

“Rise Up Against the Gynocentric Government”: Symbolic Violence, Alternative Masculinities, and Involuntary Celibacy

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Abstract

This thesis demonstrates how the men in society who claim to be the most detrimentally effected by the patriarchal standards of masculinity perpetuate patriarchal values and reproduce hegemonic masculinity by engaging in alternative masculinities and toxic behaviours that contribute to and justify their own subordination.

Through the initial examination of this research topic, it became quite apparent that there was a gap in the current literature pertaining to Incels' worldviews and opinions. Although some researchers have interviewed Incels, and other scholars have conducted research surrounding their behaviour, the knowledge produced focuses on violence or extremism. As well, it has been very difficult to find scholarly research which provides a theoretical analysis of Incels' behaviour, rather than a normative condemnation of it.

The main goal of this research project is to address these gaps, and to gain a better understanding of Incels' worldviews, opinions, problems, and solutions, by analyzing their discussions through a theoretical lens and critical paradigm. I also want this project to problematize hegemonic masculine standards and shed light on the ways in which individuals and groups can be unknowingly complacent in their own oppression. The theory that will be used in order to analyze the data collected for this research is Pierre Bourdieu's symbolic violence. The concepts stemming from this theory which will be utilized are field, habitus, doxa, social capital, symbolic capital, and misrecognition. Other concepts that will be used in tangent with the previously stated ones are hegemonic masculinity, hypermasculinity, hypomasculinity, and toxic masculinity. Intertwining this theory and these concepts will provide an extensive analysis of the data collected.

A qualitative thematic analysis will be conducted. Themes will not be pre-determined but pulled out of the data after a first readthrough of the data set, and will be analyzed through a critical lens, using the theory and concepts stated above. Using all of the above-stated data and concepts will allow for an in-depth analysis of Incels' online forums and chat rooms in order to gain an understanding of their views of the world, how these views perpetuate toxic structural systems, and consequently, their own suffering.

Introduction

Although the media, and many scholars, have framed Incels in a negative and violent light, this is an incomplete and generalized representation of the larger group itself. I will be approaching this topic of study using a critical lens in order to examine and challenge the dominant rhetoric surrounding Incels. Taking a critical approach allows me to be more aware of how my intersectional positions in society have the potential to shape my research, and consequently, permitted me to be more reflexive when conducting said research. This reflexivity enabled a more open-ended and open-minded approach to this particular research project, and to the research subjects themselves.

As a result of individuals such as Elliot Rodger and Alek Minassian, Incels have garnered a very negative reputation in society. This research project explores these depictions by gathering data from the online forum *Incels.co*, which allows Incels a space to share experiences and opinions with each other. Gathering information and data from Incels who utilize this website was critical as it demonstrated Incels' differing experiences and views of the world, as opposed to opinions from people outside of the community. Ultimately, the main goal of this research project is to draw attention to how Western patriarchal society is detrimental to all genders, however, through engaging in toxic masculinity, Incels end up becoming unknowingly complacent, even active contributors, in their own subordination. This research is needed because although there are scholarly works written on Incels, as well as written on male domination, there is little research dedicated to analysing and examining the negative cyclical nature of subordinate men upholding a system that does not benefit them.

The literature review will provide a basis of the history surrounding the emergence of Incels. It will discuss the first scholarly mention of Incels, the movements that led to where they are today, and their online presence. It will then go on to outline male online spaces, as well as the enactment of masculinities in these spaces. There is little empirical research providing a theoretical account of Incels' existence and how they simultaneously benefit from and suffer under the current patriarchal gender order, which is the main gap in the literature that this research project will address. Many articles have been published in recent years regarding Incels but most of them have characterized Incels as a potential threat to public safety, and only focused on their violent aspects. Others have conducted quantitative studies surrounding the

demographics of Incel forums, which is beneficial information but not very relevant to my specific research goals.

The theory chapter will draw connections between Bourdieu's theory of symbolic violence, as well as concepts deriving from multiple masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity, hypermasculinity, hypomasculinity, and toxic masculinity will be merged with symbolic violence and its concepts field, habitus, doxa, social and symbolic capital to provide a nuanced theoretical framework for this research project. Although individually these cannot provide a full explanation of the data, when used in tangent, they are effective in illustrating Incels' external relationships with society and internal relationships on the forum. I will justify use of these concepts and simultaneously explain how they are linked and how combining them provided my research with a strong foundation for an in-depth analysis of the material at hand.

Moving forward, the methodology chapter will detail each step that was taken throughout the research process, from exploring different online mediums to the steps taken during the analysis and choosing what information to omit or keep. It will discuss the theoretical approach to the research, ethical considerations throughout the entire process, and reflexivity¹.

The analysis will discuss the core beliefs of Inceldom, the distinctions between forum members who are bluepilled vs. blackpilled and temporary status vs. permanent status (as well as their dynamics), hierarchies of desirability both in society and the forum, and the ways in which toxic masculinity is present on the forum through the use of language in processes of gatekeeping, competitive victimization, and the need for validation and reaffirmation. This toxicity ultimately results in both the upholding of a patriarchal society that does not benefit them, and subsequently, their contribution to their own subordination. This chapter introduces a multitude of quotations taken from the previously stated Incel forum and provides a discussion surrounding Incels' unaltered comments and discussions while attempting to provide a thoughtful explanation for their views and actions.

¹ As an educated white female, I discuss both the ways I can be considered oppressed in society, the ways in which I am privileged, the dynamics between these positions that I occupy, and how these positions influence my ethical reflections.

Literature Review

The Men's Rights Movement

The Rise and Evolution of Feminism and the Women's Rights Movement

The history of the Men's Rights Movement cannot be discussed without first examining the history behind the rise of feminism and the Women's Rights Movement. The first wave of feminism occurred from the late 19th century to the early 20th century, focusing mainly on the right to vote. The suffragists of this movement posited their actions as being beneficial to the nuclear family, rather than threatening it, which is what earned them strides towards success. Bacchi (1982) describes their argument for improving the household as follows: “[h]ow better to strengthen it than to allow woman, its protector and guardian, a say in controlling the forces which threatened it...” (p. 577). The people subscribing to this argument were sometimes referred to as reform feminists or maternal feminists because rather than challenging traditional gender norms of women as caregivers, they argued that allowing women the right to vote would strengthen the household and consequently, the nuclear family. While the suffragists continued fighting for autonomy, they were forced to settle for “...traditional sex-role stereotyping” (Bacchi, 1982, p. 582), as a result of the movement being co-opted by social conservative feminists, who only fought for issues that impacted the elite (e.g., immigration and labor laws). They were successfully able to not only get the vote for women, but to also challenge preconceived notions of women as the inferior sex. Unfortunately, they were halted by these elite homogenous groups, as well as those who were seen as too radical for this movement – those who desired breaking down traditional gender roles (Gamarnikov, 1984; McGuirk, 2019).

The second wave of feminism occurred during the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s in Western society, when gender relations and gender performance came under scrutiny from many scholars, who claimed that the current gender order should be problematized and analyzed more closely (Ging, 2017). This wave left off where the first wave was slowed, with its members focusing on gaining more rights for women, such as reproductive rights, pay equity, and harsher sentences for rape and domestic abuse (Bronstein, 2005). Those involved were considered more of a collective, rather than fighting for issues that only certain women faced. With this fight for female independence came a strong rejection of female gender norms, including those regarding their physical appearances, as well as the gender dichotomy, which placed women in the

household, unable to be independent without their husbands (Bronstein, 2005; Snyder, 2008). During the late 1980s, the movement became criticized for being too white and heteronormative, failing to recognize the more unique issues of intersectionality, which led to the emergence of the third wave.

The third wave of the Women's Movement (1990s to present day) is often referred to as a hybrid between a new movement and the previous second wave of the movement. While some have defined the parameters of this wave by comparing it to the shortcomings of the second wave, others argue that this is a dangerous analysis, and further divides the movement, rather than strengthening it. For instance, Snyder (2008) explains that "[b]ecause third-wavers frequently overstate their distinctiveness while showing little knowledge of their own history, the movement has been widely criticized by second-wavers" (p. 181). While third-wavers claim that second-wavers were ignorant to struggles that were not white and heterosexual, second-wavers argue that their strides in gaining rights gave third-wavers the opportunity to fight for greater inclusivity and intersectionality amongst women. The second wave saw women as a collective, all fighting for the same rights, whereas the third wave strives to recognize the many types of intersectional feminism whilst breaking down this broad category of "women" (e.g., black feminism, queer feminism, disabled feminism, etc.) (Curtis & Cardo, 2018). Second-wavers often chalk this attitude up to the difference in media coverage when comparing one movement to another; as Bronstein (2005) explains: journalists would often create a narrative that "...second wavers are strident, while third wavers are agreeable and friendly. Second wavers are mannish and unattractive, while third wavers are feminine and pretty..." (p. 795), effectively dividing the movement between these two time periods.

Rather than rejecting typical femininity, some third-wavers reclaim and embrace traditional femininity, arguing that this does not detract from their ability to fight for equality (Curtis & Cardo, 2018). Whilst third-wavers delved into problematizing the unequal treatment of women, two of the biggest issues they drew attention to were heteronormativity, and hegemonic masculinity. Judith Butler (1999 & 2004) has published significant empirical research relating to these matters, acknowledging that society identifies a specific gender performance to be the hegemonic norm: white, tough, heterosexual, non-emotional, etc. Those who are unable to live up to this practically unachievable norm are immediately placed in an inferior societal position.

Women become the inferior sex, and non-hegemonic men become subordinate in their masculine performance, and are often ridiculed, mocked, and compared to women as a result (Butler 1999; Plester, 2015).

Emergence of the Men's Rights Movement: From Feminist Ally to Masculinist Counterfeminism

Early scholars attributed Men's Rights Movements to male jealousy towards women's cohesion and solidarity, as well as an anger towards the male sex role, and the ways in which these placed restrictions on men's behaviour more than female gender roles restricted women (Baker & Bakker, 1980). The beginnings of the Men's Rights Movement therefore sought to address issues which were oppressing men as a result of hegemonic masculinity, rather than being anti-feminist in-nature. As New (2001) states, "[t]he fact that men are also told they are superior and deserving of privilege does not cancel out the effect of this mistreatment, which can realistically be called oppression" (p. 744). New (2001) explores the suffering of men under the normalization of hegemonic masculinity as a result of male sex roles and discourses surrounding masculinity, and similar to other scholars, posits that the current systemic oppression in society allows men to mistreat and subordinate women, however, these same actions allow for the mistreatment of subordinate men (Connell, 1995; Paul, 1993).

The beginnings of this movement were not in opposition to the Women's Liberation Movement, and instead challenged problematic assumptions of masculinity, recognizing that hegemonic² masculinity is oppressive for both sexes. As Messner (1998) states, the initial Men's Rights Movement in the 1970s was meant to "...attract men to feminism by constructing a discourse that stressed how the male role was impoverished, unhealthy, and even lethal for men" (p. 256). It originally attempted to tackle systemic sexism and oppression of all sexes through an all-inclusive lens, whereby it was in everyone's best interest to eradicate normative hegemonic masculinity (Fox, 2004).

A large part of this initial support for feminism was because the first wave of the Women's Rights Movement did not pose a threat to the male power within a nuclear family. Bennett (1974) explores the ways in which many of the rights women were fighting for during

² Hegemony traditionally signifies some arrangement of authority, leadership, and domination (Ives 2004). The concept of hegemony used here refers to the ideal representation of the interests of men (as a dominant class) as universal interests, a process by which the oppression of women is reproduced.

this wave would also be to the benefit of men, especially those who were married with children, stating that when "...a wife is underpaid, her husband and family are also underpaid.

Achievement of economic equality by married women...would substantially increase family financial resources" (p. 112). Allowing women the opportunity and right to make decisions for their own lives would therefore benefit their entire households. Women gaining more power and privilege would consequently strengthen the nuclear family, rather than damage it, which was the largest contributing factor to gaining the support of men when the movement began.

It was not until the 1980s that the Men's Rights Movement took on a different stance, attempting to embrace traditional forms of masculinity (Kimmel, 1995). Men's feelings of emasculation therefore became intertwined with the emergence of feminism and women's rights evolving in Western society. Men perform their gender by utilizing the resources they have access to but often still fail to conform to gender norms, resulting in feelings of dislocation, and a denial of access to the privileges they feel entitled to (Kimmel, 2013). This shift towards masculinism resulted from many men feeling that equality between the sexes would result in men being forced to give up some of their birth-given privilege over women (Baker & Bakker, 1980). This concern quickly led some men to become resistant to women's liberation, fearing that it would end in their own marginalization.

