally unfair and will always remain so.”²⁷³ The source of those assertions reportedly come from “chadfishing experiments” and data from online dating.²⁷⁴ Blackpill assumes physical attractiveness is the most important factor for men’s success in dating and for this reason women hold the power over which men will achieve romantic and/or sexual fulfilment.²⁷⁵ Relatedly, there is no way to escape the social hierarchy that supposedly excludes incels, as it is claimed that one cannot largely alter their attractiveness’ levels.²⁷⁶ While it may be noted that it is possible to improve one’s looks, most of the community assert that this is just delusion and those among incels, who believe in that have not fully swallowed the blackpill yet. This is further fuelled by the notion of “scientific blackpill”, which presents beliefs about physical attractiveness and dating as grounded in pseudo-scientific grounds, particularly drawing on evolutionary psychology.²⁷⁷

Blackpill has been described as a disciplinary device that aids in building the collective identity of incels.²⁷⁸ The sense of victimhood and shared experiences of rejection and victimisation are an important

²⁷¹ Catherine R Baker, ‘Infrastructures of Male Supremacism: A Mixed-Methods Analysis of the Incel Wiki’ (PhD thesis, Loughborough University 2023).

²⁷² Baele, Brace and Coan (n 267) 1674.

²⁷³ ‘Pill Jargon’ (*Incel Wiki*) <https://incels.wiki/w/Pill_jargon> accessed 5 July 2025.

²⁷⁴ *ibid.*

²⁷⁵ See: Czerwinsky (n 4).; Sugiura (n 244).

²⁷⁶ See: Baele, Brace and Coan (n 267).

²⁷⁷ For an overview of the incel wiki’s role in that, see: Baker (n 271).

²⁷⁸ See: Lindsay (n 266).

element of incel identity, that creates a sense of belonging to the group.²⁷⁹ However, while taking the blackpill may be considered to be a part of forming the collective identity of incels, it is also noted that not all incels are necessarily “blackpilled.”²⁸⁰ Nevertheless, scholars have noted that blackpill philosophy helps incels justify the subjugation of women.²⁸¹ According to Lindsay, it produces a form of “stochastic terrorism”, as “individuals are encouraged to find their own (violent) ‘solutions’ to the problems identified and emphasised by the collective experience of inceldom.”²⁸² This violence could be directed at women or non-incels, but it could also be self-inflicted harm, including suicide.

Blackpill philosophy is linked to other theories observable within incels’ cyberspaces. This includes those that are based on genetic determinism and fallacious biological arguments, including theories on women’s nature (e.g. hypergamy, “80/20 rule”, “women-are-wonderful-effect”²⁸³), or on features that make one attractive (e.g. “Just Be White Theory”²⁸⁴). It is not easy to navigate all of them. Some claim that blackpill is comprised of those theories,²⁸⁵ rather than all of them creating distinct, but interdependent set of beliefs.

The understanding of hypergamy and 80/20 rule is closely related to justifications of blackpill philosophy. The concepts argue that 80% of women are romantically interested only in the top 20% of men, resulting in remaining 80% of men competing for the bottom 20% of women.²⁸⁶ The supposed hypergamous nature of women is considered to have been amplified by online dating in modern societies.²⁸⁷ Overall, gynocentrism is at the core of incels’ philosophies. For incels, this means that the world is structured around women only, often to the detriment of other groups.

Blackpill philosophy is further supported by standpoints that refer to the performance of masculinity, specifically what kind of men success in dating. In that regard, incels’ ethnicities remain a core aspect of “Just Be White Theory” (JBW) – an idea that “in multiethnic Western societies White men are favored in dating.”²⁸⁸ For this reason, incel community distinguishes so-called ethnicels – non-white incels,

²⁷⁹ See: Daly and Reed (n 6).

²⁸⁰ See: DeCook and Kelly (n 6); Lindsay (n 266).

²⁸¹ Czerwinsky (n 4) 200.

²⁸² Lindsay (n 266). 211

²⁸³ See: glossary of terms in Annex.

²⁸⁴ See: glossary of terms in Annex.

²⁸⁵ Sugiura (n 244) 8.

²⁸⁶ ‘Hypergamy’ (*Incel Wiki*) <https://incels.wiki/w/Hypergamy#80/20_Rule> accessed 5 July 2025.

²⁸⁷ See: Kayla Preston, Michael Halpin and Finlay Maguire, ‘The Black Pill: New Technology and the Male Supremacy of Involuntarily Celibate Men’ (2021) 24 *Men and Masculinities* 823.

²⁸⁸ ‘Just Be White Theory (JBW)’ (*Incel Wiki*) <[https://incels.wiki/w/Just_Be_White_Theory_\(JBW\)](https://incels.wiki/w/Just_Be_White_Theory_(JBW))> accessed 5 July 2025.

divided into multiple sub-categories, e.g. currycels, blackcel, ricecel etc.²⁸⁹ Relatedly, “racepill”, a subset of blackpill, asserts that men suffer prejudice based on their ethnicity/race.

Language used by incels reflects and propagates the above-mentioned theories as well as facilitates their creation, especially through the use of code-words. Violent and hateful language has been found within incel cyberspaces.²⁹⁰ Scholars have analysed the dehumanising and objectifying nature of the terms used by incels, both incel-specific (e.g. “foid” – a short for “female humanoid” used to refer to women) and more common slurs.²⁹¹ Furthermore, women’s biological inferiority is emphasised through stereotypes and theories on perceived natural characteristics of women, in effect creating ‘othering’ narrative.²⁹² Meanwhile, incel forums create an echo-chamber effect,²⁹³ thus limiting counter-speech possibilities. Relatedly, without those forums facilitating discussions, a lot of individuals would have no way to recognise themselves as incels.²⁹⁴

Incels’ online community is structured around gendered and racialised theories that are grounded in pseudo-scientific standpoints. This section presented an overview of the scholarship’s approach to the community’s philosophy. The next part of this thesis will turn its focus to empirical inquiry into incels’ discussions and assess its impact on the concepts laid down in Chapter 2.

²⁸⁹ See glossary of terms in Annex.

²⁹⁰ See: Czerwinsky (n 4) 200–201.

²⁹¹ See: Winnie Chang, ‘The Monstrous-Feminine in the Incel Imagination: Investigating the Representation of Women as “Femoids” on /r/Braincels’ (2022) 22 *Feminist Media Studies* 254.

²⁹² See: Jaki and others (n 6); Maxwell and others (n 5).

²⁹³ Baele, Brace and Coan (n 267) 1686.

²⁹⁴ Sugiura (n 225).

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1. Introduction

After the theoretical framework has been presented in previous chapters, the following Chapter outlines the methodology used to answer the research questions. The goal of this thesis is to understand the characteristics of incels' communications in order to analyse how its content could inform gender-based harm on the Internet, specifically online gender-based hate speech. For this reason, the following research question was set:

- (1) How does the content from incels' cyberspace inform the understanding of the concept of gender-based harm on the Internet, specifically gender-based online hate speech?**

It seeks to conceptualise the online discourse within these spaces, examining patterns and forms of communications. This could particularly help in analysing the boundary between content that potentially qualifies as hate speech and content that falls below this threshold. In incels' discussions typically, the members rely on slang, coded terminology, and in-group humour that hide deeper meaning of the communications. Thus, it is important to inquire if these coded communications affect the determination of the harmfulness of the speech present in those spheres. Thus, the following sub-question should be addressed:

- (2) Does the coded language and communication patterns in incels' spaces complicate the identification and classification of harmful speech? If so, how?**

Lastly, the second sub-question should be asked to essentially address the implications of the conceptualization that the main research question seeks to address:

- (3) To what extent does the framework of freedom of expression and hate speech address the specific challenges of the studied content produced in the incel cyberspaces?**

The potential question of effectiveness of the current human rights framework comes down to the examination of the capacity to address evolving forms of online misogyny as well as the balance between the protection of freedom of expression and prevention of gender-based harm on the Internet.

4.2. Qualitative content analysis

This thesis employed qualitative content analysis (QCA) to study incels' communications. In the simplest terms, it is a method that studies texts and reduces them to comprehensible and small categories that

convey certain meaning, to understand the multiple layers of the texts.²⁹⁵ According to Prasad, definitions of QCA could be categorised into three types.²⁹⁶ The first type approaches content analysis as a technique for objective, systematic and quantitative description of the analysed content.²⁹⁷ The second type avoids direct reference to either quantitative or qualitative dimensions and rather highlights systematic inference and replicability.²⁹⁸ The third type integrates interpretive elements, framing content analysis as a method for subjectively understanding and systematically categorizing latent meanings within texts. Scholars such as Rosengren, Schreier, and Hsieh & Shannon define content analysis in ways that accommodate both deductive and inductive processes, emphasizing flexibility and contextual interpretation.²⁹⁹

QCA was determined to be the most adequate methodology for a thesis like this. It allows for examination of implicit and explicit meanings within texts, prioritising the identification of underlying themes and patterns, rather than making simple generalisations. Further, it acknowledges that the text could be interpreted differently depending on the reader. This method focuses on smaller samples, but intensely analyses them with greater depth, which fits this thesis project with a limited time and resources.³⁰⁰ Furthermore, QCA enables the analysis of diverse materials, including online forums. Online content could serve as a powerful source of information, with online forums being particularly useful to study communities in cyberspaces.³⁰¹ Qualitative research of the online content could be very suitable in unravelling a complex, politically and legally challenging phenomenon.³⁰²

4.3. Limitations of QCA

QCA might be considered to be limited due to its flexible nature, thus potentially limiting the scientific rigour of the research.³⁰³ While this feature may be criticised, this could be refuted by in fact noting that

²⁹⁵ See: Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, 2. ed. (Sage Publication, 2004).

²⁹⁶ Bammidi Devi Prasad, 'Qualitative Content Analysis: Why Is It Still a Path Less Taken?' (2019) 20 Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research.

²⁹⁷ This approach is taken by: Bernard Berelson, *Content Analysis in Communication Research* (Free Press 1952).

²⁹⁸ See: Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (2. ed., Sage Publication 2004).

²⁹⁹ See: Karl Erik Rosengren, *Advances in Content Analysis* (SAGE Publications 1981).; Margrit Schreier, 'Qualitative Content Analysis' in Uwe Flick (ed), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis* (SAGE 2014).; Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah Shannon, 'Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis' (2005) 15 Qualitative Health Research 1277.

³⁰⁰ See: Ulla H Graneheim, Britt-Marie Lindgren and Berit Lundman, 'Methodological Challenges in Qualitative Content Analysis: A Discussion Paper' (2017) 56 Nurse Education Today 29; Hsieh and Shannon (n 300); Mariette Bengtsson, 'How to Plan and Perform a Qualitative Study Using Content Analysis' (2016) 2 NursingPlus Open 8; Schreier (n 300).; Satu Elo and Helvi Kyngäs, 'The Qualitative Content Analysis Process' (2008) 62 Journal of Advanced Nursing 107.

³⁰¹ See: David Giles, 'Online Discussion Forums: A Rich and Vibrant Source of Data' in Virginia Braun, Victoria Clarke and Debra Gray (eds), *Collecting Qualitative Data* (1st edn, Cambridge University Press 2017).

³⁰² This has been already used in the research of the manosphere's cyberspaces. See, for instance: Baele, Brace and Coan (n 267).; Henry Price, 'Anti-Feminism as Anti-Establishment and Emancipatory: The Gendered Metapolitics of Incel' (2024) 24 Feminist Media Studies 1042.

³⁰³ Elo and Kyngäs (n 301) 113.

it is QCA's flexibility that makes it an efficient method.³⁰⁴ Further, while combining qualitative and quantitative approaches may allow for a more complete analysis,³⁰⁵ using the dual-method goes beyond the scope of this thesis, however certain aspects of quantification of results are employed. Nevertheless, this thesis could still provide reliability and validity in responding to the research question.

Some authors contend that qualitative inquiries that use social media are inferior to conducting interviews or focus groups, as the researchers could miss nuanced and subtle narratives, that are observable in real-time and interactive conversations.³⁰⁶ However, the analysis of content published on online forums does not mean that the researcher seeks quantifiable information *per se*, but could aim for discovering rich field of material, with which they could interact, analyse and construct meaning of.³⁰⁷ Other methodological limitations could be present in research that qualitatively analyse social media content. This includes selection bias, information and confirmation bias as well as confounding and emotional contagion.³⁰⁸ For this reason, it is important to effectively communicate those limitations of the study. In the case of this thesis, the positionality of the author should thus be emphasised, both with regard to the data collection and data analysis. While both of those are grounded in the scientific rigour, in the process of qualitative research the role of the researcher and their subjectivity should be acknowledged.³⁰⁹ This is especially important since in a thesis project like this I am the only person that coded the data, whereas it is advised that at least two investigators perform the analysis separately.³¹⁰ The researcher's background, personality or experience can always influence the understanding of the data.

4.4. Preparation phase: Incels.is as a source of units of analysis

4.4.1. Rationale: why this forum?

This study collected the qualitative data from the forum incels.is.³¹¹ This website was created in 2017 when Reddit, an online community comprised of forums called "subreddits" denoted by "r/" before the

³⁰⁴ *ibid.*

³⁰⁵ See: Bengtsson (n 301).

³⁰⁶ Alan Branthwaite and Simon Patterson, 'The Power of Qualitative Research in the Era of Social Media' (2011) 14 *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal* 430.

³⁰⁷ Mary A Caplan and Gregory Purser, 'Qualitative Inquiry Using Social Media: A Field-Tested Example' (2019) 18 *Qualitative Social Work* 417, 428.

³⁰⁸ *ibid.*

³⁰⁹ Prasad (n 297) 7.

³¹⁰ Bengtsson (n 301) 11.

³¹¹ See: 'Incels.Is - Involuntary Celibate Forum' (*Incels.is - Involuntary Celibate Forum*, 29 June 2025) <<https://incels.is/>> accessed 5 July 2025. The website moved from incels.me to incels.co after previous domains were suspended. It may be referenced under either name in other studies

name of the subreddit, started suspending several subreddits that were predominantly used by self-identified incels (firstly it was /r/incels, and then others followed, e.g. /r/Braincels).³¹²

According to the information on the website, it has, at the time of writing, around 31,000 members, almost 700,000 threads and above 16,000,000 posts. It has several tabs, divided into categories, e.g. “Must-Read Content” that consists of the content made by users considered the most important, “Inceldom Discussion” focusing on incel experience, as well as others focusing on hobbies and topics unrelated to incel. There is a section “Incel International”, that allows users to find posts and threads in their native language.

Incels.is, just as other social media forums’ or message boards’ architecture, allows users to share posts – pieces of content that typically consists of text, images, videos, links or a combination of those elements. The forum follows a hierarchical view of the online discussions (also known as conversation threading).³¹³ Each discussion is displayed as a thread – a series of connected messages that usually follows one topic or conversation. It begins with the initial post made by the author (called the original post) and is followed by sequential replies from various users. They are displayed in chronological orders, with newer contributions appearing after older ones. The forum uses “tags”, which are used as keywords or labels attached to specific threads – this allows users to categorise the discussions and make it searchable. There are different tags on incels.is. Users can apply them to indicate the subject matter, tone or type of discussion. The tagging system mostly consists of community-specific terminology and concepts (e.g. blackpill, ragefuel).

The website was deemed a good platform to conduct research on incels’ ideologies, language and identities. Remarkably, it has large numbers of comment threads, active membership base and extension links to user-generated essays and “Incel-Wiki” as well as “rules & FAQ”. Rules and FAQ consists of membership and moderation rules as well as frequently asked questions. Incel-wiki is a “repository of information regarding the manosphere at large and incels in particular”,³¹⁴ which visually reminds widely known Wikipedia. Additionally, incels.is functions as an independent website, which offers flexible rules as well as relative freedom of speech benefits. Beale et al. suggested that incels.is is an important location

³¹² Baele, Brace and Coan (n 267) 1670.

³¹³ More on the architecture of online discussions, see for instance: Pablo Aragón, Vicenç Gómez and Andreaks Kaltenbrunner, ‘To Thread or Not to Thread: The Impact of Conversation Threading on Online Discussion’ (2017) 11 Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media 12.

³¹⁴ ‘Incel Wiki:General Disclaimer’ (*Incel Wiki*, 15 February 2022) <https://incels.wiki/w/Incel_Wiki:General_disclaimer> accessed 5 July 2025.

within the broader manosphere, operating as “a distinct, sealed-off echo chamber of extreme ideas at the very end of the continuum from “moderate” to radical misogynistic beliefs.”³¹⁵

4.4.2. Data: why this sample?

Data collection stage consisted of identification and gathering of units of analysis from incels.is based on specific selection criteria. First, the category “Must-Read Content” was identified as the source that will allow to gather content considered the most important and valuable by the community itself. Secondly, this section’s threads were sorted by views, which allowed for the identification of the content with the biggest number of views and replies. This strategy allowed the research to focus on the most influential and widely seen content within the community. The approach should acknowledge the limitations of using view count as a primary sorting mechanism, as it may overrepresent sensationalist content or fail to capture emergent but important themes in less-viewed content. However, view count serves as a reasonable proxy for influence within the community’s discourse ecosystem. The content was scrapped from 18th to 21st of March 2025. The sampled data and its analysis are limited to everything that was posted up until this date.

As a result, 20 threads with the biggest number of views within the category of “Must-Read Content” were identified and collected. Since every thread had hundreds of replies, they were divided into pages on the website. Each page was downloaded as one file and inserted into MAXQDA software for data analysis. In sum, 167 documents (pages) were gathered. The sample was broad enough to showcase multiple themes emerging from the data, but at the same time it was small enough to allow for qualitative analysis within the available timeframe and resources of a thesis like this. The list with detailed information on the sampled threads is attached in the Annex.

4.4.3. Limitations of the sample

There are several limitations in studying online content produced on forums such as incels.is. The pseudonymity afforded to users allow them to be fully anonymous. For this reason, it is impossible to record or assess the demographic information.³¹⁶ White, cis-gender men could be assumed as the main demographic group that produces and follow the content on the website. According to the website itself, membership is open to heterosexual men over the age of 18 years old, who desire a romantic relationship

³¹⁵ Baele, Brace and Coan (n 267) 1672.

³¹⁶ Caplan and Purser (n 308).

but are unable to enter one, with women and LGBT individuals being banned with no exceptions.³¹⁷ Sometimes, it may be possible to identify the demographic information from the users' comments,³¹⁸ however in this thesis the main emphasis is put on the discourse present on the website, rather than the identities of its users.

Furthermore, while incels.is offers structured data amenable to systematic analysis, the manosphere itself represents a fragmented digital ecosystem comprising of numerous communities, platforms, and subcultures that regularly emerge, transform, and disappear. The choice to focus specifically on incels allows for analytical feasibility and data consistency. It also accounts for the time constraints of a thesis like this, as focusing on a smaller sample but exploring it deeper suits the limited time and resources given to this research. While not claiming to comprehensively map the entire landscape of the manosphere, the examination of incels.is can yield valuable insights into the mechanisms of gender-based harm on the Internet.

4.5. Preliminary coding phase and analysis

After creating a sample of units of analysis, the preliminary phase consisted of firstly, familiarising myself with the data. This meant that the material was analysed on a general scale to recognise the main themes before breaking the data into smaller categories. This allows for the first hunches to appear.

After initial understanding of the bigger picture, the second phase of preliminary coding could start. In simple words, to code the data is to attach labels to segments of data, that depict what each segment is about. Coding serves to organise large quantities of content into fewer text categories.³¹⁹ In this thesis an inductive approach has been utilised. It is a way of coding that is fully based on the analysed text – the researcher allows the codes to arise from the data. This is however informed by the research questions and the overall aim of the study as well as the researcher's background. Inductive coding is flexible, as the codes could be changed, merged, grouped or de-grouped in the analysis process. Essentially, the inductive analysis results in creation of new knowledge, starting with concrete and moving to general and abstract.³²⁰ This contrasts with deductive analysis, which uses previously determined categories and

³¹⁷ See: 'Rules and FAQ' (*Incels.is - Involuntary Celibate Forum*, 9 November 2017) <<https://incels.is/threads/rules-and-faq.799/>> accessed 5 July 2025.

³¹⁸ For example, Moonshot used this approach in a European Commission study, collecting data from incels.is using keyword selectors like "i live in" or "i am from" paired with European country names to identify community members located in Europe. See: RAN European Commission (n 253).

³¹⁹ Hsieh and Shannon (n 300).

³²⁰ Elo and Kyngäs (n 301); Graneheim, Lindgren and Lundman (n 301).

tests them on a sampled material, which mostly suits research based on hypothesis.³²¹ Most of the scholarship argue that qualitative data analysis uses induction, while quantitative data analysis uses deduction.³²² According to some authors, it is possible to apply both approaches in qualitative content analysis at the same time – deductive codes can be created and used to delve into the data and thus support the inductive analysis.³²³ Considering the nature of the analysed data, this research employed an inductive approach in order to allow the codes to emerge from the data itself limiting the possibility of simply testing pre-conceived notions.

4.6. Organisation: open coding and codebook development

After the preliminary coding has been finished, the material was ready for open coding and the organisation process. Open coding stage consists of further creation of inductive codes, the central purpose of which is to open the research inquiry widely.³²⁴ Subsequently, the list of categories or themes are created. Codes should be organised into a category when they are describing different aspects, similarities or differences, of the text's content that belong together.³²⁵ This is to group the codes together and reduce the number of categories by merging those that are similar or dissimilar into broader categories.³²⁶ The aim of creating categories is to provide means of describing the studied phenomenon and generating knowledge.³²⁷ When formulating the categories, it is the researcher that comes to a decision, through interpretation, which codes should be put in the same category.³²⁸ The process of forming general descriptions through the generation of categories is called abstraction.³²⁹ Open coding is an iterative process, meaning that the researcher should go through the codes multiple times, until they attain dependable results.³³⁰

The goal of the organisation phase is to develop a codebook.³³¹ It is a table that consists of the names of the categories, individual codes, descriptions of both, an example of the text that was labelled with this

³²¹ Hsieh and Shannon (n 300); Graneheim, Lindgren and Lundman (n 301). Forman and Damschroder (n 199).

³²² Elo and Kyngäs (n 301); Marilyn Domas White and Emily E Marsh, 'Content Analysis: A Flexible Methodology' (2006) 55 *Library Trends* 22.

³²³ Graneheim, Lindgren and Lundman (n 301).

³²⁴ Bruce L Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (4. ed., [Nachdr.], Allyn & Bacon 2002).

³²⁵ Christen Erlingsson and Petra Brysiewicz, 'A Hands-on Guide to Doing Content Analysis' (2017) 7 *African Journal of Emergency Medicine* 93.

³²⁶ See: Elo and Kyngäs (n 301) 111.

³²⁷ *ibid.*

³²⁸ Ian Dey, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A User-Friendly Guide for Social Scientists* (Routledge 1993).

³²⁹ Elo and Kyngäs (n 301) 111.

³³⁰ Graneheim, Lindgren and Lundman (n 301).

³³¹ Sometimes called a coding scheme or a coding list. See: Bengtsson (n 301).; Hsieh and Shannon (n 300).

code, as well as the number of times the code is referenced. Effectively, the codebook allows for the effective analysis, and it increases the reliability of the research.³³² The codebook can be found in the Annex.

4.7. Reporting of the results

This stage of the research brings the description of the data, specifically codes and categories created in the process of coding. Codebook serves as a crucial reference both for the researcher and the readers. The process is guided by the research questions, as the data serves to develop an answer to them. Overall, the result of qualitative analysis is a composite picture of the phenomenon being studied, displaying “conceptual depth through thoughtful arrangement of a wealth of detailed observations”.³³³

It should be noted that the performance of analysis in qualitative method is integrated into coding much more than in quantitative analysis.³³⁴ As there are no simple guidelines for data analysis, with variety of approaches and techniques for presenting the findings, it is important to appropriately summarise the data, identify and articulate the patterns and relations and relate the findings to other situations or other studies, putting them into perspective.³³⁵ Communicating the results of the research should be supported by evidence – quotes, codes and quantification should be utilised. While QCA goes beyond simple counting, this process allows for identification of patterns and contextualisation of the codes.³³⁶ Nevertheless, the analysis should not disregard certain content that only appeared once or a handful of times. This could also inform the studied phenomenon.

Certain criteria should be respected in the process to guarantee scientific rigour of the coding and analysis process, notably: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.³³⁷ While there are different levels of complying with those criteria, the next chapter, through the communication of results and their discussion, strives for compliance with them.

³³² Bengtsson (n 301).

³³³ White and Marsh (n 323) 39.

³³⁴ *ibid.* 39.

³³⁵ White and Marsh (n 323); Elo and Kyngäs (n 301).

³³⁶ Hsieh and Shannon (n 300) 1285.

³³⁷ White and Marsh (n 323) 38.; Bengtsson (n 301) 13.

Chapter 5: Results and discussion

5.1. Introduction

This Chapter focuses on communicating the results of the conducted research and subsequent analysis of them. The first section outlines the general characteristics of communications within incels' cyberspace under this study, while the second one goes in depth into the themes identified throughout coding process. Since this study employed predominantly an inductive approach to coding, several themes emerged from the data.³³⁸ Not all of them, however, are discussed in depth in the present chapter. This is because the analysis laid down here is guided by the research questions, that centred gender-based speech. Lastly, this chapter considers identified themes and patterns against the backdrop of the concepts of gender-based harm on the Internet and gender-based online hate speech in an attempt to answer the research questions.

Since terminological consistency and clarity should be established in the beginning of a chapter like this, considering the need for nuance in the incels-focused research, this study uses the term “incels” to talk about misogynist incels. This is because the following results has shown that incels on the forum incels.is predominantly engage in misogynistic speech. Further, since the speech on the forum relies on slang terms and code-words, it is advised that glossary of terms in Annex is consulted.

5.2. General characteristics of incels' communications

Analysis of incels' communications reveals recurring and interlinked themes. This includes widespread use of offensive language, specifically gender-specific language and overall gynocentric worldview; frequent expressions of hopelessness and despair; and reliance on pseudo-scientific and conspiratorial standpoints.

The prevalence of offensive language is characteristic of incels' cyberspaces. Similarly to other communities within the manosphere, the communications are free from any sort of taboos, language constraints, with the cyberspaces having minimal or non-existent moderation. While this is predominantly visible in the context of language about women elaborated on in the next section, this is also observable in the usage of racist slurs as well as homophobic and transphobic language. Notably, in this study 169 references to homophobic and transphobic slurs across 79 documents have been found. Most of them included the slur “faggot” and its different variants both in discussions between users

³³⁸ See: codebook in Annex.

identifying as incels³³⁹ and in the context of referring to people outside of the forum.³⁴⁰ Transphobic language appeared less frequently in the communications, primarily consisting of the slur "tranny" – a derogatory term targeting transgender individuals, especially transwomen. It should be noted that there is no clear demarcation between queerphobic, misogynistic and racist language, as all of them often interlink. For instance, one user says: “Im happy [...], but FUCKING LOL @ flexing subhuman brown tranny looking thai women, pure white women with a tight pink pussy or death.” This statement displays white supremacist sentiments along with misogynistic and transphobic slurs. Relatedly, this study observed 75 references across 49 documents to the n-word. White supremacist speech was also observed in the form of statements like “white worship is inherent in all humans” and “[t]hey are ugly and brown and if you are white, you are downgrading yourself genetically if a kid comes along” (said about South-Asian women). Overall, slurs and offensive language are used not only to offend others but are simply used as a somewhat of a filler word or stop-word in a sentence. This is further proved by the occurrence of insults and offensive language targeting users of the forum themselves, with statements such as “what type of illness do you have btw? you need to be lobotomized for how braindead you are tbh”, or „you fucking retarded bluepilled soyfuck coping faggot.” In general, gender-specific insults prevail, however, considering the broader context of systems of oppression, it is hardly possible to separate racist, misogynistic and queerphobic sentiments in spaces such as incels’ forum – this proves that it is necessary to treat it holistically and intersectionally. Gender-specific offensive language, being the focus of this thesis, will be examined in the next section.

The existence of offensive language should be linked to and treated as a partial cause of the prevalence of overall critical, cynical and judgemental sentiments in the incel cyberspace. While discourse on women and their behaviour is the most prevalent, incels also showcase negativity towards other men and their attitudes. Specifically, in this study it was noted that “cucks,”³⁴¹ “normies”³⁴² as well as other incels were the object of criticism. For instance, cucks are blamed for not being aware of women’s “nature” – one user claims, “[a]t this point, if a man doesn't automatically assume his ‘woman’ is pulling dirty shit, I hope he gets fucked over and eventually becomes homeless or commits suicide.” The same goes for normies (and “betas”) – “I strongly believe in shaming men for fucking fat ugly women. Why? Because

³³⁹ For instance: “I never implied you broke the rules. I just think you a borderline white knight faggot,” from thread no. 19 (see: list of sampled data in Annex).

³⁴⁰ For instance: „I don't get what foids find attractive about these twinks. These fucking femboy faggots get all bitches just for looking like that. I want to beat the shit outta him and mop the floor with him”, from thread no. 3.

³⁴¹ See: glossary of terms in Annex.

³⁴² See: glossary of terms in Annex.

they are literally part of the problem.” Non-incels are considered not to lead a very complex life and the critical sentiments stem from incels looking down on them. One user notes: “[n]ormies don't have very complex or purposeful, insightful thoughts, (I think), and so don't need to write about them. The stereotypical man or woman lives a life that can be described in some paragraphs,” Relatedly, judgemental attitudes are visible in variety of discussions. First, people’s looks are notoriously assessed, with appearance being graded on the scale of 1 to 10. Overall, 79 references across 49 documents, that mentioned grading of looks, have been noted in the present study. While those references included both grading men’s and women’s physical looks, incels pay attention particularly to their own level of attractiveness. For this reason, the code “how incels look” was applied 60 times in 23 documents. Those included instances when users talked about their own looks, but also when they commented on the appearance of other users.³⁴³ Meanwhile, this fixation with the appearance leads the users of the forum to consistently question someone’s else status as an incel.³⁴⁴ On the other hand, certain persons are considered “incels in denial”, supposedly not realising that their life circumstances make them incels. The assessment of Chad’s physical attractiveness and what makes one a Chad is also an object of discussions.³⁴⁵

Emotional expression emerged as an important theme in the communications, with two interconnected dimensions becoming apparent. Overall, mention of suicide was noted 107 times in 64 documents, while the expression of hopelessness was referenced 57 times in 38 documents. Suicide emerged as both a frequent topic of dark humour and a seriously contemplated option for many. Certain content is considered to be “suicidefuel”/”suifuel” – a word used to describe information that makes someone feel so hopeless or depressed that it could trigger suicide. For instance, one post shared data on people engaging in romantic and sexual relationship, which caused several users to comment on it being “based and suifuel pilld” or alike. Hopelessness was a prevalent emotional theme, typically expressed through the resigned sentiment that "it's over" for incels. This excerpt represents some of the experiences of feeling hopeless and deeply hurt by users on the forum:

³⁴³ For instance, „He is pretty good looking, but you're better looking. He mogs your eye area and a few other facial features, but you bone mog him (and everyone else on this forum).”, from thread no. 7.

³⁴⁴ For instance: „But tbh man you look nothing like the average incel from these pics. You mog these girls to oblivion and you're white.”, from thread no. 2.

³⁴⁵ For instance: “Tall, White, long mandible, lean face, godlike eye area, retard hair cut but as chad u cant do anything wrong its impossible to fuck up, perfect chin to philtrum ratio. as i said he has an average asymmetrical nose but thats it. hes young and has a deep voice aswell. You will never be able to rate men like foids but i say hes an 7.5-8.5/10”, from thread no. 3.

I've lost everything in life. Assuming i ever had something. But lost all my teeth at 18, was maybe a 1/10 left. Am 25 rn, have taken every drug besides meth for the last 5 years. No cope in the world could tell me i can get sober still and then live a happy life. My father (only person i ever liked) died randomly for no reason at an heart attack 3 years ago. 1 year ago i tried ropping, but failed. 8 Months ago i started taking meth everyday since. [...]

Thanks for the good laugh boyos with this post, i hope it shall be my last of 2024. At most i can "life" until end 2025. Until i have to face drug withdrawal, and im not going through the hell of going through 4 different hells for months, just to perma live in a perma depressing hell until i die alone at 80 as khhv. i hope i meet daddy again and no foids in heaven. besides to fuck them. if there will be some sort of afterlife dating market 2.0, i must have gone to hell. and god is a cuck.