As previously stated, the 1980s saw the initial shift in the Men's Rights Movement, and although some men continued to support feminist ideas of eradicating hegemonic norms, others decided that feminism was contributing to their oppression, and formed a countermovement (Nagle, 2015; Smith, 1972). Much of the literature published during the second wave of the feminist movement suggested that men were becoming oppressed, theorizing that as women gained more power and status, men subsequently lost theirs (Baker & Bakker, 1980; Jensen, 1995; Messner, 1998; Wootton, 1993). While this approach does not stand up to scrutiny, the ways that men suffer under the current patriarchal order are often not recognized (Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 1985; Pollert, 1996; Wetherell & Edney, 1999). However, simply blaming the patriarchy without examining other societal issues, assumes that all men are more privileged than all women. This not only places a negative divide between the sexes, but also pits the two against one another whereby, women must continue to fight for their equal rights and men (as the more

societally powerful sex) must deny them these rights (Connell, 1998; Kessler, Ashenden, Connell, & Dowsett, 1982; Pollert, 1996).

The shift in thinking towards masculinism left some men in the movement to focus on promoting masculinity, which quickly lead to anti-feminist rhetoric. Blais and Dupuis-Déri (2012) define masculinism as "...assert[ing] that since men are in crisis and suffering because of women in general and feminists in particular, the solution to their problems involves curbing the influence of feminism and revalorizing masculinity" (p. 22). Gender equality was not seen as a positive option for the men involved in this section of the movement; they instead adopted the belief that feminism would revoke their privileges in society (Bean, 2007; Blais & Dupuis Déri 2012).

Marwick and Caplan (2018) nicely state that this other "...subgroup of Men's Rights Activists (MRAs) believed that white men in America were in crisis and that feminism—and more broadly liberalism—was to blame for the failings of American culture..." (p. 546). These men in question have essentially adopted the mindset of what New (2001) has termed the "zero-sum conception of oppression," which she describes as the ways that the most privileged members of society have a vested interest in maintaining their power, whereas the least privileged have a vested interest in gaining more power and privilege. Through this mindset, certain groups of men in this movement attribute female success and ability to ascend the social ladder as a threat that will inevitably demasculinize and displace the power dynamic (Kimmel, 2013; Nagle, 2015).

These men therefore positioned their movement as being anti-feminist in nature, opposing everything that the feminist liberation movement was fighting for. In an attempt to convince more men to join this countermovement, feminists and women were labeled as misandrist, which effectively "...constructed alliances between men's rights advocates and members of the general public who did not want to be seen as 'anti-male'" (Marwick & Caplan, 2018, p. 552). This implication created an "us vs. them" mentality, whereby feminist men were viewed as the anti-male "them", and the men who supported men's rights were viewed as the progressive "us". To delve deeper, many scholars from this time recognized that the issues surrounding men's rights and women's liberation were much more complicated than a simple male vs. female dichotomy but needed to include intersectional levels of oppression and power

as well (Jensen, 1995; Keddie, 2007; Messner, 1993, 1998; New, 2001; Pollert, 1996; Wootton, 1993). Although there were some debates in the literature surrounding this movement, most scholars agreed that oppression is not only systemic but also intersectional. Therefore, not all women are oppressed more than all men, and some men will experience a greater amount of oppression and discrimination than some women, which was the underlying premise of the third wave of feminism (Curtis & Cardo, 2018; Smith, 1972; Snyder, 2008).

Parameters of the Men's Rights Movement

This emerging hatred of women and promotion of men became toxic even to those involved in the movement itself. Men who believed women to be more oppressed than men, as well as men who self-identified as feminists, were excluded from the Men's Rights Movement from the outset. At the same time, a hierarchy emerged within the movement itself – specifically, an “us vs. them” mentality indicating an internal hegemony among members (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Kimmel (2013) describes this mentality as follows: “[*they*] were either ‘hypermasculine’ (violent, out-of-control, rapacious animals) or ‘hypomasculine’ (weak, effeminate, irresponsible, and dependent). *We*, by contrast, had just the right mixture of hardy self-reliance and community spirit...” (p. 51). The men who are able to conform to the “us” hegemonic norm force certain men who cannot live up to these standards into the “them” category. This division consequently forms a community of subordinated men with sexual frustrations, which is one of the main reasons leading to the emergence of Incels (Ging, 2017).

Herb Goldberg was one of the leading anti-feminist men involved in the Men's Rights Movement, gathering men together to fight for their rights and squash any progress feminism was making towards women's liberation (Messner, 1998). He founded the National Congress for Men, an organization dedicated to a multitude of men's rights concerns, which focused mainly on the issue of fathers' rights and custody battles, though he refused to acknowledge the ways in which this system could benefit men. The shift towards an anti-feminist rhetoric undermined the entire Men's Movement for many men who originally identified with it, claiming that “...the oppressive nature of traditional masculinity, has been undermined by fathers' rights activists who want to pursue a set of custody rights *and* traditional masculinity” (Clatterbaugh, 2000, p. 891). By reinforcing masculinism, many men became marginalized in the male hierarchy, losing status in the process. This movement was very controversial, captured media attention, and

consequently began receiving much backlash and ridicule. This essentially forced these groups to move underground, or in contemporary terms, onto the internet (Ging, 2017). The Men's Rights Movement ended up splitting into many smaller groups, each with their own perceptions of society and goals for themselves. Certain groups of men expressed feelings of marginalization within their own movement, and subsequently moved to the internet and into the Manosphere, where they found more like-minded individuals, allowing their numbers to grow, and giving them a larger platform to mobilize³.

Male-Only Spaces: Places of Male Refuge

From the feelings of emasculation that accompanied the Women's Liberation Movement grew the desire for some to create homosocial spaces, whether these places be physical (e.g., man caves), or online (e.g., the Manosphere). As Moisio and Beruchashvili (2016) state, these spaces "...represent therapeutic venues that help men in alleviating identity pressures created by work as well as domestic life and aid revitalization of men's identities as fathers and husbands" (p. 656). With the rise of feminism came a greater focus on hegemonic masculinity, often pushing men to engage in hypermasculinity when they were unable to live up to these standards.

These masculine spaces serve as an escape from men's perceived feminization of society, and arguably from the rigorous expectations of them to be tough, bread-winning, emotionless, hard-working individuals. These are spaces where men can bond with other men while engaging in masculine activities, some of which often involve discussing women (Moisio & Beruchashvili, 2016). Although there is literature surrounding the use and function of physical male spaces, literature examining online male spaces is currently insufficient. With that being said, much of the rhetoric surrounding physical male spaces can also be applied to their online counterparts as they often serve similar purposes and allow the same kind of male bonding. The Manosphere becomes a virtual "man cave" for the men who participate in various male forums and discussion boards, such as Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW)⁴, where the male participants often engage in hypermasculinity by trying to remain as tough as possible. Many of these men feel

³ It should be noted that the shift online coincided with the emergence of fourth wave feminism, enabling groups of men and women from all over the world to interact with one another online, no longer restricted by geographical barriers (Looft, 2017; Messner, 2004; Nagle, 2015).

⁴ MGTOW is an online forum whose members are typically men experiencing divorce and the possible loss of custody of their children.

emasculated following a separation from their partners, and therefore are reasserting their masculinity and reclaiming their identities. Women are not allowed or welcomed into these homosocial spaces because the spaces are created out of a rejection of all things feminine.

The fourth wave of the feminist movement was an extension of the third but heavily relied on the emergence of social media to connect and easily mobilize women regarding many issues, such as the #MeToo movement (Looft, 2017; Maddox, 2021). This specific wave has its main focus on "...technological mobilization, intersectionality, empowerment, social activism, and the denunciation of sexual violence" (Cabrera, Beloso, & Prieto, 2021, p. 417). Many issues involving social activism and sexual violence have led to some populations of men feeling targeted, having their privilege threatened and called into question by other less privileged groups who see them as oppressors and aggressors. This part of the movement has meant that men feel as if not only are their domestic lives being encroached upon, but also their online spaces, leading them to create homosocial spaces specific to the male population (Maddox, 2021).

Stemming from pre-feminist times, men's homes have generally been viewed as feminine spaces, which they do not have much dictation over, so they create their own spaces to combat this, space which "...serves as the prime venue for reproducing traditional views of masculinity and simultaneously bonding with the male kin" (Moisio & Beruchashvili, 2016, p. 667-668). These new spaces, whether physical or otherwise, uphold hegemonic masculine ideals, encourage hypermasculinity, and cultivate a space for men to openly discuss the issues they have with the women in their lives (oftentimes their girlfriends or wives with whom they live), and women in general. Much like physical spaces, "...virtual environments without a doubt remain a space in which users are constantly creating and performing a variety of identities" (Taylor, 2003, p. 26). Where men may embrace their fatherly identities on certain social media platforms such as Facebook, the virtual platforms of the Manosphere allow these same men to shed these expectations and discuss their identities as men, independent of others.

Masculinised spaces stem from a homosocial desire for men to strengthen their bonds while simultaneously rejecting everything non-masculine (Hopkins, 2000; Moisio & Beruchashvili, 2016). The behaviours in these spaces often include performances of hypermasculinity in order to not be mistaken for homosexuality, which is to be avoided at all

costs. Some authors may describe these masculinized spaces as places of gender tyranny, which dictate and control every aspect of the space and the ways in which individuals within them perform their gender identities (Doan, 2010). The structural elements allowing for this tyranny mainly stem from patriarchal norms that pervade all social spaces, including the household.

Certain authors' descriptions and explanations of masculinism are very similar to that of hegemonic masculinity. The masculinism of places and spaces goes fully undetected and largely unchallenged, dominated by men but seemingly universal. As Chowdhry (2014) states, "The constant presence of so many men reinforces the ideology of segregation of sexes, control of female mobility and dominance of men" (p. 44). Male-only spaces encourage segregation of the sexes and exclusion of women in spaces of power and importance, such as workspaces and certain occupations (e.g., the military). With women becoming more prevalent in many previously masculinized spaces, men felt the need to constantly "... (re)define themselves as something that women—or less highly valued versions of masculinity—are not; masculinity is constructed in opposition to sets of characteristics that are regarded as inferior" (Hoven & Horschelmann, 2005, p. 19). With this perceived threat to their masculine identities, and their desire to bond with other men while excluding women, men found solace within the Manosphere and its derivatives.

The Birth and Evolution of the Online Manosphere

Defining and Exploring the Manosphere

First and foremost, it is important to define the term Manosphere for the purpose of this research, as it is a fairly new topic that has not been extensively studied in academia at this point in time. Ironwood (2013) would describe what constitutes the Manosphere as "... a collection of internet blogs, cultural discussion groups, interpersonal interactions and digital clubhouses whose focus revolves around *issues and interests common to men and masculinity*" (p. 95-96). The Manosphere is therefore not one cohesive assembly of men online, rather, it is split into countless separate groups and organizations, some of which are considered to be higher up in the male hierarchy than others (Blommaert, 2017). While some groups within the Manosphere, such as Men Going Their Own Way, claim to be support groups for men struggling with systemic male oppression, many scholars posit that they inevitably end up producing behaviours and discussions comparable to male supremacy and anti-feminist rhetoric (Nicholas & Agius, 2018).

The first known mention of the Manosphere was in 2009 on a blog aptly entitled *The Manosphere*. This blogger made the claim that "...masculine failures and disappointments are not the fault of individual men but have come about as a result of 'institutionalized feminism,' a family court system 'rigged against dutiful fathers', and a world gripped by misandry" (Jane, 2018, p. 666). This particular blogger is very open with his frustrations surrounding misandry, the rise of feminism, and its negative impact on men like himself. It also becomes clear in reading this blog that many men find this online community to be a safe and supportive place to let loose their anger with a system they believe to be threatening their masculinity (Jaki, Smedt, Gwózdź, Panchal, Rossa, & Pauw, 2018). The Manosphere is therefore not making any real attempts at changing societal views of men, rather, these forums and online discussions exist as more of a "safe space" for men who blame women for the issues they have faced (Gotell & Dutton, 2016; Ironwood, 2013; Schoonen, Fransen, Bastiaense, & Caj, 2017).

Agents of the Manosphere – Positive vs. Negative Aspects

The Manosphere as a whole, encompasses a wide variety of men who feel subordinated or marginalized in society, either as a result of emerging feminist rhetoric, or because of their failure to conform to masculine norms in society (Larkin, 2018). Many men within this online sphere claim that their issue is with women and feminism negatively overtaking their lives and consequently preventing them from accessing the power and privilege which they believe themselves to be entitled to. However, as a great deal of scholars would agree, the men in the Manosphere fail to acknowledge that the issues they often describe cannot be blamed on feminism and misandry, but rather on masculinity and societal expectations that every man must perform their masculinity in a particular way (Ging, 2017; Ging & Siapera, 2018; Kimmel, 2013; Mountford, 2018).