Lastly, a final theme involved the appropriation of pseudoscientific and conspiratorial frameworks. Opinions about scientific research was referenced 33 times across 15 documents, primarily through selective citation of academic papers and data used to substantiate claims regarding women's purported "nature" and conduct.³⁴⁶ This also involved general doubtfulness toward surveyed data expressed by the commenters. Relatedly, 17 references to conspiracy thinking were observed across 12 documents, e.g. statements like: "Neuroscientists know this already but it's not a politically correct thing to say 'Women love pain,' so it's being silenced, like studies that compare IQs between races." Conspiratorial thinking is not only reflected in those, but in the several references to beliefs about "female nature," further explored in the following section.

5.3. Spectrum of gendered speech

Gendered language and a worldview that positions gender relations as central emerged as the most prevalent element in incel communications. As multiple themes arose from the data, 6 broad categories were subsequently created. Those include the following: "language about women", "incels on women", "women of colour/non-western women", "women's rights", "negative sentiments toward feminism" and "sex work and sex workers." Based on the analysis of those categories, this section outlines the spectrum of gendered language in incels' cyberspaces.

³⁴⁶ For instance, the reference to scientific research was involved in the discussion of the experience of pain in women, that was thus used to argue that women perceive pain as pleasure.

5.3.1. Language about women

Hostile and violent rhetoric about women pervades incel cyberspaces, characterised by the frequent use of various derogatory terms and references. Across 106 documents, conventional misogynistic insults have been observed 305 times. Those include speech that refer to women as “sluts”, “cunts”, “bitches”, “whores”, as well as words like “cumrag” or “fuckmeat”. Although offensive language is generally normalised within incel forums, misogynistic insults and slurs are disproportionately prevalent. What distinguishes incels’ spaces from mainstream media that are not necessarily free from conventional misogynistic speech, is the usage of multiple code-words and slang terms. While using slang and coded-communication are characteristic of marginal parts of the Internet that propagate radical ideologies, a lot of incels’ code-words are centred around women. Overall, incel-specific and non-conventional insults about women have been referenced 757 times across 151 documents. The table below shows those terms and their frequency:

Femoid/foid	536
Stacy	49
Toilet	41
Landwhale	36
Noodlewhore	26
Roastie	23
Hole	21
Becky	11
Gook girl	10
Sheboon	4

The term “foid”/“femoid”, a short for femanoid - combination of the words "female" and "humanoid", has been used the most. For incels, this word constitutes a synonym of the word “woman”. It is often used in speech that do not display otherwise offensive language. For instance, in one post the user contends that Joan of Arc “was an historical foid who lived during the Hundred Years’ War”. Others say: “foids hold a lot of governmental power”, “foids don’t like mature men”, “rice foids aren’t ‘cute’” and alike. This term and its usage dehumanise women. The conflation of women with foids leads to the understanding of women as less evolved, less intelligent and eventually less human.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁷ See: Chang (n 291).

Other terms have a similar dehumanising or objectifying function. This is mostly visible in the context of “toilet”, “roastie” (referring to the look of women’s labia), or “landwhale” (referring to overweight women) – terms that particularly function as body-shaming, fat-shaming and objectifying ways to describe women.³⁴⁸ Further, “noodlewhore”, “gook girl” (both used to talk about Asian women), “sheboon” (used to talk about black women) present both racist and misogynistic representation of women of colour. The notions of “Stacy” and “Becky” are assigned to imaginations of certain types of women and on the surface do not seem to indicate inherently dehumanising sentiment. However, they portray a representation of gendered spectrum of categories of women that ranks women according to essentialist understanding of womanhood, that does not allow for existing outside of the categories.

Apart from the above-mentioned terminology, dehumanising, objectifying, sexualising and violent speech has been further observed. Across 53 documents 103 instances of violent speech has been made. This notably included statements that wished death or physical harm on women. Dehumanisation and objectification have been noted with regard to statements such as “all women are scum parasites” (the former) or “women should be property” (the latter). Sexualisation was represented through speech that reduced women to their sexual attributes, e.g. “a man gives a woman who doesn't like him his resources in order to access her used up hole.”

In sum, the above-noted remarks prove that women’s personhood is overall denied through both the usage of specific words used to refer to them and more descriptive speech that together create a version of women as not real persons, but an objectified and dehumanised version of them.³⁴⁹ While explicit misogyny of some of the terms may be sometimes shocking, this is not an isolated and unique incidents of misogyny.³⁵⁰ It is another reflection of cisheteropatriarchal structures.

5.3.2. Incels on women

Incels’ spaces have proven to employ highly gendered worldview. The parent category “incels on women” itself represent a wide-ranging and embedded set of narratives that articulate how incels perceive, describe, and respond to women. In the organisation process, six broad sub-categories within the category have been created altogether referenced 434 times: “incels’ approaches to women”. “what is in women’s nature”, “what women are like”, “what women do”, “what women think about men”,

³⁴⁸ See: glossary of terms in annex.

³⁴⁹ See: Nussbaum (n 169).

³⁵⁰ Chang (n 291).

“women’s looks”. Each of these contains multiple, more granular codes, which allow one to trace distinct but overlapping narratives.

When talking about incels’ approaches to women, incels employ a particular positioning of themselves in relation to them. This is done primarily through rejection, avoidance and the overall feeling of unfairness. Women are constructed as inaccessible or unworthy, and engagement with them is framed as futile or punitive.

In the references to women’s nature, incels draw on biological determinism and essentialist ideas to conceptualise women’s qualities. Women are considered masochistic, narcissistic, incapable of monogamy, promiscuous, incapable of love and emotions or not intelligent. This category provides the ideological framework for justifying incels’ broader rejection of women – it shifts blame away from individual experience and onto an unchangeable “female nature,” providing fixed and satisfiable explanation for their experience of societal exclusion. The ideas behind women’s nature are closely related to descriptive notions of women’s features. The latter focus on their purported generalised traits – women are said to be evil, manipulative, entitled, shallow, abusive, attracted to violence and humiliation or considered to have high standards or being dishonest. Overall, this strips women of complexity of a human, with the tone being moralistic rather than biological, often blending anecdotal claims with broader accusations of deviance.

When incels comment on women’s behaviours, they are framed as actively harmful – they lie, falsely accuse men of, e.g. sexual violence as well as exploit and cheat on them. Relatedly, this is coupled with incels’ beliefs about women’s perceived attitudes and preferences regarding men. Women are believed to despise certain men and their physical features, with incels contending that they are invisible to women whatsoever. This serves as both diagnosis of incels’ problems and fuel for anger.

While women’s attractiveness is the object of different insults and speech employed by incels, as indicated in the previous section, this code was only used to represent instances where women’s looks were referenced in relatively matter-of-fact way. These comments often reflect incels’ preoccupation with female beauty, which includes relatively one-dimensional approach to women’s attractiveness. Incels often complain about purported unfairness on the dating market and how they struggle to date because of their unattractiveness due to women’s hypergamy. Paradoxically, their discussions of women’s looks consist of degradation of women based on them being overweight or disappointment that women that are considered “too ugly” find romantic or sexual partners.

Together, these codes construct a worldview in which women are simultaneously powerful and contemptible, desirable and despicable. This contradiction is central to incel ideology: women are blamed for incels' suffering, but their humanity is denied in the process. Overall, this contributes to the conceptualisation of women as a collective enemy.

5.3.3. Women of colour and non-western women

Although discussions of women's ethnicity and nationality are not constant, when present, they typically involve the hierarchical ranking of different racial and ethnic groups. Within the analysed sample, Asian women were the group mostly talked about – 40 times across 17 documents. This is related to the fact that handful of posts in the sample focused on incels going to Asia to acquire sexual or romantic relation. There are two main and interconnected themes observed when incels talk about Asian women – they claim that Asian women exclusively prefer white men over Asian men, and they allege their disloyalty to men of their own ethnicity. While black and Arab women were also mentioned in some discussions, the representation of them is rather minimal. This is also visible in the prevalence of the terms discussed in the previous sections. Overall, this is possibly caused by the posts that focused on Asian women within the sample. Nevertheless, the implicit reference and hierarchisation of women's ethnicities, that encompass various women's nationalities, should be acknowledged. For instance, one user notes “Not settling for a sheboon is understandable [...], but not settling for any other race is volcel”, suggesting that black women have a lower status than any other race/ethnicity. White supremacist and misogynistic standpoints are clearly noticeable in that discourse.

Incels discuss the topic of travelling abroad to find sexual or romantic relationships. The reference to this was noted 51 times across 23 documents. Certain regions are considered “heaven” for incels from the West – most notably Southeast Asia. This is further related to the concept of “SEAmassing”,³⁵¹ which is considered a chance for incels to acquire mostly sexual experiences with women, especially if the individual himself is a white person from the West. However, users disagree on the chances of success with women there, which supposedly depends on the ethnicity of incels themselves. One user note “I am a tacocel and tried in Philippines: plenty of matches with girls around my league. Looks like Asia is a paradise for incels it doesn't matter their as long they are not ricecels.” Overall, while not in full agreement, incels note that white men have a higher status in the mind of Asian women.³⁵² Relatedly, one may note that incels that decide to go to the other side of the world to acquire sexual relationship

³⁵¹ See glossary of terms

³⁵² This is related to the so-called “Just be White Theory” elaborated on in further section.

with women abuse underpinning racial and power dynamics issues. One user even noted that and contended that incels are far from being successful in dating “if they have to travel to a third world poor country and abuse the racial issues just to get a chance from 5/10 noodlewhores.”

5.3.4. Women’s rights and negative sentiments toward feminism

Gendered worldview that incels employ includes the discussion and reference to women’s rights and negativity towards feminism. Accordingly, users note that women acquiring equality in the sphere of political, economic or social rights was a mistake. This is expressed through statements like: “This is where it all went wrong. Letting women into college, letting women get jobs.”, “Giving them rights was wrong. It has caused more suffering then Hitler and Stalin combined.” Users blame men in the past that allowed women to gain emancipation and subsequently contributed to incels suffering, e.g. one user contend: “pathetic bluepilled cucks were the ones who raised them up and made them ‘equal’ to men (on a societal level of course, toilets never were and never will be equal to men biologically).”

The negative sentiments toward gender equality are related to negativity to feminism. Hostile attitudes with respect to feminism was visible 37 times across 27 documents. Out of those, the biggest observable trend was the consideration of feminism as the problem and cause of incels’ hardships. Statements like “Feminism is a disease that infects all Foids”, “Look what feminism and female empowerment has brought. Degeneracy”, “progressive feminism has infected the minds of many women in the west and made them that way” represent this narrative. Further, in line with essentialist beliefs about women’s nature, some users note that “feminism has just exacerbated [women’s] vile nature” or “Feminism itself is a psychopathic trait, where the woman uses emotional manipulation to victimize herself while humiliating the man for her own pleasure.” As indicated, gendered worldview is visible in the discourse that focuses on women’s socio-political positions and the anti-feminist standpoints.

5.3.5. Sex work and sex workers

Reference to sex work and women engaged in that industry displays another variation of fixation over women’s social roles. Overall, variety of sentiments that touch upon this topic have been referenced 43 times across 20 documents. A recurring theme has shown that incels present degrading sentiments toward pornographic actresses and prostitution in general. This was however caused by one of the posts in the sample predominantly focusing on that. Nevertheless, the comments showcase high level of sexualising and dehumanising narratives, e.g. one user say: “it doesn't matter how much money you make from doing porn. you will never take back the fact that your pussy got ravaged for the world to see. attempting to

have any standards is absolutely worthless. you are merely a service for men to regain post-nut clarity”. Some users talk about escortceling, that is using sex work services, as a viable option for incels, who are lonely, while others claim it is pointless as it does not replace a real romantic connection.

5.4. Incels’ belief system and coded communications

While previous sections provided a description of the patterns and trends of language about women in incels’ cyberspace, this section elaborates on the main emerging themes that focus on incels’ belief system and their way of codification of several messages. Nevertheless, it should be noted that those themes remain part of gendered worldview and complement incels’ standpoints elaborated on in the previous sections.

The first cluster, encompassing various incels’ beliefs observed within the study, displays interconnected theories that position romantic success as predetermined by immutable characteristics, particularly race and physical attractiveness. “Just Be White Theory” has proven to be the most referenced, with 94 instances across 32 documents. It establishes racial hierarchy within incel ideology, suggesting that white men possess dating advantages that should theoretically disqualify them from “true incel” status. As one user notes:

white men aren't playing the same game ethnic men are playing, whether they are incel or not, you can literally travel and change your SMV, a black guy goes to asian he still a black guy, he goes to Africa he's just another black guy. Lets not even bring up asian guys who have it the worse and their women are complete traitors.

Those sentiments are related to incels’ internal stratification of their ethnicities and overall racialised worldview. Within “Just Be White Theory” mentions, users make comments on the advantages of white men in Asia, which is tied to “SEAmassing” practices.

As indicated in Chapter 2, blackpill philosophy remains a backbone of incels’ worldview. In this study 40 instances across 28 documents were made to explicit instances of arguments based on blackpill or referring to this philosophy. Relatedly anti-bluepill sentiments were made 36 times across 26 documents. Those consists of several interconnected themes and sentiments, with users being more or less elaborate. Blackpill is often portrayed as a grouping of “truths” about life – one user noted: “Most incels adhere to the ‘black pill philosophy’, and a key ‘tenant’ of that is basing ones life choices and interpretation of observations, on cold hard logic.” “Bluepilled” individuals are hated and criticised for not realising the

purported true reality, e.g. one person observes: “I’m so happy that we do see the truth even the bad truth unlike this bluepilled people.”

Theorisations of women’s nature are visible in handful of concepts noted in the present study. This includes instances where hypergamy and 80/20 rule are mentioned,³⁵³ which are related to “Sub8 theory” and “Juggernaut law”. The former claims that men below the certain threshold (i.e. below 8 on a scale of 1 to 10) will not be considered desirable and will be ignored by women, while the latter theorises that unattractive women receive disproportionally large amounts of attention from men. Furthermore, incels often note that the world is gynocentric, that is, it is catered to women through prioritisation of their political and social standing. The acronym AWALT (standing for “All Women Are Like That”) further manifests incels’ perception of women as universally having the same basic underlying nature. Relatedly, incels use the phrase “women-are-wonderful-effect” – the purported phenomenon that people associate more positive attributes with women than with men.

What further remains symptomatic of incels’ belief system is the transformation of Elliot Rodger’s persona into a symbolic figure and subsequently a code-word. As indicated, Rodger’s terrorist attack in 2014 along with following violent incidents became important landmarks for incels. While Roger was not the only person that was “claimed” by incel community, it seems that his attack and the manifesto he published impressed the community that was slowly emerging around this time. Rodger's name has been linguistically integrated into community discourse through coded terminology. Overall, references to Rodger through his initials "ER" were documented 45 times across 28 documents. This includes words such as "going ER," "ERmaxxing," and embedded references like "hERoe" and "ovER", “Eating Rice”. Effectively, those phrases are used to describe or laud the acts of violence. One user says “if I was in his position I would go insane and go ER”. Relatedly, Roger’s persona was elevated to a role model, with 21 references to that across 13 documents. This normalises the acts of violence such as Roger’s attack, framing it as an ideological blueprint and role model behaviour. While it is difficult to assess the seriousness of the announcement to “go ER”, especially considering incels’ transgressive sense of humour, it remains clear that the code-words used by the community refer to violent behaviours.

Overall, the coded concepts and acronyms above create both the psychological conditions for radicalisation and a specific behavioural model for acting on that radicalisation. The frequency data

³⁵³ For instance: “Women are hypergamous by nature, thus always seeking a higher level then they currently operate on. And also the qualities of men and women are intrinsically different” from thread no. 13.

suggests these aren't peripheral ideas but central organising principles, with the most fundamental concepts (blackpill, anti-bluepill thinking) appearing consistently across the analysed content.

5.5. Interrogating gender-based online hate speech in the context of incels' communications

This study's main aim was to analyse incels' speech to increase the knowledge behind the understanding of gender-based online hate speech and gender-based harm on the Internet. This research puzzle essentially interrogates whether communities like incels must be considered when developing frameworks for understanding gender-based online hate speech. This section provides an analysis of this puzzle, bringing together the concepts laid down in Chapter 2 and this Chapter's discussion of the results.

As indicated, the Internet is not a neutral space gender-wise and gender-based harm is exacerbated by this medium. This is allowed through new paths for the harms to be facilitated and disseminated. In human rights context there are two main limitations of recognising gender-based harm on the Internet – the hierarchy between physical and speech-based harm as well as relatively limited approach to group-based harm of speech-based acts.³⁵⁴ This affects the conceptualisations of gender-based online hate speech. While the phenomenon has been increasingly addressed, it seems that one of the main struggles is the delineation between speech on the Internet deserving of being classified as hate speech and speech that, despite being harmful, does not reach this threshold. It is against this background that incels' communications should be analysed.

The nature of coded terminology and the belief system of incel community documented in this research demonstrate how spaces like this function not only as forums for seeking support and collectively expressing frustration, but also as environments that have created a picture of women that is profoundly contradictory. Women are portrayed through a lens of biological determinism that reduces them to their perceived sexual and reproductive functions, with language that treats them as objects, commodities, or subhuman entities rather than complete persons. The site is a source of conventional hostile speech as well as the source of misogynistic language, that uniquely dehumanises and objectify women. The terminology employed, ranging from "foid" to terms like "toilet," "hole," and "noodlewhore" reflects a deliberate effort to deny women's personhood and reduce them to their body parts or sexual utility. This extends beyond gender to encompass intersectional forms of harm, with language that simultaneously targets women's racial, ethnic, and other identity markers. This dehumanising framework is reinforced by beliefs about an unchangeable "female nature." Incels' construction of women contains a contradiction

³⁵⁴ Sjöholm (n 42).

that serves their ideological purposes: women are simultaneously depicted as having excessive social and political power while being fundamentally inferior and contemptible. They are blamed for wielding too much influence in society through feminism and gynocentrism, yet are also dismissed as shallow, entitled, and less intelligent than men. The portrayal becomes even more complex when intersecting with race and ethnicity.

In practice, incels' speech patterns and the nature of this content pose a challenge in framing and conceptualising gender-based online hate speech. The importance of context in evaluation of speech deserving or undeserving of being classified as hate speech have been emphasised in human rights context. In that regard, space such as *incel.is* remains difficult to assess. One may note that this website is a marginal and non-mainstream medium, that is based on offensive and transversal language, in-group humour and reference to slang terminology. Sometimes, the hate may be expressed in such a way that an outsider struggles to grasp the message. Thus, the context of this speech is that it comes from a marginal community, which, while having a "natural" adherence to misogynistic content, is not big enough to be problematic. Indeed, offensive speech is in principle protected under human rights law. Nevertheless, the assumption behind incels being simply a marginal Internet community does not fully recognise the gendered architecture of the Internet, its transnational nature, broader technosocial network of the manosphere and its relation to growing gendered polarisation and gendered disinformation. While there is no case before a human rights body that would touch upon incels' speech, the community has been increasingly framed as a threat by academic scholarship and media reporting. Perceiving incels as an individual and unique representation of harmful online misogyny may lead us to disregard it, while conceptualising the community against the backdrop of online gendered harm and male supremacy may be more useful to prove that marginality of this community should not be the only observation we make of it.³⁵⁵ While current approaches to online hate speech often focus on individual harm of hateful language, this research shows that the ecosystem of harm within spaces like *incel.is* is more complex. This calls for more nuanced and improved recognition of group-based harm of gender-based online hate speech. Trivialisation of the harm of speech-based acts contributes to dismissal of how women as a group experience harm of hostile speech that dehumanises, objectifies and sexualises them. Coded language and communication patterns complicate the identification and classification of hateful speech about women. Given that human rights-based evaluations are deeply contextual, a space for

³⁵⁵ See: Czerwinsky (n 4).

debate emerges over whether coded hate can be discerned by a regular person, particularly when it is veiled in irony, meta-humour, or slang and code terms. As a result, hateful content like that may be considered to not deserve moderation, regulation or prohibition. However, this does not recognise the possibility of the content transcending the boundaries of the community to mainstream foras and radicalising potential of this speech, along with its potential production of stochastic terror or dangerous “dog-whistle”-like communication.³⁵⁶ It has been noted that regulating and identifying speech like that as hate speech is incredibly difficult, this being both related to myriad of ways hate is expressed but also to path dependencies and regulatory choices.³⁵⁷ Furthermore, calling women “foids”, “toilets”, “Stacies” or “Beckys” or other terms like that creates a cognitive distance that enables increasingly extreme expression of hostility. Relatedly, coded language is a symbol of the speech possibly becoming more hateful with the passage of time. The specialised vocabulary of incel communities creates plausible deniability while still conveying misogynistic ideas.

As this research shows, conceptualisations of gender-based online hate speech should include nuanced perspective on incitement to violence and discrimination, which encompasses seemingly marginal standpoints. In human rights, hate speech against women deserves to be treated just as seriously as racist hate speech, with a clear obligation to combat it through variety of measures. Current frameworks of acceptable limitations to freedom of expression do not seem to encompass all the possible and necessary pathways that should be taken in the context of gender-based online hate speech. Evolving forms of online misogyny interlinked with different forms of oppression (e.g. white supremacy) present a challenge in finding a balance between freedom of expression and hate speech regulation. Considering the growth of Internet-based communications, this will be an ongoing struggle, which should be addressed in human rights context. For instance, it would be valuable for CEDAW Committee to adopt a General Recommendation that specifically tackles sexist/misogynist hate speech that puts a particular attention on its online version.

This qualitative analysis of incel forums reveals that gender-based harm online exists on a continuum rather than as isolated instances. The content produced within these communities demonstrates how misogynistic ideologies are constructed, reinforced, and normalised through specific linguistic practices.

³⁵⁶ Those are expressions that send one message to an outgroup while at the same time sending a second (often taboo, controversial, or inflammatory) message to an ingroup. See: R Henderson and Elin McCready, ‘How Dogwhistles Work’ in Sachiyo Arai and others (eds), *New Frontiers in Artificial Intelligence* (Springer International Publishing 2018).

³⁵⁷ Farrand (n 122).

Conclusions

In conclusion, this research has provided a comprehensive analysis of incels' cyberspace, treating this examination as a basis for exploration of the concept of gender-based online hate speech as an emanation of gendered harm on the Internet. By employing QCA, this thesis analysed incels' communications observed on incels.is and interrogated whether such communities must be considered when developing frameworks for understanding and countering online gender-based hate speech. Through the examination of incels' communications, this study pursued three interrelated objectives: examining how and to what extent such discourse informs the concept of gender-based harm on the Internet and online gender-based hate speech; analysing the nature of coded speech within these communities; and inspecting whether freedom of expression and hate speech frameworks address the specific challenges posed by this content.

Related to the first objective, this thesis firstly interrogated the concepts of gender-based harm on the Internet and online gender-based hate speech. The analysis established that hate speech, while remaining a contested concept, potentially leads to violence and/or discrimination, justifying state limitations on such speech. The examination of hate speech's online dimension emphasised its differences from offline manifestations, demonstrating greater propensity for rapid dissemination, audience radicalisation, and being affected by the gendered nature of Internet architecture.

Given the contested nature of hate speech's harmfulness and the relative lack of recognition given to gender-based hate speech, it was crucial to establish the mechanisms through which speech can cause harm, what gendered harm brings with itself and how it could be perpetrated through the Internet. This demonstrated that speech-based harm receives less serious treatment compared to physical harm due to inherent assumptions about their relative severity. Human rights law's distinction between group-based and individual harm further complicates this landscape, with the former receiving relatively limited protection.

Gendered harm should be conceptualised as existing on a continuum, with online manifestations representing significant exacerbations of existing inequalities. Online gender-based hate speech emerges as a distinct emanation of gender-based harm, yet despite growing attention, it lacks comprehensive recognition. This creates a persistent challenge in distinguishing between online content that genuinely constitutes hate speech and speech that, while harmful, fails to meet established thresholds. While this struggle applies to all forms of hate speech, the trivialization of harms experienced predominantly by women renders it particularly acute in the gender-based context.

Having the above in mind, incels' communications represent a challenge in framing online gender-based hate speech. Their discourse embodies clearly hostile and hateful commentary about women that systematically dehumanises, objectifies, and sexualizes them, creating an environment of sustained misogynistic expression. However, their spaces remain relatively marginal, potentially leading to considerations that their communications are highly contextual and insufficiently mainstream to constitute hate speech capable of inciting, advocating, promoting, or disseminating violence and discrimination.

This tension reflects broader inadequacies in current approaches to online hate speech. Human rights frameworks prioritise the free flow of information as a fundamental principle, treating speech regulation as exceptional. This research demonstrates that such approaches can result in insufficient recognition of ecosystems of gendered harm, where seemingly marginal spaces contribute to broader patterns of discrimination and violence. The marginality of incels' spaces paradoxically shields their content from scrutiny while their ideologies permeate broader digital and offline environments.

The second objective – the examination of coded nature of online speech – is closely related to the above considerations. Coded language remains a challenge in the detection and moderation of hostile and hateful expressions disseminated online. Incels' vocabulary demonstrates numerous ways through which the community spreads its ideology. The site is a source of several coded ways to talk about women employing specific derogatory terms, including "foids," "toilets," "holes," "noodlewhores," and "landwhales," alongside communications that present beliefs about "female nature" as facts or science.

This coded discourse creates cognitive distance that enables increasingly extreme expressions of hostility while maintaining a surface of rationality or humour. It is probable that it contributes to the creation of stochastic terror as well as "dog-whistling" narratives, that communicate harmful messages to sympathetic audiences while maintaining plausible deniability to broader publics. It is important to assess the potentiality of those code-words and patterns transcending the boundaries of those communities and going to mainstream cyberspaces and eventually to offline environments, without being classified as hateful and thus normalising hostility towards women.

The examination of the third objective – capability of freedom of expression and hate speech frameworks to address indicated challenges – displays that current approaches do not seem to comprehensively encompass all the possible and necessary pathways that should be taken in the context of gender-based online hate speech. This is both because of the relative underestimation of misogynist/sexist speech's

impact and because of the way it is conveyed online. Considering the growth of Internet-based communications, this will be an ongoing struggle, which should be addressed in human rights context.

Current frameworks struggle with the intersection of marginality and harm, failing to recognize how seemingly peripheral communities contribute to broader ecosystems of gender-based violence. The emphasis on direct incitement and imminent harm fails to capture the cumulative effect of sustained dehumanising discourse that creates conditions for violence while maintaining distance from specific violent acts. This represents a misunderstanding of how gendered harm operates in digital environments, where the architecture of the Internet enables new forms of collective harassment and ideological dissemination.

This thesis has achieved its three primary objectives. It has contributed to the existing body of literature by offering an analysis of online speech produced by one of the most popular groups within the manosphere. Human rights scholarship rarely approach hate speech through empirical analysis of a specific type of communications with an aim of informing the broader concepts. Thus, this thesis serves as a foundation for further studies that focus on online gender-based hate speech and gendered harm on the Internet. The findings can inform future efforts to promote more nuanced and improved recognition of those concepts as well as the understanding of incels as a community.

Nevertheless, just as any research, this thesis has its limitations potentially impacting the findings. It is based on QCA, which allows for certain level of subjectivity and flexibility possibly affecting the replicability of the research, compounded by single-person coding of the data. Additionally, the sample reflects a specific community with particular characteristics. However, by examining this form of online speech, the study provides deeper insight into marginal spaces that, despite appearing extreme, represent familiar patriarchal and male supremacist ideologies.

Several promising avenues exist for future research. Studies could examine the broader manosphere rather than focusing on one group, potentially through comparative analyses that might identify different patterns of speech and code-words to inform our understanding of gender-based hate speech. Further, comparing English-speaking and non-English speaking speech patterns could be a promising pathway. Additionally, research could also explore specific types of speech, e.g. it would be interesting to focus on the intersection of racialised and gendered speech in those spaces. Further, similar methodologies could be applied to other forms of online discourse to examine how gender-based hate speech contributes to gender-based harm online. Overall, the concept of gender-based harm on the Internet itself deserves

more attention and research, it could provide richer and more nuanced understanding of the continuum of gender-based violence.

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Annexes

Annex no. 1 – Glossary of Terms

Term	Explanation ³⁵⁸
80/20 rule	This is a reinterpretation of the Pareto principle, stating that for many outcomes, roughly 80% of consequences come from 20% of causes. It is related to the theory on hypergamy of women. Essentially, it is assumed that 80% of women have access to the top 20% of men in the society. This leaves 80% of men "left" with the rest of 20% women.
Agepill	The belief that age significantly disadvantages someone in dating, often claiming that after a certain age (particularly for men in their late 20s+), dating becomes much more difficult.
Alpha	A man at the top of the social status hierarchy.
AWALT (All Women are Like This)	Theory that claims that, although manifestations of women's nature may differ between individual women, all of them have the same basic underlying nature.
BBC (Big Black Cock) theory	Theory that claims that black men have an advantage over other races because of the size of their penis.
Becky	An average young woman, on a lower position than Stacy in terms of looks and social status
Beta	Men perceived as having "beta" traits - being seen as less dominant, assertive, or traditionally masculine. Contrasted with "alpha" males.
betabux	A term used to describe a man in a romantic relationship that is mostly predicated on him providing financial resources, housing and alike to make up for his nonattractive looks and/or status.

³⁵⁸ The explanations provided in the glossary of terms are a result of the analysis of the data and informed by the explanations provided by the incel community (e.g. on incel wiki) as well as the literature review laid down in Chapter 3.

Blackpill	The term is a part of a pill jargon from the manosphere, that represents the main philosophy within incel spaces. It argues that an individual's dating success is determined wholly by the physical attractiveness, which is predetermined when one is born. Thus, men who are "genetically inferior" cannot access sexual and romantic relationships.
Bluepill	The term is a part of the pill jargon from the manosphere, that represents a state of ignorance of "normies" that stems from the belief in mainstream media and conventional sources of information. A person that "swallowed" the bluepill does not realise the reality of men's situation and how the society is discriminatory against men.
Buxx	Slang for money or cash, derived from "bucks" (dollars) but spelled with an "x".
Chad	The archetypal man believed to be favoured by society owing to stereotypically "Aryan" good looks, genes, bone structure, hair and height.
Chadfishing	Portmanteau of the word Chad and catfishing (creation of fictional online persona or fake identity to deceive someone). Chadfishing refers to a deceptive online dating practice where someone creates fake profiles using photos of conventionally attractive men to prove that they wouldn't otherwise get using their real appearance.
Chadlite	A man that is below a Chad on the scale of attractiveness.
Cuck	A weak man who is exploited by their female partner and whose partner cheat on. The term "cuckoldry" is used to describe the phenomenon in general.
Currycel	Subset of ethnicels. Term used to describe someone who is on the inceldom spectrum due to having inherited some traits from ancestors from, e.g. Nepal, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan.
Dickpill	The belief that penis size is a determinant of dating/sexual success.
Escortcelling	Using sex work services as an incel, often framed as the only way to have sexual experiences.
Ethnicels	A term used in incel communities to refer to someone who attributes their dating difficulties primarily to their ethnicity or race. It's a combination of

	"ethnic" (meaning non-white in this context) and "incel. There are various categories of ethnicels, including: ricecels (incels of Asian descent), currycels (incels of Southasian descent), tacocels (Mexican incels), blackcels, MENAcels (incels from the MENA region) and others.
Fakecel	Someone who pretends to be, sees themselves as, or spends time defending incels, despite having sexual relationships.
Femoid, foid	Short for femanoid - combination of the words "female" and "humanoid".
Going ER	Refers to Elliot Rodger - a man that committed a terrorist attack in 2014 in California, United States. "To go ER" is to commit a similar crime as Elliot Rodger. It is used to describe or laud the act of mass murder or murder-suicide.
Gook	Derogatory term for people of East and Southeast Asian descent.
Gymcel	An incel that works out, believing that a muscular body will help in compensating for facial unattractiveness. Gymceling is a practice of working out as incel in order to acquire a muscular body in the hope of attracting women.
Hypergamy	The belief that women are evolutionary predetermined to "marry up"/"date up". Thus, women are believed to more selective when seeking a partner and will seek men relative to their previous partner. This means they will leave less suitable partner for one that is more attractive or have better socioeconomic status.
Inkwell	Sarcastic term used to describe incels to mock outsiders who are so unfamiliar with incels as to misspell the word or let autocorrect change it to the closest word in the dictionary.
JBpill (JB - jailbait)	A term to describe the concept that younger girls and minors are more attractive than adult women. "JB" means "jailbait", which is derived from the fact that engaging in sexual activities with a person under the age of consent will be classified as rape or sexual violence, resulting in potential prosecution.