As previously stated, there is an internal hierarchy amongst the agents in this online atmosphere; Blommaert (2017) states that the Manosphere is "split between alpha- and beta-male camps, and beta-males are usually encouraged either to turn themselves into alpha-males, or altogether reject (and possibly destroy) that world of male-female relationships" (p. 14-15). Consequently, those who are classified as beta males are more likely to experience exclusion in this sphere and will seek refuge with other beta males experiencing the same subordination. Although the men who participate in the Manosphere feel a great frustration towards other men

who are actually able to conform to ideal performances of masculinity, whom they term “Chads,” they continue to blame feminism for the perpetuation of toxic masculinity, rather than attempting to change the narrative and discourse surrounding masculinity itself (Donnelly, Burgess, Anderson, David, & Dillard, 2001; Zimmerman & Duriesmith, 2018).

The scholarly discourse surrounding the Manosphere is incomplete, focusing largely on the negative or socially deviant aspects of the community (Ganesh, 2018; Nicholas & Agius, 2018). For instance, Blommaert (2017) claims that it is “...dedicated to what can alternatively be called ‘toxic masculinity’ or ‘masculine victimhood...’ often expressed in ostensibly misogynist, sexist, (often) racist and (sometimes) violent discourse” (p. 1-2). Scholars studying the Manosphere have made many claims stating that it bears a resemblance towards other extremist groups who have been around for centuries. They have drawn comparisons between Incels and other (violent) extremist groups, coinciding with many biased media portrayals of these men, generating public fear and hatred towards them⁵ (Michael, 2017; Zimmerman & Duriesmith, 2018).

Negotiating Identity within the Manosphere

As Åkerström, Burcar, and Wästerfors (2011) discovered in their study on victimization discourse among young men, although these men subscribed to the rhetoric surrounding being victimized by inaccurate media representations, they did not appear to want others perceiving them in this same light. Therefore, balancing their identity between being a victim, which is emasculating, and being a man, “...occurs either when non-preferred identities for some reason cannot be hidden or subordinated or when both identities harbor some attractions, even if one of them is considered to be more preferable” (Åkerström, Burcar, & Wästerfors, 2011, p. 104). The men in this study therefore experience issues surrounding their ability to balance their two conflicting identities: one as a man who has been emasculated, and the other as wanting to be perceived as masculine. To be seen as a victim is marginalizing for a man because they would be seen as passive, weak, and vulnerable, all of which are traits that are closely associated with femininity (Emerson, 1994). The men within the Manosphere therefore feel obligated to perform

⁵ While I argue that Incels are not inherently violent, I recognize that when a movement is initiated and its main goals and values are *in opposition to* something, rather than *in support of* something, it has the potential to generate hatred, justification for violence, and in this specific case, misogyny, as core values amongst the group itself (see Ging, 2017; Jaki et al., 2018; Jane, 2014).

a constant balancing act between wanting to draw empathy from others as victims of a larger systemic issue surrounding gender and wanting to be seen as tough men.

Here emerges a battle of identities between these men's positions within external hegemony and internal hegemony. Arthur Brittan (1998, as cited in Nicholas and Agius 2018), coined the term "masculinism," long before the emergence of the Manosphere in order to describe the prevalence of male domination in society, defining it as, "...the ideology that justifies and naturalizes male domination. As such, it is the ideology of the patriarchy" (p. 5). Combining this definition of masculinism with Kimmel's (2013) concept of aggrieved entitlement, defined as "...the voices of *entitlement* to power" (Kimmel, 2013, p. 46 emphasis original), allows for a greater understanding of male entitlement. There is an underlying belief in the Manosphere that not only do men have the rights to privilege and power over women, but also have the right to have sex with them (Messner, 2004). This misplaced entitlement has led to sexual frustration among men, the most subordinated of whom may join the Manosphere and eventually become affiliated with the Incel community (Ging, 2017; Messner, 2016). These are the men who may have struggled to balance their feelings of victimization with their feelings of masculinity, leaving them with a greater subordinated and effeminate status within the community.

Mountford (2018) theorizes that the men who join these movements often do so because they want to learn how exactly to perform their masculinity in a way that will be perceived as appropriate by the rest of society. However, other scholars, namely Ging (2017), Ging and Siapera (2018), Kelly (2017), and Kimmel (2013) would disagree, stating that these men already know the proper ways of performing masculinity, but are incapable for various reasons. They therefore seek refuge in the online Manosphere to feel more in-touch with those who feel the same dissociation with their identities. These men engage in a balancing act of identity, shaping and reshaping their identities based on others within the same community, engaging in discussions and decisions surrounding what types of masculinity are acceptable, and which are not (Åkerström, Burcar, & Wästerfors, 2001).

Manosphere as a Community – Transcending Time and Space

The Manosphere as a whole produces a hierarchy of masculinities which can become exclusive, allowing some men to fully engage in the community, while forcing others to the

margins (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Ging, 2017). For the purposes of this literature review, the broader and more all-encompassing definition of community provided by Raitanen and Oksanen (2018) will be used to describe the Manosphere as a whole. By their definition, community is essentially a group which can be identified by its "...shared values and cultural practices, that their members use signs and symbols to identify with one another, and that they do so to subvert the norms of dominant or mainstream society to at least some extent (Blackman, 2014; Hedbigge, 1979; Muggleton, 2000)" (p. 197). While this definition fits the description of the Manosphere overall, the Manosphere also contains a myriad of smaller communities within itself, many with differing aims and goals, but all still existing under the Men's Rights Movement (Ging & Siapera, 2018). For instance, the Manosphere may sometimes attempt to subvert the gender norms of broader society (e.g., advocating for men gaining custody of their children following a divorce) while the smaller Incel community does not engage in challenging these norms, as they have accepted their lesser status (Ging, 2017; Ging & Siapera, 2018; Hall, 1977; Kimmel, 2013).

It becomes clear that the biggest appeal of an online community is not necessarily the ability for individuals to congregate with like-minded people, but also to be able to freely share otherwise controversial opinions without societal judgement. Once in an online forum, many members will share similar thoughts and opinions, meaning that more taboo issues will not encounter as much resistance, defiance, or judgement (Haythornthwaite, 2009). The online aspect of the Manosphere allows for the rapid sharing of information and similar life experiences over time and space, as well as, the opportunity for anonymity, which can be very alluring when discussing controversial opinions (Keipi, Näsi, Oksanen, & Räsänen, 2017).

This online atmosphere itself can also have a negative impact as a community when it excludes certain men and consequently perpetuates societal toxic masculinity in an otherwise perceived male safe space (Jaki et al., 2018). However, it also has positive aspects by allowing these men the opportunity to connect with one another in a way that may allow them to feel less isolated (Holloway, 2017; Raitanen & Oksanen, 2018). Incels parallel the broader Manosphere in the sense that they fail to abide by societal norms but are either considered to be too radical, or to have fundamentally different beliefs and goals to the other Manosphere groups (Ganesh, 2018; Marwick & Caplan, 2018). The Manosphere therefore imitates the cycle of exclusion put forth in

society, dismissing other individuals who do not conform to the norms they have created within their online community, and further forcing them to the margins (Ging, 2017; Hall & Jefferson, 1975; Jaki et al., 2018; Raitanen & Oksanen, 2018).

Involuntary Celibates (Incels)

Incel Ideology and Mechanisms of Exclusion

Incels can first and foremost be considered a smaller group within the broader Manosphere and the Men's Rights Movement as a whole. This is because their values, life experiences, norms, and rules that they abide by as a population align with those of these larger online groups. Jaki et al., (2018) describe Incels as a “[p]erson who is not in a relationship nor has had sex in a significant amount of time, despite numerous attempts...concerned with what constitutes attractiveness...how to approach women...and how and why they are unsuccessful in this regard” (p. 10-13). Although this definition is non-gender specific, Incels do not allow anyone other than men in their online spaces, and do not believe that women, or any other gender, can identify as Incels (Ging, 2017).

The basis of the Incel ideology stems from the redpill/bluepill/(blackpill) analogy, which originated from the film *The Matrix*, and has become not only a wide discussion amongst the Incel community but also a method of exclusion in terms of who will be accepted within the community itself (Ging, 2017). In terms of the Men's Rights Movement, the Manosphere, and the Incel community specifically, to take one of these metaphorical pills can be described as follows: “...a red pill (knowledge and misery) or a blue pill (ignorance and bliss)...the red pill refers to the belief that men are oppressed...The black pill...then is the nihilistic belief that unattractive men will never ‘score’” (Jaki et al., 2018, p. 5). By this explanation, those men who have been redpilled and blackpilled are part of the “us,” fighting for men's rights and against male oppression, and those who have been bluepilled, or simply have not taken the red pill, are “them,” those who believe strongly that women are oppressed in society and that men systemically perpetrate this. Incels have adopted a blackpilled way of thinking, believing that as men who do not have the means to achieve hegemonic masculine standards, women will never desire them (Ging, 2017; Jaki et al., 2018). Rather than claiming that all men are systemically oppressed and targeted by women, Incels share a conviction that amongst all the internal masculine hierarchies, they are the lowest of the low, with no hope of upward social mobility.

(Mis)Representations of Incels in Media and in Literature

There is a significant gap in the empirical literature surrounding the Incel community because this group is relatively new to the public and has gone undetected until the last few years. Furthermore, it has been difficult to find much empirical literature pertaining to the thoughts and opinions of Incels themselves. For instance, Donnelly et al., (2001) conducted a life course analysis on Incels to better understand their demographics in terms of population size, race, gender, class, etc., arguing that “[n]ot only is research on involuntary celibates scarce, it is fraught with conceptual and methodological problems” (Donnelly et al., 2001, p. 160). However, despite their inclusion of interviews, this study is notably flawed, as the researchers decided to include women within their study. At first glance, it seems that the researchers are attempting to promote inclusivity, however, if they had considered the values and opinions of Incels, they would have quickly realized that they do not believe women can identify as Incels (Ging, 2017).

Despite this oversight, however, the study was instructive in its conclusion that Incels, like many other individuals in society, use Hagestad’s (1996) standards of “on time” and “off time” when comparing themselves to others, using “...normative expectations of sexuality and life progress to measure the progress of their own lives...” (Donnelly et al., 2001, p. 160). In the case of Incels, it is clear that the majority of these men would describe themselves as being sexually “off time” and behind the rest of their male cohort, including those who also feel inferior when compared to hegemonic standards of masculinity. These authors also found that Incels experienced many barriers to finding sexual relationships, such as: shyness, body image issues, and difficult/strenuous living/work arrangements, which all contributed to their perceived struggle. Some of the affects of these barriers are feelings of dissatisfaction, frustration, anger, stunted sexual development, loss of confidence, and despair (Donnelly et al., 2001). Systemic hegemony causes a toxic spiral for this group of men whereby they measure themselves against what they perceive to be the sexual norm, fail to measure up to this norm, and consequently feel a sense of dislocation between how they are and how they think they should be. (Donnelly et al., 2001).

Messner (2004) suggests that men affiliated with the Incel community become marginalized when failing to conform to societal norms, and subsequently seek refuge in the Manosphere, then further marginalize themselves because of their disaffection towards men who

are able to find sexual partners. This is also reflected in what Thomas (1966) states as: “...situations we define as real become real in their consequences” (p. 301), meaning that the willingness for men to classify themselves as involuntarily celibate can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. One of the more recent studies on Incels was conducted by Zimmerman and Duriesmith (2018), who performed a media discourse analysis to provide a more all-encompassing definition of the Incel community. This did not, however, provide much information regarding the group itself, and failed to interview or speak to anyone within the Incel community. Rather than distinguishing Elliot Rodger and Alek Minassian as two of the most radical individuals amongst the larger Incel group, Zimmerman and Duriesmith (2018) describe the entire Incel population as being akin to a terrorist organization with the ultimate goal of inciting fear and violence into society. While violence is an inherent part of this population, these tendencies are not a main focus of this specific research project.

Although some newer articles and books have been moving away from having an over-focus on violence and extremism related to Inceldom, many scholars continue to perpetuate this stereotype through their research. As an example, O’Donnell and Shor (2021) not only highlight past instances of Incel violence and potential extremist comments on the Incel forum, but they also go on to make comparisons between Incels and lone wolf terrorists, exploring how the dynamics and the rhetoric of the Incel forum bear resemblance to these groups. Other scholars, such as O’Malley, Holt, and Holt (2022), move away from these associations with terrorism, and instead draw comparisons between Incels and subcultures that perpetuate dangerous rhetoric online. They go on to discuss anti-vaxxers, and their willingness to spread misinformation about vaccines, which has led to a lack of herd immunity and continuation of lethal illnesses in contemporary society. They argue that, like anti-vaxxers, Incels participate in dangerous discourse online, and that the public should be wary of their potential to become violent. Similarly, O’Malley et al., (2022) has argued that the accelerated development of the internet has led to a greater number of deviant subcultures appearing, and subsequently pushed more individuals to enact violence in the real world. Although they speculate on some of the reasons for this, they also state that more research must be conducted on this topic before drawing any official conclusions. Ultimately, similar to previous scholars, they also conclude that Incels are an inherently dangerous group which needs to be studied further in order for their violence to be understood and prevented (O’Malley et al., 2022).