Juggernaut law	The theory that the very most unattractive women receive a surprisingly large amount of attention from men, sometimes more attention than women of average attractiveness
Just Be White Theory	Theory that claims that being a white man provides significant advantages in dating across different countries and cultures. Notably, it claims that white men have an advantage in dating Asian women.
KHHV	An acronym for „kissless, hugless, handholdless virgin”
Landwhale	A pejorative and dehumanising term used to describe overweight women.
LARP (Live Action Role Play)	It is a genre of role-playing games in which characters are portrayed through physical action. In the incel spaces, the term is used to refer to instances when someone is pretending to be someone or something they are not.
Lay Down and Rot (LDAR)	A phrase claiming that self-development, positive behaviour or corrective actions are pointless, and that an individual’s situation cannot be improved.
Looksmaxxing	Word to describe attempts to improve one's looks to reach their greatest aesthetic potential.
Manlet	A man of short height.
MENAcel	It refers to someone from Middle Eastern or North African backgrounds who identifies with incels. A sub-category of ethnicels.
Mentalcel	Individuals whose incelness is caused by psychological factors.
Noodle-whore	A pejorative and dehumanising term used to describe Asian women.
Normie	Average person. Someone who is not an incel.
Oneitis	Unrequited love. A state of consistent romantic obsession with a person who is not in a relationship with one.
PSL (Puahate Sluthate Lookism)	A sequence of internet communities where people discuss looks theory, looksmaxxing and blackpill.
Racepill	It refers to the belief that race and ethnicity significantly affect someone's success in dating and relationships.
Ragebait	Content provoking anger or strong emotional reactions, often used to generate engagement, clicks, or to reinforce existing grievances and worldviews.

Redpill	The term is a part of the pill jargon from the manosphere, that represents ideologies claiming to reveal uncomfortable truths about relationships, dating, and gender dynamics.
Ricecel	An individual whose involuntary celibacy can be attributed to their East or Southeast Asian ancestry.
Roastie	Derogatory term for women. It refers to women's labia, implying that distended labia looks like a roast beef.
SEA girls	Women from South-East Asia
SEA maxxing	It refers to the practice of men (typically from Western countries) traveling to or relocating to Southeast Asian countries with the specific goal of finding romantic or sexual relationships, often based on the belief that they'll have more success there than in their home countries.
Sex haver	A catch-all term to refer to anyone who has had sex.
sexual market value (SMV)	concept that describes someone's level of desirability in the dating market. The term "sexual market" is considered to be a dating market.
Shitskin	A pejorative term used to refer to those with darker-brown skintones.
Simp	A term used to describe men who are perceived to invest too much into a woman without their reciprocity, e.g. their time, money or affection.
Slaying, slayer	A slayer is a man who can easily acquire casual sex with women. Slaying is a verb used to describe casual sleeping with women.
Stacy	A woman able to attain romantic and sexual relationships with Chads. Described as vain, unintelligent and obsessed with her appearance
Sub-8	Theory that claims that men who are not a Chad (are below 8/10) will have little to no romantic or sexual success. The name comes from the decile scale, which is a physical attractiveness scale of 1 to 10.
Suicidefuel	It refers to content, situations, or information that supposedly makes someone feel so hopeless or depressed that it could trigger suicidal thoughts.
To ascend	To leave incelism and access sexual relations with women. Acquiring sexual relations for money does not count.
To cope	It refers to coping mechanisms. For incels, "to cope" is to reject the harsh truth about the world, and adopt a less disturbing belief instead.

To mog	The act of dominating another person. A person who mogs others is called a mogger.
To rope	An euphemism for suicide, referring to death by hanging.
Toilet	Derogatory term for women.
Truecel	A term to describe someone who is doomed into incelldom due to unchangeable characteristics, mostly physical features.
Tyrone	A Chad that is black/of Sub-saharan African descent.
Volcel	Someone who is voluntarily celibate.
White knight	A term used to describe a "nice guy" obsessed with the idea of coming to a woman's aid.
Wizard	A man that turned thirty and have not experienced sex with women.
Women-are-wonderul effect	An alleged phenomenon that people associate more positive attributes with women than with men.
Wristcel	Refers to someone whose involuntary celibacy results from having thin wrists.
X-bait	Words ending with "-bait" are generally used to indicate that something is making one lured or made to feel a certain emotion. For instance, if something is a "ragebait", it means that it is making one feel rage, anger or fury.
X-fuel	Words ending with "-fuel" are generally used to indicate that something is instigating, boosting or fuelling. For instance, "suicidefuel" is used to say that something instigates anger, bitterness or anything that makes a person inclined to commit suicide. On the other hand, if something is "lifefuel" it means that it instigates positive emotions, making a person regain their faith in humanity.
X-maxxing	Words ending with "-maxxing" are generally used to indicate a series of activities that incels take to imprpove their lifes. For instance, looksmaxxing refers improving one's apperance, while moneymaxxing refers to attempts at becoming wealthy.

Annex no. 2 – List of sampled threads

The table displays the information about the threads that were sampled. The title of the thread given by the author of the post is displayed along with the number of views, replies, the number of pages of the thread, the date of the original post, the date of the last reply and the assigned tag.

	Name of the thread (original spelling)	Views	Number of replies in the thread	Number of pages	Date of the original post	Date of the last reply (as of 18.03.2025)	Tag of the thread
1	This is what every foid thinks about ugly men	179 000	450	10	3.05.2020	24.12.2024	It's Over
2	Roundup of Thailand Trip - girls, advice, conversation screenshots etc	160 000	448	9	11.03.2018	14.10.2024	LifeFuel
3	Holy shit chad posts 1 minute video of his face staring at camera and get half a mill views. Every girls is thirsting in comment section	159 000	670	14	13.11.2019	4.02.2025	JFL
4	Women gain sexual pleasure from the pain that is inflicted upon them	134 000	371	8	30.10.2020	16.03.2025	Brutal
5	Females are Psychopaths - A Socio-Historic Review	128 000	307	7	6.05.2023	17.03.2025	Blackpill

6	[Tinder Experiment] Ugly gymcel gets hot Tinder matches! [Spicy thread] [GTFIH]	122 000	484	10	14.01.2018	7.10.2023	-
7	[Tinder Experiment] 5'7 incel gets more than 40 cute matches in Asia in 1 day	117 000	371	8	26.11.2017	18.08.2023	-
8	The Life and Times of itsOVER (Legendary white incel slaying in Thailand)	113 000	439	9	10.07.2018	25.05.2023	-
9	Response to: "You're Not Entitled to Sex"	112 000	285	6	16.12.2018	10.11.2024	Blackpill
10	Balding is so terrifying that almost every famous/rich person gets a hair transplant (HUGE COMPILATION)	99 000	441	9	25.09.2020	22.04.2024	Blackpill
11	Incel charged with sexual assault for touching a womans arm	97 000	394	8	10.10.2019	9.07.2024	News
12	I insult women as chad and they continue talking to me and give me their number	96 000	266	6	28.04.2018	7.09.2024	Experiment
13	Inceldom is Actually a Blessing in Disguise (if You Let It Be)	88 000	363	8	25.03.2018	6.03.2024	Blackpill
14	Almost 200 Pornstars Say Size Matters (Brutal dickpill)	87 000	394	8	27.03.2022	26.01.2025	Brutal

15	r/IncelTears face reveal: meet AdvocateDoogy, the autistic behind the "Prove the Incel Wrong"	86 000	553	12	9.12.2021	3.03.2025	Soy
16	"Me [52M] just found out at least 4 of my 5 children [33F][30F][28M][24F][14F] are not mine. Wife [51F] wont say anything."	84 000	353	8	31.03.2019	30.12.2024	It's Over
17	SCIENTIFIC PROOF that the order of importance is: Race > Height > Face > Money	83 000	240	5	9.07.2018	1.02.2025	Blackpill
18	MY LANDWHALE GOT 10+ LIKES LESS THAN A MINUTE AFTER SETTING THE ACCOUNT	81 000	310	7	30.12.2024	20.12.2022	Blackpill
19	In 2013 and oldcel teacher shot himself after a student he loved got with Chad, he made a website	78 000	312	7	20.12.2022	16.04.2024	-
20	Data on people having sex, virgins, etc. (WARNING: SUICIDEFUEL)	75 000	353	8	30.01.2020	13.01.2025	RageFuel

Annex no. 3 – Codebook

Code name	Definition	Example of a quote	Frequency	Number of files the code was used in
I. Gender-specific speech and gendered worldview				
Language about women	This parent-code refers to speech that was used to describe women, including their behaviours and qualities.			
Conventional misogynistic insults	This code refers to language that used hateful, misogynistic and/or sexist language toward women. This includes segments that talk about women using the following insults: "slut", "cunt", "bitch", "whore". While those words sometimes are referred to men on this forum, this code excluded the segments that used those insults against men. Some segments assigned with this code used other insults	"Again these bitches eat, wipe their mouths and declare they've done nothing wrong."	305	106

	against women (e.g: "cumrag", "fuckmeat", "piece of shit", "meatcunts"). This code also includes statements like "I hate women", "fuck women".			
Incel-specific and non-conventional insults	This parent-code refers to instances where incel-specific words or code-words/slang terms are used to describe women.			
Gook girl	Instances where the word "gook" is used to refer to a woman.	"It's not difficult to impress subhuman gooks in some third world shithole."	10	8
Hole	Instances where the word "hole" or "meathole" are used to refer to a woman.	"but all women are used loose holes nowadays..."	21	17
Sheboon	Instances where the word "sheboon" is used to refer to a woman.	"Im not ascending with sheboons i want my own race"	4	2
Roastie	Instances where the word "roastie" is used to refer to a woman.	"hope this roastie dies in a fire or some freak accident"	23	18

Toilet	Instances where the word "toilet" is used to refer to a woman.	"Toilets can be very cruel when they try. I think it was written by a woman."	41	27
Becky	Instances where the word "Becky" is used to refer to a woman.	"Though it's not enough to get Becky in your bed anyway."	11	8
Noodlewhore	Instances where the word "noodlewhore" is used to refer to a woman.	"cope, noodlewhores are the best looking foids out there"	26	13
Landwhale	Instances where the word "landwhale" is used to refer to a woman.	"Anytime I go out in public I see obese landwhales with at least average and even above average men."	36	23
Femoid/foid	Instances where the word "foid" or "femoid" are used to refer to a woman.	"well, if its pain foids want i will certainly give them that."	536	132
Stacy	Instances where the word "Stacy" is used to refer to a woman.	"Stacy is so out of your league you don't exist and can ignore the existence of non Chads."	49	31

Dehumanisation	This code refers to language that dehumanises women. Dehumanisation is understood as instances where women are reduced of their human qualities and dignity. This include animalistic comparisons (calling women “whales”, “parasites”, “monkeys”, “apes”, “bugs”, “insects”), but also suggestions that women are not humans/persons at all.	"All women are scum parasites and every single male who doesnt record his actions 24/7 in case of a rape accusation is just asking for it."	33	26
Objectification	This code refers to language that objectified women. Objectification is understood as instances when a woman is reduced to the status of a thing or commodity, rather than a human being. This includes comparing women to: “cum dumpsters”, “sex toys”, “used goods” as well as referring to women as having quality (like products) or having compliance levels.	"Fucking dumb slutty cunt whore foids only liking big nigger cocks because they are fucking cum bucket ass fucked cunt dumb whores"	18	14
Sexualisation	This code refers to instances where women are overtly sexualised. Sexualisation is	"if it was a chad he could have grabbed her tit with	29	25

	understood as the reduction of women to their sexual attributes and their sexual behaviours as well as treatment of them solely as an object of sexual desire.	one hand and pussy with other and say hey bitch im gonna rape you today and she would be all wet bringing him to her home where she would spread all her holes for him"		
Violent speech	This code refers to speech that expressed the wish to commit violence against women, including but not limited to expressions of a desire to inflict suffering, death threats, descriptions of physical harm, encouragement of assault, violent retribution fantasies, and statements expressing pleasure at the thought of women experiencing pain or death.	"All women deserve to be brutally raped by my incel prick and then strangulated afterwards."	103	53
Incels on women	This parent-code is a category for all codes that refer to incels' belief and approaches to women's behaviours, qualities/features, and their nature.			

<p>Incels' approaches to women</p>	<p>This sub-category refers to instances where users express their strategies, methods, or philosophical stances regarding how incels should interact with or relate to women.</p>			
<p>Women should not feel entitled</p>	<p>This code refers to instances where users argue that women are not entitled to various rights, protections, or considerations. It primarily captures discourse that emerged as a counter-response to arguments that "men are not entitled to sex." Users employ this strategy to challenge what they perceive as women's sense of entitlement by claiming women should not expect or demand certain things. The most frequently mentioned item that users argued women are not entitled to was personal safety, though the code also encompasses other rights and protections that users believe women unfairly expect or demand.</p>	<p>“Personally women need to know they are not entitled to ANYTHING! The lack of accountability is one thing, including womens lack of self awareness but entitlement is total garbage. I know I’m not entitled to sex but if I give respect it’s a mutual exchange to give respect back or your just an asshole, women need to know this. Like I always saw your feelings are inadequate. So if I’m</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>6</p>

		going to fucking slave I'm not doing shit for a single cunt. I know it's over but it's better to be angry and know the truth than to be "free" and live a lie"		
Avoiding and not needing women	This code refers to instances where users advocate for or express beliefs about the futility or harm of pursuing relationships with women. This includes statements promoting avoidance of women as a strategy, assertions that romantic or sexual interest in women is pointless and claims that there are no good women in the world.	"the best thing to do as incel in public it's to avoid looking at any foid's eyes or even at her body cuz if she notices you are FUCKED"	18	14
Women have unlimited options in dating	This code captures instances where users claim that women possess an abundance of romantic and sexual opportunities with men. This includes statements asserting that women have easy access to multiple partners, face no scarcity in dating prospects, or can effortlessly attract male	"Females honestly live life on tutorial mode. You can fucking be deformed and still have guys hitting on you."	10	7

	attention and commitment. These claims position women as having disproportionate power and choice in the dating market compared to men.			
The approach of men to women in the past	This code refers to instances when the users talk about the past treatment of women and how the society evolved. The language used is focusing on how women were distributed among men. The users talk about the past as days of "violence and rape" and consider that if the "social contract" is not in place anymore, men may have to go back to those times of "barbarism".	“Men reformed themselves and created societies with laws and codes of conduct because it benefited the collective, especially the collective male populace, this was the function of "patriarchal societies". To manage a safe and fair distribution of resources, and that includes sexual and reproductive resources.”	7	3
It's better to be with a woman, who does not have sexual experiences	This code refers to instances where users advocate for pursuing relationships with sexually inexperienced women. Users	“Fuck what normies and women say, a young virgin woman would	6	5

	<p>justify this preference by arguing that women without prior sexual encounters lack a basis for comparison and are therefore less likely to evaluate their current partner unfavourably against previous experiences.</p>	<p>absolutely make for a better life partner because they don't have the experience with 200 hundred other guys to compare you against. People also pair bond better with fewer partners — after so many relationships, people don't feel love like they did initially seems to me.</p> <p>There's a reason why men all over the world from all period in history champion virgin women. Too bad that's been tossed out the window with feminism along with society having enforced monogamous</p>		
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		relationships. The rich get richer the poor get poorer applies to sex now too.”		
Women are at fault for destroying men's lives	This code captures instances where users attribute responsibility to women for causing significant harm or devastation to men's lives. This includes claims that women deliberately ruin men through various means and that women derive pleasure from causing it.	<p>“All over some foid leading an old lonely, intimacy-starved Truecel on and then dropping him like a sack of shit which lead to this snowballing, family wrecking tragedy.</p> <p>She was playing him as she was already with Chad, which Christopher knew about, leading him on like this and giving the man false hope then snatching it away along with his career and reputation is twisted. Gut feeling is she told him she wouldn't be with him, and</p>	4	3

		then shopped him to school authorities when he kept messaging her. Or, and I'm inclined to go along with this theory, her mum found her phone and told the school.”		
Incels approaching women to annoy them	This code refers to instances where users advocate for or describe deliberately harassing women through unwanted approaches. This includes recommendations that unattractive men should intentionally make women uncomfortable through persistent attention.	“Fuck that cunt. This should make non-chad men want to approach even more, to piss those whores of. It's awesome when they have their days ruined simply by a guy talking to them.”	3	3
Women should not be trusted	This code captures instances where users express or advocate for general distrust toward women.	“What I took away from this is to never trust a foid.”	3	2
Women can't be incels	This code refers to instances where users argue that women are categorically unable to experience involuntary celibacy or	“And cuckolds like Jackbud wonder why we say femoids can't possibly	2	1

	possess legitimate understanding of incel experiences.	be incel? They can stuff their fucking face, never work out, have a shit personality, have unreasonably high standards, and they'll STILL manage to find the perfect partner.”		
Women are useless	This code captures instances where users characterize women as having no use as well as them being replaceable.	“And let's face it, women are useless anyways, so I guess it's pointless to rekindle the relationship. This is why a lot of "lesbians" eventually end up with men. They have to cash in on male utility eventually.”	2	2
Women have no idea how easy they have it than men	This code refers to instances where users claim that women live easier lives than men but remain unaware of their advantages.	“Women are delusional — they have no idea how easy they have it compared to their male	2	2

		equivalent. Any evidence they do see to the contrary of their own wrong world view they reject out of hand and call “incel logic” and other hollow insults.”		
Women should not be put on a pedestal	This code captures instances where users criticize the practice of idealizing or excessively revering women. This includes arguments that other incels wrongly elevate women to an unrealistic status and calls to stop treating women as superior beings.	“This is what guys who are deep blue pill end up like, they do everything "right" by society and still end up alone. They end up losing their shit because their whole life they put pussy on a pedestal and eventually they can't lie to themselves anymore. You can't be a hopeless romantic and an ugly guy”	2	2
Women's purpose is to serve men	This code refers to instances where users express that women's primary or sole	“Their only use is to serve men so we can develop	2	2

	function is to meet men's needs and desires.	society, but they don't even want to do that.”		
It is in control of women to make men happy	This code captures instances where users place responsibility on women for men's emotional and sexual satisfaction.	<p>“IT WOULD BE SOO EASY FOR THEM TO FUCK US NOT EVEN FUCK US, EVEN JUST A HANDJOB MANG. A 5-MINUTE HANDJOB WOULD INSTANTLY CURE OUR DEPRESSION AND MAKE US VERY HAPPY.</p> <p>It is 100% in the control of women to make us happy and healthy, yet they don't want to do that. That's why I hate them. It takes them literally 0 effort to give us even a mere handjob.”</p>	2	2

<p>What is in women’s nature</p>	<p>This sub-category refers to instances where users make claims about inherent, biological, or fundamental characteristics that they believe are intrinsic to all women</p>			
<p>Women are masochists</p>	<p>Instances where users claim that women derive pleasure from experiencing pain, particularly in sexual contexts. This includes assertions that women naturally enjoy physical or emotional suffering and that masochistic tendencies are inherent to female psychology or sexuality.</p>	<p>“It's common knowledge that all women are masochists but most say it's 100% due to psychology, rather than neurology, when in fact it's a mix of both, leaning more heavily toward flaws in foids' brain processes.”</p>	<p>18</p>	<p>8</p>
<p>Female nature</p>	<p>Instances where users invoke the concept of "female nature" as an explanatory framework for women's behavior or characteristics. This includes both detailed elaborations on what users consider to be women's essential nature and brief references that criticize or condemn</p>	<p>“Damn, i thought i was blackpilled on the female nature, but this completely blew me away. Having all this evidence right in front of my face all collected in one place is really an hiroshima nagasaki pill.</p>	<p>11</p>	<p>8</p>

	"female nature" without specific explanation.	It's innocent good natured men like me who used to think women were good and virtuous who can be the most easily betrayed by these evil creatures. Not anymore, though."		
Women have high sexual market value	Instances where users claim that women possess inherently superior "sexual market value" compared to men. This concept relates to users' belief that women have greater desirability and leverage in romantic and sexual exchanges.	"Women have inherit worth, that landwhale has more SMV than every Chad on the planet combined."	9	7
Women don't feel pain	Instances where users assert that women lack the capacity to experience genuine physical or emotional pain.	"Foids essentially do not feel pain. Pain is meaningless to them, like color is meaningless to a colorblind man."	7	3
Women are narcissistic	Instances where users characterize women as inherently narcissistic, including claims	"When they actually express pain by crying or	7	5

	that women are excessively self-focused, crave attention and admiration.	<p>screaming, its usually just to get attention or help.</p> <p>When they are alone they dont do shit.</p> <p>You can see this in little girls already.</p> <p>They fall over and then they FIRST look around for a person to target and then they cry AT that person for attention.”</p>		
Women are not capable of monogamy	Instances where users claim that women are biologically or psychologically incapable of maintaining exclusive romantic relationships. This includes assertions that women's natural state is promiscuity, and that historical monogamy only existed through external enforcement.	“It's only when monogamy is enforced by religion and legality (stoning to death for adulterers), that women will marry their SMV (Sexual marketplace value) match.”	7	5
Female promiscuity	Instances where users specifically invoke the term "female promiscuity" when	“modern society actually celebrates and endorses	7	6

	<p>discussing women's sexual behaviours and nature.</p>	<p>female promiscuity and cheating on men, so that great investment you made isn't even guaranteed to be solely yours to enjoy JFL. Men have literally no motivation to be "good people", anyone who thinks people should be "good" for the sake of "being good" is an illogical idiot that doesn't get how reality actually works.”</p>		
<p>Women enjoy causing suffering</p>	<p>Instances where users claim that women derive pleasure from inflicting pain or distress on others, particularly men.</p>	<p>“Yes they enjoy seeing men in pain. They will say this is because of revenge for patriarchy or dumbfuck shit but I think it's really because, like any</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>1</p>

		bully, they are insecure and need to feel better about themselves by laughing at the misfortune of others.”		
Women are psychopaths	Instances where users characterize women as having psychopathic traits or tendencies by nature.	<p>“Very typical female behavior. This short quote contains multiple of the psychopathic traits I mentioned.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. She hates being held accountable for her actions 2. She stalked the guy who said that to her ex-partner (how else would she know he even said that in her absence) 3. She kept stalking him for years because shes a vindictive cunt. How else would she know he 	5	3

		<p>cheated? When he cheated she fucking creamed herself. You can virtually feel her schadenfreude and passive aggressiveness: "Fun fact: He also cheated on her years later." This is what "revocation of conditional release means." She cant let go. I bet she is still stalking the dude online to this day.</p> <p>4. I have no evidence for this, but from experience, I would not be shocked if she somehow destroyed the dudes relationship or made him cheat somehow (Its as easy as getting another woman to fuck</p>		
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		him and telling his gf that she deserves better so she starts being a cunt to him).”		
Women are incapable of love	Instances where users characterize women as having psychopathic traits or tendencies by nature.	“Foids aren't capable of loving others. They'll lust after the Chaddiest of Chads but the foid only loves one person: herself.”	4	4
Women are not intelligent	Instances where users claim that women lack intellectual capacity for complex or critical thinking.	“it's because they were historically used only to advance the population and watch the children when the father was out working, they didn't have any reason to possess critical thinking because they didn't need it for watching kids.”	3	3

<p>Women are parasitic in nature</p>	<p>Instances where users characterize women's essential nature as parasitic, including comparisons to organisms like leeches that survive by exploiting host organisms.</p>	<p>“Not only are women psychopaths, but they are also parasitic in nature. They latch onto men like leeches, draining them of their time, energy, and resources until there is nothing left. They use their feminine wiles to gain control over men, taking advantage of their kindness and generosity. They have no sense of loyalty or commitment, hopping from one man to the next like a parasite, leaving a trail of destruction in their wake.”</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>4</p>
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<p>Women's existence is externalised</p>	<p>Instances where users claim that women's sense of self and ability to function depend entirely on external factors and stimuli. This includes assertions that women lack internal motivation or self-direction and require constant external validation or input to maintain their existence or identity.</p>	<p>“If their entire existence is externalized, then the solution to all their problems is external. Hence, they buy a lot of trash to comfort their unending desires. They are like black holes that stop existing once they run out of things to consume”</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>1</p>
<p>Women are reckless</p>	<p>Instances where users characterize recklessness as an inherent trait of women's nature.</p>	<p>“Maybe this is a psychopath trait, maybe I'm just rambling. Oh yeah, this falls under recklessness, doesn't it? I mean, who in their right mind will wife a woman who looks like that? If she were the same age but 50</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>1</p>

		years ago she would have turned into a cat lady.”		
All women are lesbians	Instances where users claim that all women are lesbians or primarily attracted to other women.	“And I think every guy in the world now knows they are lesbians. I'd argue, they are not even attracted to men, just a specific idea of one.”	2	1
Women don't feel emotions	Instances where users assert that women are incapable of experiencing genuine emotions or can only display shallow, superficial emotional responses.	“The emotion. I agree that men are more emotional, I always felt that their emotions were genuine and stronger, whereas women seemed to overdo it wildly, I could see how shallow they were.”	3	2
Women hate children	Instances where users claim that women have a natural aversion to or hatred of children.	“The historic record is very clear: Women fucking hate children XD. Like, holy fuck, do they ever harbor a hatred of	1	1

		children. When studying this topic, you better brace for blackpill impact. The wikipedia articles on infanticide and the history of abortion alone read like a long version the “total nigger death” cospasta, only that it’s real and it’s women killing babies.”		
What women are like	This sub-category refers to descriptive statements about women's general characteristics, personality traits, or behavioural patterns.			
Women are evil	Instances where women are described as evil, cruel, heartless, demons or other terms alike.	“This kind and extent of female cruelty is genuinely terrifying to me in its inhumanity. Moreso than a thousand ERs combined.”	39	23

<p>Women are attracted to violence</p>	<p>Instances where women are described as enjoying violence, both in the context of violent behaviours that they see and violence that they experience themselves.</p>	<p>“For example you mentioned later on that in gore videos women seem to be more tough than guys in a weird way. I can 100% support this, when women get beaten up by guys in these videos, the commenters always note how well they take it. I remember one where this chinese dude caught his wife cheating and started whipping her with a belt full force and she didnt even flinch.”</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>10</p>
<p>Women are not honest about men</p>	<p>Instances where users claim that women are deceptive or dishonest when expressing their preferences, opinions, or experiences regarding men and dating.</p>	<p>“TBH its not even a matter of being honest at all, women just aren't self aware enough period to even come to these</p>	<p>11</p>	<p>7</p>

		realizations, much more be honest enough to admit to them”		
Women are manipulative	Instances where users characterize women as inherently manipulative in their interactions with others	“I believe women don't have a sexual libido. Women have a libido for MANipulation.”	7	3
Women have high standards	Instances where users claim that women maintain unrealistic or excessively demanding criteria for potential romantic partners.	“It’s honestly insane how choosy women are versus men. Obviously men have an ideal they prefer too, but the difference is men still feel attraction to I’d say even average women and are readily willing to compromise on that ideal — but that’s clearly not how it works for women. It’s either a true Chad or they feel no lust.”	6	5

Women have a victim complex	Instances where users assert that women habitually adopt the role of victim in various situations, whether genuinely warranted or not.	“What the actual fuck? This is proof that women are just begging to be "victims" atp.”	6	5
Women are attracted to being humiliated	Instances where users assert that women are naturally drawn to degrading treatment and find humiliation appealing or arousing.	“This would make sense objectively though, because when you think about it all women want is chad and to be humiliated and degraded by him is bigger to them than being embarrassed or whatever by an incel (which they could care less about in general.)”	5	3
Women are entitled	Instances where users characterize women as having an unjustified sense of deserving special treatment, privileges, or outcomes without corresponding effort or merit.	“Foids love to throw around the word “entitlement” when criticizing people but they are the most entitled people on the planet. They	4	3

		feel entitled to just about everything and they think they deserve it, meanwhile other people, according to them, deserve literally nothing, even though they work harder and build the society they live in”		
Women don't feel empathy	Instances where users assert that women lack the capacity for empathy or genuine concern for others' wellbeing.	“If only foids cared about the damage they cause unfortunate, lonely, and unlucky men. Damn this world.”	4	3
Women are privileged	Instances where users claim that women are inherently privileged and enjoy preferential treatment in society.	“foids are extremely privileged. they can do anything and get away with it.”	3	2
Women are not good mothers	Instances where users assert that women lack the qualities, instincts, or capabilities necessary for being a good parent.	“All the nurturing features we attribute to mothers can only be found in fathers. Provision, care,	3	2

		<p>heck- even cooking. So many mgtow fathers and even</p> <p>my own father have stories about their wives horribly misfeeding their kids. My mom raised my siblings on breakfast cereal and ice cream until my dad intervened. I recall another mgtow father on a forum saying he was on a business trip and his children called him and asked if they could have real food when he comes back.</p> <p>This is very common behavior.</p> <p>So why do children love their mom more? From</p>		
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		<p>what I have seen it is essentially brainwashing by the mom. The mom triggers the dad on purpose,</p> <p>then portrays him as the bad guy to the children. My own mother, blunt as she ever is, simply told us kids: "Your dad is evil, he may not seem like it but I know him, hes evil deep down."</p>		
Women are shallow	Instances where users characterize women as lacking depth, focusing primarily on superficial concerns, and being excessively self-centred.	"well foids are shallow cunts tf do you expect, we need the taliban out here"	4	4
Women are abusive	Instances where users claim that women engage in abusive and murderous behaviour toward others.	"We have plenty of finding at this point that show that women are just as violent as men and that	2	2

		the majority of child sexual abuse is committed by women. Even when it comes to sexual assault, women get the highscore.”		
What women do	This sub-category applies to instances where users describe specific actions, behaviours, or activities that they claim women typically engage in. This focuses on observable or alleged behaviours rather than personality traits.			
Women lie	Instances where users characterize women as dishonest or deceptive. This includes claims that women engage in lying and assertions that women are fraudulent.	“It’s crazy how women will gaslight and insist it’s no big deal for men just fucking lol Sometimes I wonder why they bother with these lies, everybody knows.”	11	9

<p>Women exploit men</p>	<p>Instances where users claim that women take advantage of men for personal gain.</p>	<p>“These whores use this to their advantage. If they can't get free shit from the man then they will cuck the man into submission so he can purchase all the things for her child so she doesn't ever have to spend a penny on her own spawn.”</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>5</p>
<p>Women can accuse men of anything</p>	<p>Instances where users assert that women possess the power to make accusations against men, particularly regarding sexual assault, that will automatically be believed regardless of evidence.</p>	<p>“now the foid just has to say he has been abusive towards her and accuse her of multiple assaults/rapes and he won't see his last child ever again”</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>Women give birth to children that are not their partners</p>	<p>Instances where users specifically blame mothers for perpetuating traditional gender roles and expectations.</p>	<p>“The percentage of cheating foids having babies with other men are</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>2</p>

		surprisingly high - probably.”		
Mothers enforce gender stereotypes	Instances where users specifically blame mothers for perpetuating traditional gender roles and expectations.	“If you research this, a high number of prisoners are raised in single motherhood homes. Almost everything women say is projection. So when women complain about how gender is a social construct, keep in mind that it's mothers, not fathers that enforce gender stereotypes.”	2	1
Women put men in life-threatening situations	Instances where users claim that women's actions or behaviours create dangerous circumstances that threaten men's physical safety	“Women put men in potentially life-threatening situations just by existing and being stupid whores, knowing that you are the one who	2	2

		will have to be accountable for her stupid behavior and put your life on the line for her. They won't feel anything if they see someone else destroy you, while trying to make it seem like you are the one who is a threat.”		
What women think about men	This sub-category captures instances where users make claims about women's attitudes, opinions, preferences, or mental processes specifically regarding men			
Types of men women prefer	All instances where users make claims about the categories or characteristics of men that women find attractive or desirable. This includes assertions about specific physical traits, personality types, social status, or behavioural patterns that users believe women prefer in romantic or sexual partners.	“Despite being between 20-25 year old these dumb whores are so blinded by chads look. Fucking shallow cunts won’t ever love us like this”	37	28

<p>Women don't care about unattractive men</p>	<p>Instances where users assert that women are indifferent to or actively hostile toward men they perceive as physically unattractive.</p>	<p>“Being incell means that I accepted the reality that women don't like unattractive losers like me. I can't even ask girls out I don't want to because just talking to girls in real life is weird and they will destroy my soul if I get attached to them.”</p>	<p>18</p>	<p>9</p>
<p>How women treat men</p>	<p>Instances where users express observations, opinions, or judgments about women's general behaviour and conduct toward men.</p>	<p>“Women do not view men holistically. Men are placed on a linear spectrum that ranges from “money” to “penis.” You either benefit her materially or sexually. If you don't benefit her, you may as well be dead. Case in Point: Many men report being left by their women</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>5</p>

		the second they fell on hard times.”		
Women don't appreciate men	Instances where users claim that women fail to recognize, acknowledge, or value men's contributions, efforts, or positive qualities.	“They can only push so far before there is backlash. They are the weaker gender overall, not just physically, but also mentally and in terms of what they can build and maintain. They truly think they would be fine in a world with no men. It's laughable they don't see how much they depend on men for small and big things.”	4	2
Women are with men for their money	Instances where users assert that women's romantic relationships with men are primarily motivated by financial gain rather than genuine affection.	“A woman is only going to be with them for superficial reasons anyway. In fact that is the	3	2

		case for lots of normies as well.”		
Women’s looks	Instances where users evaluate, describe, or comment on women's physical appearance and attractiveness. This encompasses discussions of women's bodies, facial features, or overall aesthetic appeal, including but not limited to attractiveness ratings and body-shaming comments This code applies to appearance-focused discourse that is presented in a relatively matter-of-fact manner rather than overtly hostile language.	"to be fair her face is fucking amazingly good looking for a fat cunt. But this just proves once again that you can be a 350 lb landwhale and still get more sex more relationships and have more value than an ugly male"	31	20
Women of colour/non-western women	This parent code captures instances where users specifically discuss women of colour and women from non-Western backgrounds. This encompasses any discourse that singles out or differentiates these women from white or Western women, regardless of the nature of the commentary.			