In a similar vein, Zimmerman and Duriesmith (2018) describe Incels as subscribing to a “...broader political ideology rooted in a toxic combination of male supremacy and white supremacy” (p. 1), associating them with more well-known radical groups. In parallel, Lindsay (2022) uses a constructivist theory to emphasize themes of violence and anti-women rhetoric within the online forum. They argue that Incels are a fairly cohesive group who are united through media misrepresentations of themselves, and their hatred and potential violence towards women. They claim that “[c]omments found in incel forums regularly advocating extreme violence against out-group members also reinforce this collective identity...” (Lindsay, 2022, p. 219). While forum members are bonded in certain ways, they are not a monolithic group and have far too many differing opinions and experiences to be considered to have a collective identity. Countless differing opinions and experiences emerge online, and it is only a miniscule number of men who become radical enough to conduct acts of violence in society. Although most of these men have sought out Incel forums, chat rooms, etc., as a means of feeling connected to others with similar life experiences and mindsets, this does not diminish the underlying violent and misogynistic attitudes of these groups (Marwick & Lewis, 2017; Raitanen & Oksanen, 2018).

While it is true that the Incel community perpetuates misogyny and contributes to a collective hatred of women and feminism, rather than attempting to criminalize their behaviour, as Zimmerman and Duriesmith (2018) have proposed, more empirical attention needs to be given to this population of men who are also oppressed by the gender roles imposed on them by broader society. Jaki et al., (2018) claim that Incels feel misrepresented by the media, which is an accurate statement given the previous literature compared to all of the media interpretations dedicated to warning the general public about this implied imminent threat to their safety (Stretesky & Pogrebin, 2007; Waling, 2017; Zimmerman & Duriesmith, 2018). However, the media functions predominantly on soundbites of information, and stories that have a quick and lasting impact on viewers - ones that push the political agenda, which is one of the main reasons that the portrayals of Incels in the media have been empirically incomplete (Ging, 2017).

Blommaert (2017), on the other hand, has published a chapter in a larger book analyzing the manifesto written by self-proclaimed Incel, Elliot Rodger, which takes a more critical approach. Jaki et al., (2018) sum up the incident involving Rodger as follows: “... 22 year-old

Elliot Rodger stabbed and shot 6 people to death near the UCLA campus, after posting a video on YouTube in which he complained about being rejected by women, while envying sexually active men” (p. 1). Blommaert (2017) dissects this manifesto with the intention of looking into Rodger’s interests and societal impacts in order to determine what led him to commit this heinous act of violence against the public. While this chapter did provide an accurate empirical account of Incels in terms of discussing beta and alpha masculinities, and the Manosphere as a whole, it still largely focused on the violent aspects of the Incel population. Although it is important to analyze these specific cases of violence, as they have been one of the most significant reasons that Incels have received so much media attention, the community itself should also be analyzed beyond their violent tendencies. The multi-layered analysis necessary for this population requires more than the space that a single academic chapter can offer (Blommaert, 2017).

When discussing Inceldom, “...it remains impossible to talk about the incel without also talking about violence” (Sharkey, 2022, p. 39). However, I propose that violence does not need to be positioned as the main component of Inceldom. Although there are radical forum members, they do not necessarily represent the majority of Incels, who “...do not share radical beliefs unless you want to call determinism a radical ideology” (Sharkey, 2022, p. 38). Rather than approaching Inceldom with a preconceived notion of all Incels being violent and dangerous individuals, Sharkey (2022), as well as myself, take on what they have termed to be an “...affirmative feminist approach...” (p. 41), which is inherently more considerate when drawing conclusions in research. This approach to research recognizes that although Incels do subscribe to a misogynistic and patriarchal way of viewing the world, they require a more complex examination. Sharkey (2022) therefore takes one of the more progressive approaches to Inceldom currently, arguing that men are presently being born into a world already heavily influenced by feminism and the patriarchy. They cite bell hooks as stating that boys’ and men’s first experiences with violence are in the expectation of achieving hegemony, which requires them to be emotionally stunted, and unable to truly reach manhood as a result. Because these men have grown up in a feminist-influenced world, their frustrations towards their failures to achieve manhood are taken out on women, who are viewed as dictating expectations of masculinity (Sharkey, 2022).

In summation, it is essential for scholars to continue to examine other layers of Inceldom, beyond violence and hatred for women. As Sharkey (2022) so perfectly puts it: “The spectacle of the incel for feminism should not distract us from considering these boys in terms beyond condemnation, which is what they expect of us...” (p. 48). They conducted multiple interviews with Incels regarding Incels’ perception of how they are viewed by the public. They do, however, state that their research is purely exploratory, and therefore cannot be generalized to the entire Incel population. The conclusions that Daly and Reed (2022) have drawn through their interviews are very similar to the conclusions reached when analyzing forum discussions, therefore, greater research including more in-depth interviews is needed to go beyond the scope of what is being said online. This research project specifically attempts to take an affirmative feminist stance, approaching this population tentatively and attempting to provide a thoughtful explanation for their online discussions.

Ultimately, the literature on the Incel community is currently limited in both breadth and depth, and there are still many gaps to be filled by current and future scholars. Hopefully some of this future research will include in-depth studies recounting first-hand experiences told by Incels themselves (Donnelly et al., 2001). The media portrayals of Incels as terrorists and violent threats against the public must be problematized, as they do not consider the complexities of this population, nor their views surrounding the rest of society (Zimmerman & Duriesmith, 2018). It is within every individual’s best interest to eradicate social norms associated with gender, and masculinity in particular. This would mean that men are no longer experiencing aggrieved entitlement or frustration involved with being unable to conform to hegemonic norms. Further, women would no longer be forced to bear the brunt of hatred for a systemic structure that they did not create, cannot control, and are simultaneously being oppressed by (Ging, 2017; Kimmel, 2013). This project specifically attempts to fill some of this gap in the literature by using a combination of theory and concepts related to masculinity which has not yet been utilized to provide an explanation for how Incels view the world. It will examine their online forum discussions, drawing out common themes, and analyzing them accordingly. How do Incels’ perceptions of themselves, and the world around them, contribute to and reproduce multiple masculinities that keep them subordinated?

Theory

For the purposes of this research project, Bourdieu's theory of symbolic violence, as well as the conceptual frameworks and concepts surrounding masculinity, will be explored. Symbolic violence and its concepts (field, habitus, doxa, capital, misrecognition), in combination with divisions of masculinity (hegemonic, hyper, hypo, and toxic), can effectively provide an explanation as to how Incels have emerged from hegemonic masculinity, and unknowingly end up contributing to its toxicity and their own subordination. Within Bourdieu's theory, habitus, doxa, field, and capital (both symbolic and social) will be applied to the Incel forum and its emergence from the gender dynamics of broader society. The multiple masculinities previously mentioned will provide a deeper explanation into the differences in gender performance and behaviour of different types of men, and their interactions with women. Subsequently, symbolic violence will provide an explanation as to how the individuals displaying these behaviours unknowingly perpetuate the toxic systems that produce them.

Bourdieu's Theory of Symbolic Violence

Bourdieu (2013) describes a social world as being a "...universe of *presuppositions*...in short the ensemble of tacit conditions of membership, what is taken for granted by those who belong to it and which is invested with value in the eyes of those who want to be of it..." (p. 298). The social world inevitably favors some characteristics and discredits others, all of which determine one's position within the world itself. The social world in this case is Western society, which is a field of being and negotiation. Within this field, for the purposes of this thesis, the presuppositions that will be examined are mainly surrounding the multiple different types of masculinity, and the ability of agents within this social world to adhere to one of these types of masculine performance. As the social world is very broad-in-nature, it is therefore beneficial to break it down into different fields in order to distinguish specific types of capital, means of gaining them, and using them as power. A field is a symbolic system operating on different types of capital, each of which encompasses its own means of exclusion, inclusion, and recognizable mechanisms of gaining said capital.

A field is above all, a relational concept, meaning that each individuals' position within any given field is not determined by their autonomy but rather their position in relation to all other

individuals within the same field. Harrits (2011) explains a field as “...a relational configuration of specific forms of capital and practices, i.e. a social universe united towards a specialized social struggle for resources and recognition” (p. 239-240). This chapter examines two separate fields of social interaction: Western society, and the Incel forum itself. The men studied in this research project therefore occupy two distinct positions at once: their social position in society, determined by how close or far they deviate from hegemonic masculine norms (their first position), and their position on the forum, determined by how many or how few undesirable characteristics they have (their second position) (Bourdieu, 2013). Those in the societal field compare and compete against one another in order to gain the most resources and recognition, which in this case is social capital gained from how much one is able to achieve hegemonic norms. Fields are not mutually exclusive, however. The Incel forum exists as a smaller field within the societal field, though it primarily operates around a different type of capital and separate goals. Each of these fields are symbolic systems which inevitably and unknowingly enact symbolic violence to maintain a social order that their members have recognized as legitimate.

McNay (1999) describes fields as follows: “[a]ny field is marked by a tension or conflict between the interests of different groups who struggle to gain control over a field’s capital...” (p. 106). For the purposes of this research project, different types and relations of masculinity will be examined, demonstrating that Incels are agents in society who are apart of one field (when engaging in masculinity), and apart of another field (the Incel forum) when enacting hypo or subordinate masculinities. Every member within a specific field competes against every other member in that field to gain power and meet the ideal image that the dominant group has established. Although the two previously stated fields operate in different ways, what ultimately binds them together is that they share the same doxa, which Giazitzoglu and Muzio (2020) precisely describe as a “taken-for-granted reality” (p. 68). Doxa is dictated and determined by the most powerful groups in society, and is therefore seen as a natural reality, a “given” way of societal flow and being, which is not recognized nor questioned by the masses. In the cases of these two fields, their doxa aligns with ideal masculine norms, which are accepted as the standard by those who are being studied in this project.

Within symbolic violence, doxa is essentially one's unknowing acceptance and adaptation of a powerful and oppressive group's mindset. When related to this project, it can be considered as the acceptance and perpetuation of hegemonic masculine norms as the ideal form of masculine performance, despite how damaging it may be to both women, and the vast majority of men in the societal field. In this field, the social order appears as normal and natural, stemming from patriarchal values and ideations; men are placed above women, and 'ideal' men – those who are "...straight, able-bodied, white, and 'hard,' i.e., not feminine" (Duaw & Connell, 2021, p. 4) - are placed above all other types of men. This version of hegemonic masculinity is not fixed, it is everchanging, but ultimately it is the most desired performance of masculinity in society at any given time. Although this specific type of masculinity is not the most common, it is the most vied for among men, and therefore becomes a coveted status to attain. The men in the societal field hone a habitus that is reflective of the "given order" of the social world. They attempt to meet hegemonic standards of masculinity, and if they are unable to do so, many often instead enact hypermasculinity, accentuating any and all masculine traits they *do* have in an exaggerated way in order to compensate for the areas that they may otherwise be lacking (Duaw & Connell, 2021).

This feeds directly into the habitus of the individuals in each field of study. The doxic reality they are living largely contributes to their habitus, or their perception of the world around them. While the doxa explains one's unknowing acceptance of the "given" order of society, habitus is the process through which the subordinate group perpetuates the dominant group's rhetoric by perceiving their own reality through the mindset of the powerful. They view both themselves as well as others through the mindset and perception of those who dictate the doxic reality. The adaptation of the powerful groups' mindset means that within their first position, in attempting to gain capital and social status, these individuals feed into hegemonic masculinity, accept it as the norm, and oftentimes strive to achieve it.

An individual's position in each of the above-mentioned fields is dictated by the type and amount of capital they are able to gain and utilize in a productive way. These concepts are defined as such: "...social capital (social connections with prominent or influential people)... and symbolic capital (social honor and prestige)" (Topper, 2001, p. 41). Both types of capital and their usefulness are also dictated by the most powerful groups in society, and those who are able

to conform. This research project will examine the ways in which social capital in the societal field, and symbolic capital in the forum's field relate to one another. How much social capital one is able to gain is predicated on one's ability or willingness to adhere to social norms.

While Bourdieu does provide this research with both a theoretical framework, and its subsequent concepts, it is insufficient for analyzing the dynamics of gender roles. Feminist scholars and feminist sociologists largely laid the groundwork for this research project in terms of their analyses of the Men's Rights Movement and the literature surrounding both it and the emergence of the online Manosphere. While some of these scholars simply critique Bourdieu's approach to discussing women in combination with his other works, specifically when related to his ideas surrounding capital and doxa, others attest that combining his theoretical ideas with feminist theory and feminist sociology would allow for more in-depth research. Regarding Bourdieu's earlier works, Thorpe (2009) states that "...Pierre Bourdieu had little to say about women or gender with most of his writings framed preeminently in class" (p. 492). This was the case up until the translated book-version of his writing entitled *Masculine Domination* was released in 2001, which drew significant criticism from many feminist scholars and feminist sociologists. Reviews and responses to this work claimed that Bourdieu's analysis of gender, in tangent with capital, doxa, habitus, etc., lacked important nuance, and was not an accurate representation of the strides feminism had made in society by this point in time (Thorpe, 2009).