<p>Gradation of women's ethnicities</p>	<p>Instances where users talk about the differences between different ethnicities and races of women. This includes sentiments that talk about the users' preferences, but also when they hierarchise certain women of different identities (based on nationality, ethnicity etc).</p>	<p>"i'm polish and don't support racism, tho in general polish girl are easy, not SEA level easy but nevertheless "</p>	<p>19</p>	<p>11</p>
<p>Asian women</p>	<p>Instances where users specifically reference or discuss Asian women as a distinct group. This includes assertions about Asian women's romantic and sexual preferences, particularly claims that Asian women exclusively prefer white men over Asian men, allegations about Asian women's disloyalty to men of their own ethnicity, and any other generalizations or observations specifically targeting women of Asian descent.</p>	<p>“Just being a white is good enough for these asian noodlewhores, they worship whites like god. Moreover, they have very twisted sense of male masculinity, many of them are crazy for tranny looking prettyboys.”</p>	<p>40</p>	<p>17</p>
<p>Black women</p>	<p>Instances where specifically black women and their purported traits are referred to.</p>	<p>"Niggress world wide take great pleasure in sexual pain inflicted upon them..</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>8</p>

		<p>They possess absolutely NO Moral skills, and quite frequently even kill some of their own young. Unfortunately, they usually produce somewhere close to a dozen offspring, with a typical sow producing generally 6 to 10 piglets from an almost equal number of "Baby Daddys" that refuse to accept any responsibility or provide financial support. While Human couples tend to produce only a small number of children and devote their energies</p>		
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		<p>and resources to seeing that they are raised properly,</p> <p>Niggress are biologically programmed to spit out as many bastard miniature skins as possible with little regard for who donates the DNA."</p>		
Arab women	Instances where specifically Arab women are referred to.	<p>"i couldn't say the same about sandnigress tbh every time there's some euro tourist, he always get a ton of whores thirsting over him and trying to be his gf. and i am talking about mainland original arabians and not the one of the west maybe i am generalizing a lot "</p>	1	1

<p>Women's rights</p>	<p>Instances where users discuss women's rights in a critical or oppositional manner. This includes arguments that granting rights to women was a historical mistake, assertions that women's rights should be revoked or restricted, and expressions of opposition to women's legal equality or social freedoms.</p>	<p>"Where modern soyciety went wrong was trying to put women (who are naturally submissive) into positions equal to or above men."</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>9</p>
<p>Negative sentiments toward feminism</p>	<p>Instances where users express critical, dismissive, or hostile attitudes toward feminism as a movement, ideology, or set of beliefs.</p>	<p>"It was the whole point of feminism. Women didn't want to have to marry for financial support. The problem is : being a provider has been the main incentive most men could give to women in order to convince them to marry them. If marriage is based on physical attraction alone, then a huge dissymetry</p>	<p>37</p>	<p>27</p>

		<p>happens as very few men are sexually attractive. So if men can't attract women with resources or sex, then what is left ? They have to present themselves as pseudo-friends (emotional tampons), comedians (jestermaxxing) or servants (yesm'ladymaxxing)."</p>		
Sex work and sex workers	<p>Instances where users discuss sex work and women engaged in the sex industry, mostly including pornographic performers. This encompasses general commentary on prostitution as a phenomenon, reflections on the sex industry, and instances where users draw parallels between sex work and other relationship dynamics, such as</p>	<p>"Lol do you know how ironic it is that this is an extremely normie sounding statement, like when they say - "you can't buy love" and romantic relationships LITERALLY FUNCTION UNDER A</p>	43	20

	<p>modern dating practices or romantic relationships.</p>	<p>MODEL OF PROSTITUTION. Its just "covert prostitution". The difference between a man taking a woman out on a date that costs \$500 to get sex, and a man simply paying said women \$500 directly to get sex, is SEMANTICS. At the end of the day \$500 was spent in the effort to get sex. Just yesterday a female co-worker of mines said that she couldn't "lay down" with a man that was stingey when it comes to spending money on her, I laughed and told her to listen to what she just said and how is that any</p>		
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		different than prostitution, she got quiet and walked off. Everything on this planet is basically bought and sold in some form, but please go ahead, tell me WHAT GOODS I CAN'T BUY WITH MONEY.”		
II. Incel belief system	This parent code encompasses instances where users reference, discuss, or elaborate on specific theories, concepts, and ideological frameworks that are characteristic of incel communities.			
Just Be White theory	Instances where users refer to or discuss "Just Be White" theory, which posits that being white provides sufficient advantage in dating to overcome other perceived deficiencies. This includes claims that white incels cannot be considered "true incels" (trucels) because of their racial	“It’s the just be white game. Currycels cannot do this”	96	32

	privilege, as well as counterarguments challenging or refuting this theory.			
Blackpill	Instances where the blackpill philosophy is explicitly referenced. It includes instances when users explain blackpill concepts, defend it or argue in its favour. It does not include every mention of the term “blackpill”.	“the blackpill saves more lives than any bullshit normies try to push to us”	40	28
Anti-bluepill	Instances where users express explicit opposition to or criticism of "bluepill" thinking and individuals perceived as bluepilled. This includes instances when users elaborate on what is considered “bluepilled” thinking.	“telling incels to improve themselves by putting in effort and taking showers is the definition of bluepill you dont think we have tried that already it doesnt work incels lose normies win get that thru your thick skull”	36	26
Hypergamy, 80/20 rule	Instances where the concept of hypergamy as understood by incels is referenced and discussed, along with instances where the rule 80/20 is referenced. This includes	“stop complimenting these women, it makes them want to go for chad even more and commit	23	19

	mentions of female hypergamous behaviour and invocations of the 80/20 principle that claims 80% of women pursue the top 20% of men.	more hypergamy, allowing them to keep their high standards and continue their degeneracy”		
Gynocentrism, gynocracy	Instances where users reference the concepts of gynocentrism or gynocracy as understood within incel ideology. This includes claims about society being organized around women's interests and assertions about female-dominated society.	“seriously though, this is disgusting. just another example of gynocentrism. wahmen always victims, men evil. so predictable at this point.”	10	8
All women are like that (AWALT)	Instances where users employ or discuss the acronym "AWALT" (All Women Are Like That) or its underlying principle.	“They all make the same fuckin dumb joke and the same exact words. I never believed in AWALT more than I do now.”	10	8
Sub8 theory	Instances where users reference "Sub8 theory," which relates to claims about attractiveness thresholds below which men are considered undesirable to women.	“If only it was true as I can't imagine a more painful experience than fucking a sub8.”	10	7

<p>Juggernaut law</p>	<p>Instances where users discuss or reference the "Juggernaut law," which theorises that the most unattractive women receive disproportionately large amounts of attention from men, sometimes even more attention than women of average attractiveness.</p>	<p>"I've told you guys about juggernaut law countless times. You had to have seen pig woman experiment by now. What were you expecting? You thought it was all hyperbole? You thought it was just a meme? Nope, it's reality. Juggernaut law can't be overstated."</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>Women-are-wonderful effect</p>	<p>Instances where users reference or discuss the "women-are-wonderful effect" (WAW), which refers to the phenomenon that people associate more positive attributes with women than with men.</p>	<p>"Again, this is counter intuitive for most normies because they were raised by women who indoctrinated them with women-are-wonderful efect. But for me, who's mom was not present, cold</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>1</p>

		and abusive, I was spared such biases.”		
III. Elliot Rodger	This parent-code refers to codes that focus on Elliot Rodger's persona.			
Terminology that references Elliot Rodger	Instances where Elliot Rodger's initials "ER" are used as an incel-specific code-word to describe certain behaviours or expressions. This include using it as a verb ("going ER", "ERmaxxing"), noun ("ERfuel") or putting the initials inside other words ("hERoe", "ovER") as well as using his initials as capitalised first letters of random words ("Eating Rice", "Emergency Room").	“Having 4 daughters is already fucked up, and then finding out they aren't even yours after raising them...He should just go ER on his family tbh”	45	28
Elliot Roger as a role model	Instances where Elliot Roger is mentioned, i.e. as a role model, example, his life, looks or crimes are discussed. This includes when incels are called "ERs" or "Elliot's".	“No. If St Elliott decides it's my time to join him in incel heaven then so be it.”	21	13
IV. Incels’ expression of feelings	This parent-code encompasses instances where users articulate or communicate their			

	emotions, personal experiences, and emotional responses to their circumstances.			
Mention of suicide	Instances when users talk about suicide and suicidal ideation. This includes instances when users use the phrase "suicidefuel" or "suifuel" - words that are often used in reaction to specific information, indicating that something is so depressing that "fuels" suicide.	"Drowning is said to be a very unpleasant and painful way to go. That reminds me of a photo another user posted here some time ago. Fortunately I saved it. Another option would be to buy a bunch of heroin or fentanyl and overdose. Won't just be painless, it'll literally be blissful."	108	65
Hopelessness	Instances where users express the feeling of hopelessness, sadness, sorrow and the willingness to give up on life. It includes instances of self-depreciating language and undervaluing oneself.	"Cant laugh at him knowing we are all on the same track to slowly losing our sanity due to being denied a natural right in what is supposed to be a modern society."	57	38

V. Homophobic/transphobic language	<p>Instances when users use homophobic or transphobic language. This predominantly includes the use of the word "faggot" in variety of context, but also other hateful words and references to LGBTQ+ persons.</p>	<p>"What a faggot. Probably fuckin queer just doesn't know it. He will get to have heaps of sex with sluts before he decides that though, dog cunt."</p>	<p>169</p>	<p>79</p>
VI. Offensive language towards other users of the forum	<p>Instances when users use offensive language toward other users on the forum. This includes the usage of violent speech as well as usage of slurs.</p>	<p>"Call me an fakecel again you bitchy faggot"</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>20</p>
VII. Grading of looks	<p>Instances when users grade looks on the scale from 1 to 10. This includes grading of one's own looks, but also of other people.</p>	<p>"Based on this photo she's no more than 5/10"</p>	<p>79</p>	<p>42</p>
VIII. Sentiments toward men or men's attitudes	<p>This parent-code refers to instances when users present different sentiments, notably criticisms, toward men and their attitudes.</p>			
<p>Criticism toward "cucks"</p>	<p>Instances where users criticise "cucks".</p>	<p>"Cucks are just as dumb as the foids who say that, because they seem to be just as oblivious about how important men are. I</p>	<p>35</p>	<p>16</p>

		<p>think foids and cucks are just the ones we see the most on social media because they dont get banned or shadow banned, and they make the most noise. I'd say 80%-85% of foids and 25%-40% of leftist men took over most social media when it comes to gender discussions. Luckily we have twitter that is more balanced, and private groups on facebook, but we need a popular video platform like youtube or tiktok that isn't cucked to set things off to a new level."</p>		
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<p>Criticisms toward other incels/people on the forum</p>	<p>Instances of criticism toward other users on the forum.</p>	<p>"Fuck this guy, first of all he is a volcel, because he could probably land some landwhale in Britain. Second, it's just pathetic spend so much time on this forum as a fakecel, just to later carry on, use JBW to create new neglected ricecels (his son and the potential husbandus of the noodlewhores)."</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>13</p>
<p>Negativity toward normies</p>	<p>Instances where users express negative attitudes toward normies or criticism toward their way of living.</p>	<p>"Yeah fuck him. We incels honestly need to raid these normie scum comment sections with hate and ignite cyber warfare."</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>15</p>
<p>Criticisms toward pick up artists</p>	<p>Instances where users express criticism toward Pick-up Artists.</p>	<p>"ultimately, PUA is primarily a grift which preyed on lonely males,</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>2</p>

		and I'm not sure that there's much to gain from defending it on an incel forum when they're its primary target"		
Reference to MGTOW	Instances where MGTOW or their standpoints are referenced.	"I also admire your reverence for the old school Mgtows and MRA's; yes they brought forth a lot of awareness on the insidious dynamics of relationships, and so much other good stuff. I don't know why people are trying to tear each other apart over a "cope" or two, when there's vast notions, observations and hypothesis that are basically right ."	4	4

Reference to committing violence (against non incels)	Instances where users refer to committing violence against non-incels.	"I want to punch this man and light him up with a gasoline tank and watch his body burn"	4	4
IX. Reference to conspiracy	Instances where users express conspiratorial thinking or suggest that widely accepted information, narratives, or data have been deliberately falsified or manipulated. This includes claims that historical facts, scientific findings, or social phenomena are not as they appear to be or as "everyone has been made to believe." This includes references to phrases like "Jewish propaganda".	"Cancer cure aleredy exists, Its held in a goverment lab and CIA documents, Its because they make money on programs to rake in money like curing and stuff but its not the actual cure, Big Pharma needs its money Yaknow, Thats why every effective real medicine is outlawed or kept in a lab somewhere or storage unit away from prying eyes aswell as the tools."	17	12