Lovell (2000) goes on to argue that Bourdieu's view of women at this time was that they were simply "objects of value" (p. 21), to serve men in order for these men to gain greater symbolic capital for themselves. Women therefore did not have the means of gaining their own capital in society, they were simply seen as a vessel for men to climb the societal ladder. Bourdieu's refusal to acknowledge women as active subjects, rather than objects in the societal field, resulted in his conclusion that women were complicit in their own subordination, unwilling to change their habitus for their own benefit (Fowler, 2003). Bourdieu's dominant rhetoric surrounding gender relations, according to McLeod (2005), had underlying tones of strict binary divisions where society is in a fixed state of "masculine domination and female subordination" (p. 53), with everyone adhering to this doxic reality (Thorpe, 2009). Without recognizing women as independent and active subjects in society, Bourdieu's theories are limited in scope when it

comes to gender relations and the influence of gender on the ability to gain different types of capital, and subsequent power.

Certain scholars from this timeline posited that women in society could gain gender-based capital specific to femininity. Huppatz (2009, as stated in Thorpe 2009, p. 424-495) makes an important distinction between "...female capital – the gender advantage derived from being perceived to have a female (but not necessarily feminine) body—and feminine capital—the gender advantage derived from a disposition or skill set learned via socialization, or simply when members of a particular field recognize one’s body as feminine...”. When this type of observation and analysis is made, it becomes clear that Bourdieu’s theory and concepts are indeed limited. It is in this way that being perceived as feminine, in some instances, can have similar benefits to being seen as masculine when it comes to gaining capital and symbolic power. Hegemonic masculinity is contemporarily considered to be the norm of Western society, and those who are able to achieve this norm are awarded the most social and symbolic capital in this field; however, women who are perceived by others as feminine, or having a feminine body, can also reap certain benefits (Lovell, 2000). Huppatz (2009) also observes that some women are "...capitalizing on their femaleness and femininity within particular occupations (e.g., paid caring work) to gain outcome” (as cited in Thorpe, 2009, p. 495). This is still relevant in the present day, where many women may take advantage of their feminine features in jobs such as serving and customer service, in order to gain greater tips and make more money (economic capital). It thus becomes clear that women are subjects capable of acquiring many types of capital and are not passive objects simply existing for the benefit of men, as Bourdieu implied in his works.

Feminist scholars have also been very critical of Bourdieu’s overly deterministic analysis of gender when related to habitus. Judith Butler has been very openly and vocally analytical of Bourdieu’s work, citing that it "...offers no account of social change in the cultural arena” (Arnot, 2002, p. 49). He is argued to be far too deterministic and essentialist in his views of the world, leading his analyses to be misrepresentative of feminist scholarly works and ignorant of the influence and impact gender can have on the concepts he discusses. His unwillingness to explore feminist rhetoric is brought to light by Sweet (2020), when discussing a rape case, stating that "...Wacquant and Bourdieu read the rape and its aftermath as evidence that women’s

gendered dispositions force them to participate in their own oppression” (p. 923). Rather than delving deeper into gender relations, and the ways in which toxic masculinity and male domination may be the culprit at play when men feel it is okay to assault women, Bourdieu instead puts the onus on women themselves, claiming that they are unknowingly complacent in this violence, unconsciously accepting their subordination, and male dominance. He claims that symbolic violence is at play here, using this unknowing complacency as a victim-blaming tactic, and claiming that women are not reflexive, which results in their own demise and inability to shift their habitus for their own benefit (Sweet, 2020).

It is therefore quite clear how Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic violence, and its subsequent concepts, are limited in terms of analyzing the ways in which gender can affect one’s ability to acquire and utilize capital in a tangible way. He claims that women and feminism are at fault for these societal issues, rather than hegemonic masculinity itself. As a result of this limited scope, more feminist literature was consulted for this theoretical framework, in order to provide nuance and delve deeper into the ways in which gender and gender performance interact with concepts such as capital and habitus. While he does not particularly examine how gender structures negatively impact women, Bourdieu does recognize that “[i]n the West...pure masculine domination typically exerts its effects only on lower-class ‘lads’ who have no other ‘investments’” (Fowler, 2003, p. 472). He therefore does recognize gender and gender performance, but as many scholars have stated, his focus is only on males as subjects, and females as objects. This does, however, positively contribute to this research project, as it will go on to discuss that all genders suffer under the current patriarchal domination of society, not just women.

Hegemonic Masculinity, Alternative Masculinities, and Homosociality

After examining how the theory of symbolic violence may be limited in scope, it was clear that the concepts deviating from symbolic violence only provide a partial explanation for Incels’ behaviour and would do a much better job when combined with concepts stemming from multiple masculinities. As previously stated, the ideal form of masculinity in the societal field is white, able-bodied, tough, etc. Those who are able to meet this hegemonic norm are awarded the most social capital, and therefore are considered the powerful social group that dictates the doxic reality and the habitus of those in this field. However, many men are unable to meet this standard

and a common response to the failure to live up to this norm is to enact hypermasculinity, which can be defined as "...the exaggeration of stereotypical male behavior, such as feting of physical strength and aggression over emotional intelligence and empathy" (Dauw & Connell, 2020, p. 20). Hypermasculinity is an exaggerated form of masculinity, which tends to be violent-in-nature, and relies on putting down others as a means of building oneself up in an attempt to gain more social capital. As Dauw and Connell (2020) discuss, "[t]oxic masculinity focuses on the way that the extreme rejection of femininity through the performance of hypermasculinity creates unhealthy behavioral patterns and ideological beliefs that become toxic to men and, on a structural level, to their environments" (p. 4-5). The violent effects of this hyper-exaggeration enforce masculine stereotypes and contribute to their normalization rather than challenging it.

The men who engage in hypermasculinity overstate all masculine qualities they have as much as they can and downplay any undesirable characteristics they may have (e.g., short, feminine features, etc.). These hypermasculine actions are often toxic to themselves and to those around them, enforcing hegemonic masculinity as the norm and trying to gain more social capital in a destructive way. Hypermasculine men in particular have fully adapted the mindset of the socially oppressive group, believing those who are unable to measure up to hegemonic ideals are lesser and should be ridiculed. Those who identify as Incels fall far from masculine norms, and do not engage in hypermasculinity, but instead attempt to embrace their subordination in an attempt to gain symbolic capital.

Incels are therefore on the opposite end of the spectrum from hypermasculine men and in the field of the forum instead enact hypomascularity, which is an "...*understatement*, with its emotional effect *complacency*..." (Hall, 2002, p. 43, emphasis original). Hypomascularity is an alternative masculinity, largely the antithesis to hypermasculinity, and attempts to understate any masculine qualities that would fit into the hegemonic norm. Similar to men engaging in hypermasculinity, men who enact hypomascularity accept the current image of hegemonic masculinity as the norm. However, differing from hypermasculine men, they are complacent in their subordination, and do not attempt to conform to hegemonic norms of attraction. They do still, however, affirm doxic reality by accepting hegemony as the standard; although they reject this as their goal, they do not reject it as the norm. Those who are recognized by others as the most hypomascularity acquire symbolic capital and power on the forum.

Both of these extreme reactions to masculine norms result in the perpetuation of toxic masculinity through their unknowing complacency in preserving hegemony, and the ways in which they ridicule those unable to acquire capital. When combined with the derivatives of masculinity, the theory of symbolic violence serves to explain how Incels are complacent in their own oppression. It can therefore be explained as the inability for individuals to "...recognize its existence when they use the categories that benefit the dominant groups to understand the world, evaluate their strength and weakness, and frame their actions" (Hall, 2002, p. 251). The previously discussed concepts (*habitus*, *doxa*, etc.) explain why a certain group adapts the mindset that they do, and why they do not realize their complacency.

Hegemonic ideals are also upheld in both the social field and the field of the forum through the willingness of men to engage in homosociality, which Sumpter (2015) argues is "...reinforced through three components: emotional detachment, competitiveness, and the sexual objectification of women" (p. 105). Although mechanisms of gaining capital may work oppositely within each of these fields, as previously stated, the engagement in homosociality remains the same. In both realms, all men are encouraged to remain unemotional; in the social field, groups of men will get together, but it is deemed inappropriate and uncomfortable to talk about their feelings. Similarly, on the forum, individuals are encouraged to accept the hopelessness of society so as to no longer experience feelings of anguish or false hope. There is no emotional intimacy amongst these groups because this would risk them being perceived as feminine and weak. Competition between men can be seen through their enactment with both hypermasculinity (in the social field), and hypomasculinity (on the forum). Men pursuing hypermasculinity are in competition with themselves, by trying to achieve hegemony through self-improvement, and with each other by trying to be perceived as the toughest/most manly, as well as in sexual prowess, which ties into the objectification of women. This competitive nature amongst men also heavily contributes to toxic masculinity, and the unknowing complacency in perpetuating an unrealistic norm.

The objectification of women can be observed in both of these homosocial environments. With groups of men in the social field, this objectification normally assumes a sexual role, with these men discussing their sexual successes, degrading women in the process. On the forum, Incels see women as undeserving of rights and privileges, with many of their opinions being

rooted in misogyny. They will also use terms such as “femoid,” an abbreviation of female humanoid, in order to degrade women in discussion. Both groups similarly see women as lesser than men, and undeserving of equal treatment, whether it be through sexual objectification or dehumanization. These three characteristics of the homosocial environment all continue this cycle of symbolic violence whereby all of these men contribute to their own subordination under the current norm (Bird, 1996; Sumpter, 2015). It can therefore be concluded that alternative masculinities still have the potential to be harmful to men, unless they seek to challenge the current gender norms.

Both types of alternative masculinities fall under the hybrid masculinity category because they continue to reproduce hegemony. Hybrid masculinities often “...work in ways that create some discursive distance between young, White, straight men and hegemonic masculinity, enabling some to frame themselves as outside of existing systems of privilege and inequality” (Bridges & Pasco, 2014, p. 250). Incels engaging in this form of masculinity distance themselves from traditional masculinity, accentuating any and all features they have that contribute to their marginalization. They consequently distance themselves from any privilege that is tied to their identities and uphold hegemonic ideals in the process. Lusher and Robins (2009) state that “[a]ppropriate behaviors, beliefs, or views are differentiated from inappropriate ones by having a reference group to vilify” (p. 402). This is where hybrid and hegemonic masculinities clash and become toxic to one another. The intense rejection of all things non-masculine results in hegemonic men ridiculing and excluding those who do not possess hegemonic qualities. They vilify and “other” these lesser men, forcing them to engage in other types of masculinity, which in turn, defines them as against hegemony, effectively vilifying the more powerful group (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014; Lusher & Robins, 2009; Messerschmidt, 2012; Sumpter, 2015).

Methodology

The main goals of this research project are to describe Inceldom and the worldviews of those who self-identify as Incels. This project uses data collected from their forum, which includes comments on their own lives, their worldviews, the problems they identify, and the solutions they propose to said problems. This will be accomplished through identifying the overarching themes that emerge in the data collected from discussions between forum members on the most engaged-with Incel forum at the time of data collection. The specific goals of this project are to identify the main themes of conversation and debate amongst Incels, as well as the evidence that they have gathered to support their claims and opinions. Ultimately, this research seeks to explore and understand Incels' beliefs, values, and overall views of their world.

Incels were chosen as the population for this research project because they are a fairly new group in society, and as a result, there has not been an abundance of research conducted surrounding their behaviour, especially not from their points of view. More specifically, much of the research that *has* been conducted on Incels has been more quantitative-oriented, oftentimes focusing on the racial demographics of this population (Speckhard, Ellenberg, Morton, & Ash, 2020; Williams, Arntfield, Schaal, & Vincent, 2021), or the use of problematic language through mechanisms of coding for certain words or phrases. There are therefore many gaps in the literature that have left room for an abundance of research to be conducted on this population, and this research specifically attempts to fill part of those gaps by providing a qualitative analysis of their beliefs and internal social dynamics. Much of the research conducted in the past has produced conclusions that fit the narrative of Incels being dangerous and violent, and because critical researchers are attempting to transform social norms and accepted realities in society, Incels have largely become associated with political positions and beliefs (Hammersley, 2005). The political issues associated with Incels have been recent, as the Incel community was not well-known until the media coverage of the attacks by Alek Minassian and Elliot Rodger. Because media outlets tend to focus on aspects of stories that can be glorified to peak the public's interest, stories on Incels have mainly focused on their violence and pegged them as a dangerous threat to innocent civilians. As a result of this focus on violence and danger, the politics associated with Incels as a group are largely negative, and consequently, their online communities have become increasingly policed by authorities as well as ordinary citizens.

Without wanting to feed into the dominant rhetoric surrounding Incels as inherently violent and dangerous individuals, while simultaneously needing to recognize the often violent mindset of this group, I positioned myself as an outside observer of their discussions and took an affirmative feminist approach to this project (Sharkey, 2022). I attempt to allow their thoughts, ideas, and debates to remain unfiltered, and whether these ended up demonstrating violence or violent ideologies was not relevant to me when beginning data collection or analysis.

This research project rigorously adheres to the critical research paradigm, by challenging ideas of hegemonic masculinity and social norms concerning gender performativity, intersections of oppression, as well as problematizing demonizing discourses surrounding Incels.

Every individual occupies multiple hierarchical positions within the social hierarchy, and this allows researchers to notice certain things, while simultaneously being blind to others. These positions have a hand in shaping both what we see and what we know in society, especially in terms of oppression, and more specifically, intersectional oppression. When conducting research, it is essential for every critical researcher to understand their stance in a multitude of different social hierarchies. As such, I put forth a conscious effort to be aware of my own privileged positions, as well as my oppressed positions within the social hierarchy, and consequently, how this could potentially influence the research that I was conducting (Strega, 2005).

As a female researcher studying Incels, I can appreciate that although patriarchal Western society dictates my position as being subordinated by many of the men being researched, I also must recognize that these men perceive themselves as experiencing more oppression than I do, despite dominant discourses that suggest otherwise. Because of the difference in how each gender is treated in society, my experience as a woman is very different from their experiences as men. As a woman, it was very clear to me from the beginning that this forum was not a safe nor welcoming space for me to participate in. However, it is worth noting that the community's internalized standard of attraction often centers on whiteness (Gheorghe 2023), with many differentiating between "Staceys" (attractive white women) and women of color. When themes of white supremacy and racial preservation became prevalent in the data, I became more aware of my position and privilege as a white researcher observing racially charged insults and similarly demeaning language.

As a critical researcher, I must recognize that as a white female, I cannot claim to understand the experiences or oppressions of people of colour, however, as a woman, I should, according to critical reflexivity, have a better understanding of gender privilege within patriarchal society because I am part of the gender minority and have experienced oppression from those who identify as men. As a white woman I also must recognize that oftentimes my white privilege outweighs the gendered oppression I experience, however, Incels' perception of their social position is that they are oppressed by all women in society. As a critical researcher it is very beneficial for me to observe a wide variety of thoughts and opinions from many types of Incels, as they all experience the world in a different way from me and from each other. Having a peek into these differing worldviews through their interactions with each other, widened the scope of my knowledge of Incels and allowed me to learn much more about my research topic and how this population views the world around them.

My literature review encompasses both sources of knowledge from those with experiential knowledge, giving their firsthand accounts and opinions regarding the Men's Rights Movement, Manosphere, and Incel population, as well as scientific knowledge on these topics. As previously stated, researchers will have different authority depending on their status within different positions in a given hierarchy and given field, allowing some to speak on certain issues, but not on others (hooks, 1988). White, middle-class men often become the authority to speak about others' experiences as a result of their privilege, and legitimize minorities in a patronizing manner when they "allow" them to speak. Researchers who fit into a privileged category must be reflective of their position and acknowledge how it influences their research as a whole, attempting to speak with others, not for them. Critical researchers use different sources of knowledge that are all equally valid, but value experiential knowledge, which allows the researcher to speak to people who have experienced what is being researched, above all else. The goal of critical researchers is to transform one's knowledge by speaking to those with lived experience. With my research question and goals in mind, I will be examining Incels' perceptions of their lived experiences, and subsequently provide an analysis of the data.

Qualitative Data Analysis: Justification

Considering the nature of this research, and everything discussed above, it was logical to proceed using a qualitative analysis of the data to centre Incels' perceptions of their world. The

data was collected from online text, and a qualitative approach allowed me to gather a plethora of discussions, opinions, and arguments had within this population of Incels, without reducing their views of the world to statistics and calculations. This approach enabled raw data to be presented in its initial state. Rather than making predictions surrounding my research, I wanted the data to speak for itself, and to draw conclusions from it without any predetermined themes to seek out while doing the initial coding. This research project was not concerned with the demographics of the Incel population, rather, it sought to examine the behavioural and hierarchical dynamics of their forum. In order to do this, it was necessary to look at a variety of discussion threads that the Incels engaged in, examining the language used and the relationships between the individuals being analyzed. Rather than making hypotheses surrounding the data prior to collecting and analyzing it, I instead did an initial observation of the data during collection, and subsequently explored this same data set a second time in order to observe the phenomena that was present.

Originally, I had planned to collect data and explore multiple Incel forums, manifestos and YouTube videos with interviews of Incels, in order to get a full scope and insight into issues that they identify, their potential solutions to these problems, and how they view the rest of the world. However, after reading two manifestos, I concluded that they were not relevant to my research goals because they only focused on the writer's life specifically, and therefore did not give much insight into larger societal issues, or issues surrounding Inceldom as a whole. I also watched the entirety of a YouTube video in which one of the members of an Incel forum was extensively interviewed regarding his life, Inceldom, and many of its elements. Initially, I thought this may be an informative first-person account of many of the issues that Incels face, effectively giving me an insider's perspective of what is discussed on the online forums and groups that Incels engage in. However, upon conducting further research and collecting data from one of the forums, I found a thread discussing this specific interview, with the vast majority of comments from other Incels stating that this was not an accurate representation of Inceldom, and that they were all very disappointed that this interview opportunity was thwarted and wasted by someone who chose not to talk about their values accurately or to their full extent. Upon observing these criticisms, I made the decision to exclude this interview from my data and from my research in general, as it was clearly not representative of the majority of Incels, or their core values.

This was just one example demonstrating how using chat rooms and online forums as testimony was incredibly beneficial to me as a critical researcher. The information that was gathered for this project contains recounted experiences from people who identify as Incels. As a researcher, I was most concerned about my ability to gain and observe unfiltered accounts from these individuals in order to produce narratives demonstrating their worldviews (Alasuutari, 1995).

In terms of their online chatrooms and forums, I explored a variety before narrowing my data down to one single forum, which at the time was named *Incels.co*, but has likely since switched domains. Every other forum that I observed was much less popular, had less members, much less engagement through discussion, and therefore was not as valuable to me or this project. There were a few forums that did not require members to be Incels at all (no restrictions upon creating an account and participating in/creating discussions), and others which not only allowed women to join and contribute to the forum's conversations, but also believed that women could be Incel and could therefore speak on Incel issues. Although, at first, I did browse these alternate forums in order to determine their relevancy, I was quickly able to conclude that they were not very popular discussion boards; member posts were infrequent, and interactions with each post were very minimal, meaning that there were a substantial lack of in-depth discussions and nuanced arguments, both of which I was actively seeking for my analysis. Additionally, many of these discussion boards did mention *Incels.co* as being a very popular forum, sometimes citing their discussions as being too extreme and their group as too exclusionary for the liking of these other online groups. Because *Incels.co* was brought up on so many other types of Incel forums, it was safe to conclude that this was a very commonly frequented site amongst this population, and controversial enough to include a variety of viewpoints.

After visiting the *Incels.co* forum, and briefly observing how it worked and what type of content was available for data collection, I concluded that there was more than enough data available for an in-depth analysis, and with there being around ten thousand account users on the forum (at the time of data collection), it was extremely rare for any one topic to be fully agreed upon. In order for my analysis to be representative, though not statistically representative of the

larger Incel population, and Inceldom itself, it was essential to examine a multitude of differing opinions on a variety of topics.

Gaining access to this selected forum was quite simple as it was not necessary to create an account to view posts or discussions. Without an account, I was not granted the permission to create posts or comment on other users' posts to engage in discussion, however, this was not a goal of this research project. Once I accessed the forum, I began selecting discussion threads at random, reading through each of the threads in order to decide which ones would be the most relevant to the goals of this research project. I quickly discovered that there were thousands of threads, and consequently, random selection was not a practical nor efficient way to conduct my research. This first observation of the data did, however, give me the opportunity to seek out some of the more common themes in forum discussions.

After deciding that this forum was the best choice to become my primary source of data, and many common themes had been identified during this initial readthrough, I subsequently consulted Paillé and Mucchielli's (2006) qualitative thematic analysis as a means of both collecting and analyzing the data at hand. The first aspect of this approach concerns the work of capturing all themes of a data set. The purpose of this is to identify all relevant themes in the material that are related to the research objective(s). I did this by reading a few posts from each of the tags on the forum in order to determine which ones were the most relevant to what my research was seeking to explore, and which posts had the most interaction/comments from other forum users, as this would allow for differing opinions and complex debates amongst members. After capturing this sample, I decided to use 20 of the tags on the forum that seemed to be the most used and had the most engagement from users (in no particular order): Experiment, Hypocrisy, It's Over, JFL (Just F***ing Laugh), LDAR (Lie Down and Rot), Lifefuel, News, NSFW (Not Suitable for Work), Ragefuel, Serious, Story, Teehee, Venting, Based, Cope, Discussion, Soy, Toxic Femininity, Suicidefuel, and Blackpill. I selected the ten most engaged-with posts from each of these 20 tags, yielding a minimum of 200 forum posts as my main data set.

Each post made on the forum becomes associated with whatever tag the user posting decides and is therefore placed into the broader category of that tag. Users on the forum can select any specific tag and see all posts associated with that tag, sortable by the number of

comments each post has received. From here, I selected each tag one at a time and collected data from the ten posts that had the most comments, taking screenshots of the entirety of each one of these threads, and eventually converting these screenshots into quotations as my primary data set. This demonstrates a purposive sampling approach to my data, as I was able to seek out the discussion threads which included a variety of thoughts and opinions by being the most engaged with by forum members. From an ethical standpoint, because all forum members used aliases for their profiles, and utilized seemingly random photos from the internet, many of which were anime-based, this therefore did not expose anything about their identities through names or images. None of these accounts had to be linked to an email address or phone number, etc., so all accounts could remain anonymous, and users would not risk being identified or doxxed⁶. If a user had linked their email or phone number to their account, this information was not visible to other users on the forum.

The second aspect of this type of thematic analysis involves discerning between the importance of certain themes in the data sets, recurring themes, groupings of similar theme, and those which do not align with the research objectives, and could subsequently be disregarded (Paillé & Mucchielli, 2006). Through the initial readthrough of the discussion posts that I was taking screenshots of, I was able to differentiate between useful tags and non-useful tags, as well as which tags out of the 20 that I had previously selected would be best to start with (having the most relevant information for this specific project). I quickly became aware of many themes within these tags and began selecting for evidence to support these emerging themes while reading through each thread in the screenshots I had collected. A word document was then created for each individual tag, adding all of the screenshots from the ten most popular threads from each tag to their designated documents for further analysis. The most popular threads were sorted by how many comments each thread contained, those with the most comments were the posts that were most interacted with by forum members. I then split the screenshots into three broad categories: worldviews of Incels, how the forum works, and the forum's internal dynamics, each of which contained multiple sub-themes.

⁶ Doxxing is exposing someone's personal or private information on the internet, it is often a tactic of hackers and is generally done with malicious intentions.

Within the first category were sub-themes such as ideologies of the blackpill, misogyny, Incels' values and beliefs, their identified problems (and subsequent solutions), and right-wing viewpoints. In the second category were the themes: hierarchy of hierarchies on the forum, negotiation of capital, bluepill vs. blackpill, and temporary vs. permanent status forum users. Within theme three were the following categories: competitive victimization, gatekeeping, affirmation/reaffirmation of Incel status, and forum toxicity. All of these categorizations shifted at least slightly to compensate for changes in research goals, however, this is how they started when the data was first collected.

For efficiency, I transferred the word documents containing screenshots to the NVivo program in order to code all of the collected data. I created three separate nodes to represent the three very broad themes, which were stated above. Uploading all of the screenshots to NVivo allowed me to easily read through each of the collected images within each of the tags, to code them into the appropriate nodes, to add notes whenever necessary to further divide them into even smaller sub-themes, and to add observatory notes for future analysis. After completing this initial coding, I re-read through all of the screenshots that had been coded and ended up transferring them back into new word documents, which were specifically labelled to match their given themes and sub-themes. Once all of the data was collected and efficiently organized, I was able to begin mapping out the structure of the analysis, and deciding which screenshots contained the most accurate quotations as support of the observations I had made during the initial coding process. After this base structure was created, the writing of the analysis flowed easily.

Since I conducted a thematic analysis, and I am dealing with subjects whose identities will remain anonymous, I did not have to go through procedural ethics for this particular project. Because confidentiality is not a huge issue for my research, as my data is focusing on anonymous comments and chats, I will primarily be focused on Incels providing an insight into their worldviews through their firsthand comments and recounted experiences.

In terms of the tangible limitations of this research project, with the Incel forum being anonymous, there is no information surrounding the demographics of forum participants, and therefore, I could not draw any conclusions regarding race, age, ethnicity, or even sex. There is

no way for me to tangibly determine nor confirm whether any of the Incels' claims regarding their appearances were true, or how/if their appearances contributed to their suffering in society.