<p>X. Reference to and opinions about scientific research</p>	<p>Instances when users refer to and analyse scientific research or survey data. This also includes doubtfulness toward results of survey data or research papers.</p>	<p>"These types of studies are unfortunately close to worthless. Surveying people is not a good data collection method. People lie, especially about sex. Women tend to underreport the sex they have and men overreport it. Any survey where you ask people about the sex they have is flawed, and I just cant take it to be an accurate depiction of reality."</p>	<p>33</p>	<p>15</p>
<p>XI. Reference to online dating "experiments"</p>	<p>Instances where users discuss or report on self-conducted "experiments" involving the creation of fake profiles on dating platforms and applications. These experiments are designed to test hypotheses about attractiveness and dating success by</p>	<p>"I did a tinder experiment with him 3 years ago, i got matches but not one of them wanted to meet up. 18 matches in 10 days sucks especially if you</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>14</p>

	comparing response rates and interactions across profiles with varying levels of physical attractiveness.	swiped everybody. I set my location to somewhere in the US. I also set my height to 6'4". The guy is actually only 5'10" iirc”		
XII. On sexual violence	This parent-code refer to instances where users discuss, reference, or express opinions about sexual violence in its various forms			
Opinions about rape	This code captures instances where users express their perspectives, beliefs, or attitudes regarding rape, including the endorsement and perpetuation of rape myths or discussions of the nature of the cause of rape.	“I've always said these whores love being raped. They complain about rape because it takes always that little sense of respect they think they have”	15	9
Scepticism about sexual violence	Instances where users dismiss, minimize, or express complaints about sexual violence being reported or taken seriously by society. This includes assertions that women overreact to sexual misconduct and	“One day they will say that we are guilty of telepathic rape. It will be a thing one day. You visually undressed her and	13	9

	claims that soon every behaviour will be considered sexual violence.	visually raped her. We are not far from such a thing.”		
Sexual assault false accusation	Instances where users talk about false accusations when it comes to sexual violence.	“foids make a lot of rape false accusations and sexual assault false accusations and everybody believes them.”	3	3
Sexual abuse of minors	Instances where users mention sexual abuse of children or adolescents.	“do you guys reckon I could fuck thirteen year old girls in japan? what are the chances? are they on tinder or do you go on highschool buses and ioi them then ask for date?”	2	1
Women get lighter sentences for sexual assault	Instances where users claim that women get lighter sentences for sexual assault.	“Foids always get lighter sentences for sexual assault.”	1	1
Sexual assault is a made-up category	Instances where users claim that sexual assault is a category made-up by women.	“nothing is ever SA, it's a made-up foid category”	1	1

<p>XIII. On travelling abroad to engage in sexual and/or romantic relationship</p>	<p>This parent code encompasses instances where users discuss traveling to foreign countries, particularly developing nations, with the explicit purpose of engaging in sexual or romantic relationships with local women.</p>			
<p>Travelling abroad to sleep with/get women</p>	<p>Instances where users discuss international travel specifically aimed at acquiring sexual or romantic encounters with women. This includes sharing advice about destinations where users believe women are more accessible or "easy," and discussing strategies for leveraging advantages as foreign visitors to obtain sexual relationships.</p>	<p>“If you don't have to go to Thailand to work and just want to spend money you should mention Philippines. You can stay forever on tourist visas, it's probably twice as easy, and girls there HATE condoms. Cebu and Davoa city are cheaper than BKK, too.”</p>	<p>51</p>	<p>23</p>
<p>SEAmassing</p>	<p>Instances where users discuss or reference "SEAmassing" - the practice of maximizing one's romantic or sexual success by traveling to or relocating in</p>	<p>“I will SEAmass so fucking hard in a year my dick will fall off.</p>	<p>31</p>	<p>13</p>

	Southeast Asian countries. This includes advice and strategies on how to deal with “SEA girls” and discussions of the perceived advantages of dating in the region.	If it won't work It will be me who will fall... from a bridge.”		
White men in Asia	Instances where users discuss the perceived romantic and sexual advantages that white men enjoy with Asian women. This includes assertions about white men's dating success in Asian countries, claims about Asian women's preferences for white partners, discussions of racial privilege in those contexts, as well as counterarguments challenging these assumptions.	“Must be nice to be white and have a guaranteed solution to all your problems: go to Asia. The only exceptions are severe manlets or sub 3/10 faces.”	13	9
Finding a wife abroad	Instances where users discuss seeking long-term romantic partnerships or marriage with women from foreign countries.	“I’ve seen guys in both PH and Thailand do that, they go out and find a wife, sort it out and basically become an honorary Asian”	6	2

XIV. On love and relationships	This parent-code encompasses instances where users discuss romantic love, intimate relationships, and partnership dynamics with women.			
Sexual/dating market is unbalanced and unfair	Instances where users characterize the dating and sexual landscape as disadvantageous or inequitable, particularly toward men. This includes assertions that dating dynamics favour women disproportionately, claims about unfair advantages in romantic competition, and arguments that the "market" for romantic and sexual relationships operates under biased or imbalanced conditions.	“This is very true. Women would not have this overinflated market if other guys would stop with all the attention and willingness to stoop so low.”	22	7
Transactional nature of relationships	Instances where users describe romantic relationships as fundamentally transactional or exchange-based rather than emotionally genuine.	“All relationships are transactional and you have to give something. Chad gives looks, normie gives buxx.”	4	3
It’s better to not be in a relationship	Instances where users argue that men, particularly incels, should avoid pursuing	“to realize that you're better off escortcelling	5	4

	<p>romantic relationships because genuine loving partnerships are allegedly impossible or unattainable.</p>	<p>than being in a monogamous relationship and having a family is actually a very black pill to swallow.</p> <p>it's also a very black pill to swallow that humans are indeed not social beings. most people know that everything is transactional, but ya the fact that we're not social beings is pretty black pilling</p> <p>i guess this is what society wanted anyway. the atomization of men. so ya whatever might as well roll with it"</p>		
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<p>Incels wanting love</p>	<p>Instances where users express desire for romantic love and emotional connection, or genuine intimate relationships.</p>	<p>“I want love from a cute woman and sex. That’s the only thing I want. Her looking at me with love, laughing with her, making love, traveling with her. I literally feel sick now as this will never happen”</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>Love does not exist</p>	<p>Instances where users assert that romantic love is not real, genuine, or possible.</p>	<p>“A foid is only physically attracted to you (or "loves" you) because subconsciously in her mind that entails her offsprings having better genes. However, it's all just lust at the end of the day, and "love" truly doesn't exist... just a figment of our imaginations and movies</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>3</p>

		telling lies about being "love" being real.”		
Falling in love with liberated women is not possible	Instances where users claim that genuine romantic love cannot develop with women who are sexually liberated.	“The truth is that we kind of dodged a bullet. In a world where females are sexually liberated, falling in love is just a disaster waiting to happen.”	1	1
XV. On race and ethnicity	This parent-code encompasses codes that were applied in instances where race and/or ethnicity were discussed and referred to.			
Racist language	Instances when racist language is used, most predominantly when the n-word is used as well as statements that consist of racist sentiments that consider one race as better than another or use racist violent language.	"The world is out of control, niggers everywhere, I saw a nigger reach for a popular scandinavian beer in the beer fridge just last wednesday, Should be taken outside and beaten the fuck up, Niggers and	75	49

		<p>aboriginals have bullied me all my life so when one die online i just laugh xD</p> <p>Now theres a difference between niggers and blacks, Blacks can behave, NIGGERS CAN NOT!"</p>		
Gradation of incels' ethnicities	Instances when white supremacist sentiments are expressed, that is language that portrays white persons or "white traits" as inherently better and supreme in relation to other people.	"All subhuman tbh. Only aryan girls matter."	20	11
White supremacy	Instances when users refer to different ethnicities that have different effects on men's capability to find relationships. This includes the expression of unfairness of the treatment of certain men's ethnicities by women.	"as a black guy, I'm probably even less attractive to SEA girls than western ones which says a lot. So, if any blackcels or other ethnics can share their	14	10

		experiences, I'd really like to hear it."		
White people's higher status in the mind of Asian people	Instances when users say that Asian people, specifically women, treat white people as if they have a higher status.	"Its probably because in east asia white is seen as high class and fancy. Its just pure betabuxxing. An incels could sign up for an sugar daddy website and get the same results because they want money."	7	6
Who is considered white/black/brown	Instances where users discuss or debate racial and skin colour categorizations, particularly focusing on who is included or excluded from being considered "white," "Black," or "brown."	"to me there is only 3 colors. 1.white 2. brown and 3. nigger color. but the truest white race that God wanted to have in charge of the earth are the northeast whites from europe and the German whites. Since almost everyone became a Jew	5	1

		sympathizers then now only Americans who are racist and in the mountains and against niggers altogether are the truest whites"		
XVI. On incelism and incels	This parent-code encompasses instances where incelism and incels are discussed about and referred to, either through conversations around incel identity, incels' looks, their theories and expressed sentiments.			
How incels look	Instances where users discuss how incels look. This includes both assessment of one's own looks but also other incels or people who are considered incels.	"I would say he is better looking (I guess it would be a matter of preference). I mean, he looks more natural and less "gay vampire" at least. His bone structure is better.	61	23

		<p>A pic of him at 16, he looked like he belonged in a boy band.”</p> <p>His bones are all natural. Top tier jawline and zygus.”</p>		
Questioning someone’s status as an incel	Instances where users challenge or express skepticism about another user’s identification as an incel.	<p>“You’re right low-tier normies are invisible and treated like trash by Western women. I’m not denying your hardship buddy boyo. Just really don’t think you’re truecel nor incel at all for that matter. Just a really failed normie. Saw your lookism thread, your height and frame is shit not gonna lie. Still a solid 4/10.”</p>	35	22

Incels in denial	Instances where users claim that another individual is an incel but is unaware of or refuses to acknowledge it.	“He’s a projecting and self-loathing incel-in-denial. And absolutely no one is surprised.”	32	11
Incels pay for Chads and women’s lives	Instances where users express resentment over the belief that incels are financially supporting "Chads" and their families, through taxation.	“most incels will just cope and spend the rest of their lives paying for the education and food of Chad's children through taxes”	10	6
Incels should not have children	Instances where users assert that incels should not reproduce as they will pass down their genes and subsequently create children that will be incels in the future.	“He has passed on his genetics how many times? Why leave a bunch of hapa fatherless children. What a fucking faggot, creating more incels.”	6	4
Incels are misrepresented	Instances where users claim that incels are misrepresented by people that talk about them, including the media.	“His prove the incel wrong series is so ignorant and cringe. He labels us all as the same, a woman hating hive mind and just	5	4

		repeats all the worst stereotypes about us.”		
Letting the world fall into degeneracy	Instances where users advocate for incels to disengage from or withdraw contributions to society as a form of protest until their perceived needs or demands are addressed. This includes calls to become a NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) or to passively allow society to decline or "degenerate" as a form of retributive strategy.	“That’s why every incel must NEET and become a parasite on society. No more Isaac Newton’s and no more Nikolai Tesla’s, then let the world fall into degeneracy until our demands are met.”	3	3
Incels have inferior genes	Instances where users claim that incels have inferior genes.	“And yet we are left out all because of inferior genes, I seriously hope nCoV wipes out all of humanity (in Plague Inc)”	3	3
It is better to be an incel than a cuck	Instances where users claim that it is still better to be an incel than a cuck.	“This is next level cuckery. Providing for Chad's daughters, so they may dickride the Chads of the next generation. When	3	2

		I read stories like this, I thank fuck I'm incel. Better incel than cuck, all day every day.”		
Incels should take action if they want change	Instances where users argue that if incels want to bring about societal collapse or meaningful change, they must take deliberate, active steps rather than remain passive.	“The same things that happened in the past are happening now, the difference is we have the social customs and resources to make those things non-issues, endless pacifiers to keep men relatively "in check" so no real rebellion takes place, so if we want a collapse were going to have to be active about it and ensure that it comes to fruition, because without action it won't”	3	3

Incels need mainstream social media presence	Instances where users observe that incels need mainstream social media presence that will allow them to speak their “truth”	“Yep. Jfl, I got all 15 of my Reddit accounts hard permabanned for speaking the truth. We need a mainstream media where you don’t get canceled for saying the truth, not just some obscure forum nobody knows about”	3	1
XVII. On society	This parent-code encompasses instances where users comment on society at large, often expressing disillusionment, resentment, or ideological opposition to modern social structures.			
It’s society fault that men are angry	Instances where users blame society for male anger, frustration or suffering, particularly due to perceived exclusion from intimacy or romantic connection.	“Society rejects us by denying us the opportunity to experience one of the most basic pleasures that majority of people gets to experience, by structuring society in	37	12

		<p>such a way that it benefits women at the cost of average/below average men, while expecting us not to reject society back? If society doesn't accept us, they shouldn't expect us to accept society. If there is no personal benefit in our civil obedience to society, then there should be no reason for us to maintain civility.”</p>		
The West is fallen	Instances where users declare that Western society is in decline or collapse.	<p>“The west is completely fucked.</p> <p>You can get higher quality girls if you live there tbh as then you have the time to invest in a higher quality food. When slaying</p>	10	9

		though yeah it's gonna be mediocre girls.”		
Society deserves to be punished	Instances where users express a desire for large-scale suffering or disaster to befall society as a retribution for incels’ sufferings.	“I really, really hope we get another black plague. Corona won't do shit, but hopefully we are long overdue for something that will wipe out partying NT normshits quickly firsthand.”	4	2
Society is degenerate	Instances where users characterise modern society as morally or intellectually corrupt or irrational often attributing this degeneration to historical decline.	“The majority of people is not normal. The planet is vastly composed of deranged beings. Doubt me? Look at the absolute state of society in general throughout the planet. Either paying the price for their degeneracy, low IQ decision over hundreds of years, or too fucked up to	4	4

		ever recover being screwed by (((them))) financing meaningless wars.”		
The modern society is tailored to benefit women	Instances where users argue that societal structures, norms, or institutions are designed primarily to advantage women at the expense of men.	<p>“Holy fuck that’s brutal — notice no one ever tells these women they have loose vaginas oh no it’s always that the guy has a small dick.</p> <p>Women truly have no frame of reference for how the world revolves around them.”</p>	3	3
Incels should not support society	Instances where users advocate for incels to disengage from or resist contributing to society, especially through labour, taxes, or civic duty.	“Exactly. I don’t get it either. I have to work because we can’t get NETbuxx here, but whatever I earn is MINE to spend on myself and things I enjoy. No way I	1	1

		have any desire to give it up to a society that doesn't care about me. I will give as little of it as possible back.”		
XVIII. On masculinity and men	This parent-code encompasses instances where users reflect on male identity, masculinity, or the experiences of men in society.			
How Chads look	Instances where users describe or analyze the physical appearance of "Chads" and assess who is a Chad and who is not.	“He has both extremely gl and extremely masculine bones. That's all the masculinity you need, even if he were dressed as a woman women would still be crazy for him.”	37	12
Different standards for Chads and incels/unattractive men	Instances where users compare the social treatment of highly attractive men (Chads) to that of less attractive or incel men.	“Chad doesn't have to hold back and filter himself while normie betas and incels have to walk on eggshells.	25	16

		Females are not offended by anything Chad says, but are offended by every other little thing a male says who they find unattractive.”		
Men are victims of double standards	Instances where users express that men, in general, are disadvantaged by societal or institutional double standards.	“One of life’s great black pills is how female “problems” tend to have significantly more funding and social awareness than male issues. Eg breast cancer vs prostate cancer and so on. Nobody cares if men go bald but if women have alopecia then they’re considered tragic victims. People say it’s different for men but men also look far worse without hair.	15	11

		<p>Sort of related it always cracked me up how Overwatch went to great lengths to support breast cancer by selling skins to raise charity money but they never did one for men or prostate cancer. Woke institutions ironically have no sense of fairness and are inherently anti male, that's the reality. These people hate men then act shocked that we hate them right back and oppose their ideology.”</p>		
<p>Men are desperate in dating</p>	<p>Instances where users portray men as desperate enough so that they willing to lower their standards in romantic or sexual contexts due to rejection, loneliness, or lack of dating success.</p>	<p>“those men have literally no self esteem whatsoever they are not even ugly men shows how desperate</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>3</p>

		they can be and how hard dating is for men”		
Masculinity is not valued anymore	Instances where users argue that masculinity has lost its cultural value or relevance. This include assertions that masculinity has been feminised.	“The value system of masculinity has been warped by modern culture, its actually been feminized, to the point where a lot of "typical" conventions for masculinity mirror that of women's values, men of the past didn't really care about this shit, think about how weird it is that you are discussing hundreds of thousands of dollars within the context of how much it will make a woman "choose you",”	5	2
Only being a Chad matters	Instances where users claim that only highly attractive men ("Chads") have	“Normies get cucked. Only chad wins this game	4	4

	meaningful success in romantic or sexual domains.	and that's only for a very short period of time until he hits 25 or so then he's aged out for young women.”		
Male loneliness	Instances where users reflect on the emotional isolation or social neglect experienced by men.	“I think growing up bears huge risks for guys nowadays. You will be lonely, but you have to get used to loneliness, which is not easy. I could barely stand being alone after school (even though I was a total outcast in school) and I also did some weird, desperate and risky things to get a chance at finding friends or a gf.”	2	2