Another limitation of this research is that, while it is qualitative research, there is no opportunity to interact with forum members in order to ask questions or explore their comments further. The data collected is fixed, therefore, whatever was debated during each discussion post cannot be expanded upon. It would be beneficial for future research to include open-ended interviews as a form of collecting qualitative data on Incels. If they were able to remain anonymous, they would also avoid the risk of being doxxed, which would allow for a more structured and in-depth understanding of their worldviews without fear of backlash. Interviewing a large sample size would allow for many different opinions to be explored by the researcher, and asking additional questions when certain topics of interest are brought up would allow for a more significant understanding of them.

Analysis

1. The Doxa of Inceldom

1.1 Core Beliefs of Inceldom

1.1.1 Misogyny as an Underlying, Universally Shared Value

Incels' views on society largely stem from their beliefs that men have suffered as a result of the rise of feminism and the women's liberation movements. They see society as hopeless for them because, in their opinion, it is gynocentric and allows women to control the social and sexual market. They see women as the subordinate sex, being influenced by emotion more than logic. They are considered intellectually inferior whilst simultaneously having the most influence over what is deemed desirable and undesirable when it comes to men. They see women as desiring hegemonic men (white, straight, tough, etc.), and therefore develop a hatred for them (stemming from ingrained misogyny) because they fall short of this attractive standard, and therefore, sex and relationships become virtually unattainable.

From Incels' point of view, society is gynocentric and therefore favours women, which negatively affects most men because most men are unable to meet women's high standards. When falling short of these standards, they become hopeless, which negatively impacts their self-esteem, and their hopes for the future. Despite patriarchy and misogyny still very much encapsulating society, Incels see women as being the most privileged beings, holding the most power in society and being a large factor in the oppression of Incels. The doxa of Inceldom is therefore rooted in misogyny and the belief that hegemonic masculinity is an unchangeable reality that Incels will never measure up to.

With gynocentrism being a large identifiable problem on the forum, when it comes to proposed solutions to these issues, they mostly target reproduction and limitations on women's sexual partners by wanting to enforce monogamy, legal incest, and a return to pre-feminist times. For them, this would look like a typical nuclear family, where the woman stays home and takes care of the household and its members, while the man goes to work and provides for the family. In addition to this, the woman's purpose would only be to serve her husband and she therefore would not have the rights or independence that current Western women have (voting, financial independence, etc.). Certain Incels wish to redact some of women's rights in order to return to when women were not as sexually liberated, and monogamy was a social norm. Others want to

enforce Islamic values because these are also more closely aligned with pre-feminism in terms of how they approach relationships, marriage, family, sex, etc. A return to monogamy would leave less men to be lonely and sexually frustrated, whilst also forcing women to date their looksmatch⁷.

The doxa of Inceldom aligns with the doxa of the societal field, hegemonic and hypermasculinity are accepted as the desirable norm. For them, and the rest of society, social capital is gained based on how close or far one strays from the hegemonic norm, despite it being a nearly unachievable standard. In the societal field, the doxa of an Incel is clear when they measure themselves against the hegemonic norm and conclude that they have the least amount of social capital, and have subsequently formed their own group and online forum in solace. In the field of the forum, they maintain the same doxa, however, their standards of symbolic power differ from that of society. Having social capital in society gives one prestige and power, however, this power has the opposite affect on the forum. The socially powerful in society have the least amount of symbolic power on the forum, they are the least respected and the most discredited individuals. In order to gain symbolic capital and power in this field, one must stray as far from the hegemonic norm as possible. Symbolic power and hypomascularity therefore still rely on hegemonic masculinity as being the accepted and unquestioned norm.

Their patriarchal and misogynistic beliefs follow the given accepted reality that men are still superior to women and should have more power and status as a result. Their beliefs and views surrounding women have underlying misogynistic tones, consistent with the dictation of the patriarchy. They believe that women are biologically and physically inferior, and consequently, their identifiable problems and solutions to Inceldom all involve the control of women, keeping them subordinated by men, and adhering to the values of the misogynistic patriarchy. Whilst their doxa is an unchallenged given, Incels' habitus is more fluid, and will shift depending on which field one is in, therefore, Incels may modify their behaviour depending on their given setting, in order to fit in and gain capital. Those who do choose to engage in hypermasculine practices (e.g., going to the gym, working to become upper-class, etc.) recognize that this would gain them social capital and power in the societal field and consequently increase their chances at romantic and sexual success with women, whom are supposedly the ones setting

⁷ The person, of the opposite sex, who is equal to you in terms of looks and attractiveness.

these expectations. Although those engaging in hypermasculinity are awarded some capital for vying for the desired type of masculinity, they are also unknowingly contributing to upholding problematic and damaging values and beliefs stemming from unachievable hegemonic norms.

Hegemony emerges in comparison to what it subordinates; in pre-feminist society, hegemony mostly worked against women, however, in contemporary society, Incels believe that it is women who dictate what constitutes hegemonic masculinity, this being the men who are most desirable to them, thereby excluding a large group of men who are considered undesirable. Those who do not live up to women's standards help to define those who do as the ideal norm for all men to strive to achieve (Barrett, 1996). This is where Incels' desires to return to more traditional patriarchal ways stem from, they want to put men's importance back into the spotlight.

Because Incels attribute their oppressed status as originating from the rise of feminism and women's rights, many of the obstacles they supposedly face in society stem from misogynistic attitudes. This can be seen not only in their views of the world, but also in the language they utilize when discussing women, as can be seen in the quotations below:

[deathgreetmeslow]: "Youtube fucking slut deserves some acid in the face Pakistan style. Chad pic in the background.

God I hate everything about her, she also has the intelligence of a down syndrome child. bet you she has the most beef flaps from chads 8 incher". (April 30th, 2018)

*[RichCel]: "I haven't seen anyone more in need of being raped by a pack of [n*****s] than this cunt, recently". (April 30th, 2018)*

[MayorOfKekville]: "ALL sub-8 men know exactly how we feel, even the cucks and feminists. It's just the cucks and feminists are completely delusional and repeatedly tell themselves that the blackpill is not true and that a m'lady will fall in love with him if he ReSpEcTs her because her heart is good and pure and the world is a just and fair place.

Misogyny is the beating heart if Inceldom. It is the logical conclusion of all rational thought. Only when a man embraces it can he see the world as it is". (July 7th, 2019)

As is evident in the above three quotations, misogyny is rampant on the forum not only in the identifiable problems and solutions that Incels describe, but also embedded in their everyday

language. The willingness to speak about women in such problematic and derogatory ways demonstrates the values that Incels adopt, stemming from structural misogyny and patriarchy. On top of the language they use to refer to women, their opinions of them are also dripping with sexism and negative stereotypes, as can be seen below:

[Arthas83]: “Females are all dirty, sinful, opportunistic, parasitic, degenerates. They became mad and blind by all their privileges. The moment a female asks for money that is the only red flag you need, to know that she is worthless.

I feel no sympathy for those who let themselves be deceived. Beta cucks, are willing to become slaves to foids, but they ignore the Holy Creator. The Almighty has no partner, you can't worship the foids and Him at the same time. I hope God judges them soon.” (May 28th, 2018)

Incels often adhere to traditional beliefs and values which are not progressive nor logical, but instead considered to be outdated, skewed, and biased. This can be seen in the following quotations, as well as in discussions surrounding race relations and racial preservation, which will be outlined later on in this chapter.

[caffeine455]: “nonvirgin women=fucking worthless trash”

[MainLander] (in response to [caffeine455]): “Yeah they're just pieces of meat to me at this point. Would fuck and that's it.” (June 26th, 2018)

[Unknown User]: “Nonetheless, the grievances of the incel movement can have a strong emotional (and therefore political) impact, because just about every man, except Chad, can relate to them, as he recalls the sexual frustration of adolescence. We know that among the fondest dreams every heterosexual boy ever had since puberty was to enjoy a girl's love, adoration, affection, and pussy; and we all felt the dismay at knowing we were so close yet so far away from having it.

Girls are physically weaker, and their nature is submissive, yet society elevated them to such a higher status compared to us, by giving them both the rights that were traditionally reserved for men, and the privileges that have always been reserved for females. We remember how this kept the jailbaits' pussies tantalizingly out of our reach, and how the girls misused their power, letting their whims direct them forward making the dumbest decisions.

My vision was to create a new society, where pussy would be as easy to obtain as anything else we get on the free market. Girls need to be property because when property rights aren't protected, there ends up being a shortage or even a famine – in incels' case, of access to pussy. Men are wired to want to own females,

females are wired to want to be owned by men, and that's all there is to it. To feel any other way requires a lot of cultural conditioning to suppress the natural desires and glorify an unnatural desire – for equality between the sexes – as superior to what our instincts tell us is right.

That would be fine, if feminism actually worked, we use cultural conditioning to civilize our species in many other ways, for the good of mankind. But feminism doesn't work, so we'd be better off going back to our 'primitive' (or as I would call them, 'classical') patriarchal ways – aka, what we had before we began this disastrous pseudo-egalitarian social experiment” (n.d.)

Although Incels view women as the lesser sex, as is demonstrated in the above two quotations, they simultaneously believe that women have all the power in society, especially regarding their control over the sexual market. They believe that ultimately, the rise of feminism has ironically had a negative impact on women, while at the same time negatively impacting men in the sexual market. The user in the following quotation includes a statement from a local politician running for congress in a small U.S. city, in which he explains how feminism has actually had a negative overall impact on women, despite them gaining more rights:

[Unknown User]: “He seems to have similar opinions to Tom Graver when it comes to women (property) and some weird Hitler idolization. That said, his manifesto has some good parts. Relevant to this blog post, I quote from it:

Part 1:

‘Most career women end up feeling tired and overburdened by their responsibilities. They sigh heavily, as though they are being compelled to carry the weight of the world on their weak backs. They're so different from the carefree young girls they used to be, or the happy mothers whose husbands bring home the bacon while they relax at home and enjoy spending time with their kids. The housewife gets to sip coffee in her pajamas and make her infant smile by speaking baby talk and playing peek-a-boo with her, while the career woman rushes in the early morning to put on her work clothes and go fight traffic. The career woman tells herself that having her own money gives her freedom, because now she can buy 300 pairs of shoes (most of which she'll wear maybe once) without having to deal with a husband complaining that she's making frivolous purchases that bury him in an avalanche of footwear when he opens the closet

When James Damore published his essay, Google's Ideological Echo Chamber, career women hated him because they couldn't face the truth that they had invested in a path that wouldn't lead them to the kind of happiness and fulfillment they could have enjoyed as tradwives. They were trying to cope by deceiving themselves, and he dropped a truth bomb on them, so they had to get rid of him. But others will take up the fight, and the truth bombs will keep coming until we

put an end to the feminist social experiment, which has gone the same way as communism and other egalitarian social experiments.

If women were truly as competent as men, they would not need constant handouts and other forms of affirmative action from men in order to try to achieve equality in fields like STEM. Already, men pay the majority of taxes, yet women want more freebies. They want WIC, and child support payments from men, and all kinds of other forms of wealth redistribution, to bail them out when they make irresponsible choices (such as bypassing all the good providers to go get impregnated by a sexy badboy, or dumping a good husband, rather than raising the kid with him), that would otherwise lead them down the path to giving birth in the rain in dark alleys. Feminists want women to have rights, but they don't want women to have accountability for their choices.

Some might argue, 'Women bear the burden of having and taking care of children, so they deserve to have men support them financially' Yes, but one could argue with equal validity, 'The men who support women financially should be rewarded by those women for doing so' A lot of men are getting little or no benefit in exchange for what the state makes them pay to enable women to be mothers. The men who make child support payments, but don't get to have sex with their ex-wives anymore or spend any time with their kids, have not received a benefit that is proportionate to what they have to pay. The incels who have never slept with a woman at all, or even held a woman's hand, yet are forced to pay taxes for schools, welfare, and other support for other men's children, are arguably not receiving a benefit at all, because their genetic lines are coming to an end (This is why they often refer to working for a living as 'wagecucking')

Saturday, June 02, 2018 3:07:00 PM

Anonymous said...

Part 2:

'In fact, those incels' paying for women to have sex with other men and bear children by those other men subsidizes, and thereby enables and encourages, those women's choosing those other men over them. It negates the advantage those incels would have otherwise been able to offer in the sexual marketplace, which was that they could provide for a family. So incels are actually incurring another cost, rather than receiving a benefit, in exchange for their contribution. If only a few women were getting away with this, it might serve their feminine imperative; but since it's happening on a civilization-wide scale, it threatens the survival of the whole race because eventually, women will run out of cucks to exploit.

Feminism has made men less happy, but it has made women downright miserable, by depriving them of the relatively cushy life that used to be their birthright. From

1999, suicide rates among white women and white men increased by 60% and 28%, respectively.’ (n.d.)

This quotation essentially posits that with the rise of feminism, women not only gained more rights but also more responsibility, which, in the long run, has led them to be miserable shells of their once comfortably satisfied selves. Rather than staying home to take care of the kids and the house, women are now forced to work and contribute to a capitalistic society, then come home to take care of their children and husbands after a long day of labour. The assumption is that they no longer enjoy the benefits of their husbands’ salaries, they must make their frivolous purchases with their own money, but they still expect men to financially support them when they are the ones who are pushing for divorces and child custody. They believe that not only has this hurt women but it has also hurt sexually deprived men, such as Incels, because not only do women dominate relationships, but Incels are now being forced to pay into taxes, money which is allocated to things that they have no need for (schools, childcare, etc.). Incels, like other hegemonically-excluded men (e.g., gay men), are therefore paying into services that they do not typically benefit from, making them a commodified resource under capitalism. As men, they are a needed resource to continue patriarchal capitalism, without yielding any benefits because as atypical/subordinated men, they are automatically excluded from the benefits and privileges that masculine men accrue (Collins, 2015).

[Unknown User]: “Rise up against the gynocentric government.” (n.d.)

[mental_out]: “The main issue is that they got equal rights but not equal responsibility. I wouldn’t give half as much of a shit if they suffered the same as men, but no they’re actively protected from the responsibilities men have to take on and have everything provided for them. They’re beyond having equal rights to men, they’re actively put on a pedestal in our society and held above men (at least average and unattractive men any way).

They don’t have to fight in wars, they don’t have to do any of the dangerous jobs that men do, and the government throws money at them left and right. That’s not equal rights at all that’s being given actual supremacy to men” (August 3rd, 2019)

Feminism and women’s rights therefore become one of the most agreed upon identified issues on the forum that plague Incels’ everyday lives and wellbeing. As user *mental_out* summarizes, Incels believe the government to be gynocentric, rotating around the needs and

wants of women, without giving them all of the responsibility and consequence that comes with having the rights that they have acquired.

The issue of hypergamy is one of the largest reasons Incels have a desire to return to traditional times when women were controlled under the patriarchy. Hypergamy can also be referred to as the 80:20 rule, which essentially theorizes that 80% of the female population vies for the top 20% of men. The top 20% is somewhat subjectively labelled, but does mostly follow hegemonic norms of desirability, specifically the Chads, Tyrones⁸, and the rich men of society. The rich men do not necessarily need to meet the physical hegemonic masculine standards entirely but do need to be at least somewhat conventionally attractive to be considered a part of the sought after 20%. With 80% of women essentially controlling the sexual marketplace, many men become sexually starved, and this eventually results in groups like Incels. Therefore, many of Incels' solutions to their problems surround solving or equalizing the 80:20 ratio. Women not pursuing their looksmatch leads to higher standards of attraction, and unfair dating grounds for 80% of the male population who cannot get anywhere near the hegemonic standards that women dictate.

*[Unknown User]: "**Hypergamy**
Hypergamy is the principle that women are always in competition with one another to try to secure the highest value male they can, who is typically of higher value than they are themselves. Hypergamy is facilitated by our modern dating culture, where average women can easily match with all the tallest, most handsome, best looking men in a city. These men can then take turns servicing each of these women, and the women don't necessarily mind, because they all fantasize they will be 'the one' he chooses. Statistics show the top 5% of men are now having 38% more partners than they did a decade ago, and women's sexual partner count is also riding with this. Hypergamy also leads to unstable relationships, as women are always eager to "trade up" if given the opportunity. Most divorces for this reason are initiated by women"*

*[BlkPillPres]: "Women still have their 'exclusive powers' (sexual and reproductive resources)
Men rendered our 'exclusive powers' most via technological advancement and giving women rights (physical and material resources)
Relationships way back in the past were more 'fair' and 'successful' because every party had some form of leverage, now women are basically the only ones*

⁸ Chads are hegemonic masculine white men, Tyrones are masculine black men who get as close to hegemony as they can (hegemony is white-centred).

with leverage so they no longer have to 'date fairly (rampant hypergamy)', which results in an underclass of sex starved, depressed and suicidal males.

Women's exclusive powers are now under threat as male ingenuity (technological advancement) is now beginning to encroach upon their 'realm' e.g. sex android technology (which is why they are already protesting against it)". (n.d.)

[LittleBoy]: "Tinder and online dating has raised the standard of attraction for women. Something like 80% of women are chasing the top 10% of men, which leaves the other 90 in a terrible spot. Women, hypergamy, and the onset of online dating have all contributed to nearly 1/3 of men in their twenties reporting not having had sex at all. Great time to be a woman. Bad time to be a man". (n.d.)

As the users in *BlkPillPres* and *LittleBoy* explain, with the rise of feminism, women have become sexually liberated and have taken control over sexual relations in the social field. Rather than them being influenced by men, and contributing to the patriarchy, women have now become freer in their sexuality, deciding who they date, have sex with, and reject now that they have greater freedom. User *LittleBoy* discusses how this has also become accelerated by online dating apps such as Tinder; it is now easier to find a sexual partner, and even easier to simply swipe left as a form of instant rejection. These online dating apps work against Incels because they are based mostly on appearance at a first glance, which is exactly where Incels are at their weakest, so there is an even greater opportunity for them to be outright rejected without having a fighting chance with a woman and without being able to potentially persuade a woman with their personality.

With women's rights being identified as the main issue causing Inceldom, it follows suit that practically all identified solutions surround some method of removing these rights. Additionally, many of the problems and solutions that Incels address on this forum would not be considered appropriate off the forum, therefore, they tend to keep these discussions on the forum itself. Certain solutions that may make their way out of the field of the forum directly align with the unchallenged doxa of society, for example, revoking certain rights of women, and socially enforcing monogamy. Both proposed solutions directly coincide with the patriarchal and misogynistic doxa of Western society. The patriarchy has stakes in the control of women and women's bodies, therefore, removing certain rights from women (e.g., voting, working in certain fields of employment, etc.) would consequently cause many women to be increasingly under the control of men. Ideally within this proposed solution, more women would go back to being

housewives who serve their husbands and families, which would allow men to capitalize on the employment, power, and sexual markets, further strengthening the patriarchy. Similarly, socially enforcing monogamy would result in more control over what women can and cannot do with their bodies. Enforced monogamy would specifically target women because, while it is socially acceptable and normalized for men to have many sexual partners at once, if women engage in this same behaviour, they are looked down upon, shamed, and labeled as sexually promiscuous. Additionally, this solution is an attempt to even out the skewed 80:20 hypergamous ratio, which is dictated by women and their choice of male sexual partners, and what they consider to be desirable male qualities. These are potential solutions to Inceldom that Incels would likely be more comfortable talking about in the societal field because they would be considered doxically acceptable solutions based on underlying themes of patriarchy and misogyny, which are the foundations of Western society. The proposed solutions to hypergamy all surround women having less rights than they do currently, as can be seen in the quotes below:

[EyesAreSoCold]:

- *“They are less intelligent than men.*
- *They are more swayed by emotion.*
- *They are not as loyal as men.*

With these in mind they will make very bad voters. Just look at how women vote today. It’s everything that is popular. They vote for immigration, environmentalism, socialism, feminism. There is a reason why women always have had their influence restricted. Inceldom rarely existed before women got voting rights, and you can see that in all those countries where women are the most free hypergamy and Inceldom are also big.

I misread the title as voting rights didn’t see you meant rights in general. I don’t think women should be stripped of all rights, they are humans after all. But I wouldn’t want to give them some important privileges such as being allowed to vote.” (n.d.)

[Fat Link]: “They should lose their rights because women’s so called liberation is literally ruining society creating a generation of criminals and lost broken men like us.

Arranged marriages should make a return along with all the oldschool rules that went with it is to be able to marry your girl of choice you’d have to prove to her father you are financially able to take care of her and your presumed future family. So yeah women would be under their father’s control again on who they could marry or not and they’d be raised to be humble, respectful, polite, kind and feminine once again, without anyone allowing the Jew’s

MTV/Facebook/Instagram garbage to rot their brains making them always think they are 'missing out' by not whoring themselves to every Chad that comes along or travelling to dangerous third world shitholes so they can feel they've become 'cultured'. Women's natural nature is to be amoral so you literally need a system to teach them to behave morally and reward them for so doing otherwise you end up with a shitty anti man society that we have now that only rewards the top 10% of males who won the genetic and or familial lottery (meaning they were born wealthy and privileged)." (n.d.)

[RodgersSecondAdvent]: "That post of mine she monitored was very tame though. Not only shouldn't foids have equal rights, they ought to be property." (April 29th, 2018)

[HidekiTojota]: "Yes, bring back traditional ways. Females must not be able to vote and they should stay home to take care of the children. That's how it's supposed to be." (August 2nd, 2019)

The users *EyesAreSoCold* and *Fat Link* are discussing the reasons for women not deserving the right to vote, and various other rights in society. Incels tend to adhere to a more traditionalist mindset, claiming that women are more emotion-oriented and make decisions based on their feelings, rather than based on fact and science. User *Fat Link* believes women to be much too simple-minded to rule society, and that they must be trained in the proper ways to live and to pursue sexual and romantic relationships. They want women to essentially be reduced to property and goods to be traded, wagered for, and pursued by the wealthiest and most promising of men, further fueling the patriarchy and capitalism as a whole. Their belief is that women's biggest purpose in society should be breeding and continuing the human race. They claim that women should be earned by men, and once earned, should remain in the household like in pre-feminist times, when women would cook, clean, take care of the children, and were ultimately controlled by their husbands, as they had very limited financial, sexual, or social freedom.

Apart from the proposed solutions related to reverting back to the typical traditional, patriarchal household, another suggested solution to hypergamy includes enforced monogamy. This proposed enforcement of monogamy would not be legally enforced, but rather, socially enforced. In essence, rather than society accepting or even encouraging women to be sexually liberated, it would instead be a social norm to be monogamous, in an attempt to even out the sexual and romantic playing field between the sexes. While this view does combat the dominant habitus in the social field, it is still rooted in misogyny and blames women for the hardships of

men. Incels often discuss how it is unfair for unattractive men because their looksmatch vies for men who are above their own looksmatch, resulting in hypergamy's skewed sexual ratio. If monogamy were to be socially enforced, Incels would have a greater chance at finding someone to engage in sex with, or even have a relationship with.

[Blackpill101]: "The only reason as to why femoids detest far right movements in general is because they're composed of incel-looking men who want to bring back patriarchal values (indirectly force women to engage in a monogamous life with some average looking guy).

Women love the Left because it is their resource of orbiters and white knights willing to defend their actions no matter what.

Once the Alt right takes the blackpill, we incels should 100% join forces with them." (May 9th, 2018)

[Unknown User]: "Because those women in an alternate traditional society would have been married with children to their looksmatch instead of guzzling a bunch of upper middle class and above cum for money that goes to their pimps/agencies to help promote the destruction of their society and their genetic duty as a species." (n.d.)

[Unknown User]: "Racial diversity is the very damn thing that causes 'superiority' and 'inferiority' between races, it is a core problem that causes incelism. Think about it, lets say we created this rule that forced women to date within their 'looks league', and at a certain age, every human gets a ID with a league number attached to it, and you can only mate and breed from that number and up, but you can't lower (because that takes away women from men beneath your looks range, and then above you likely won't struggle if you take one away).

Under this law women would just date white 5/10 men as a 'loop hole' since whites are seen as more attractive, so they can still have the social status upgrade that comes with having a white man and 'be within their rights', as well as latch onto the looks factor." (n.d.)

Enforcing monogamy would have society appearing similar to pre-feminist days when each man was with one woman, and women were not sleeping with multiple different men at once. Encouraging looksmatching would have a similar impact, as everyone would have to date only those on the same level of attraction and desirability as themselves; unattractive women would have to date unattractive men, etc.

Another proposed solution on the forum has been to enforce virginity to a certain age, which goes along the same route as enforcing monogamy, demonstrated in the quotations below.

If monogamy were socially enforced and encouraged, it is likely that more women would be unwilling to have sex at a younger age, as it would be a violation of social norms, and could lead to ostracization among their peers. This is also linked back to underlying traditionalist values, which push certain users to only want to have sexual relations with virgin women because they do not want their women to have been “defiled” by Chads and/or Tyrones. The longer women and girls are forced or encouraged to remain celibate, the higher the likelihood that Incels have a chance to have sex with them before a more attractive man does.

[Unknown User]: “Actual Black Piller: ‘No Hymen, No Diamond, JBF (Just Be First) Theory is all that counts, if she has had sex with anyone but me I’ll fuck her, but I won’t marry her’”. (n.d.)

*[MSCW]: “sure boyo.
what’s next 7 girls don’t have a sex drive”*

[dokterdoom] in response to [MSCW]: “I mean they do, but this is why we need chastity devices, to protect both boys and girls, state sanctioned and enforced monogamy and enforced virginity until 21, sex licenses, and state ran camps for sluts, mansluts, pedos, rapists, cucks, etc.” (May 26, 2018)



Images 1, 2, 3: Screenshots from Tinder experiments regarding virginity.

Incels often conduct ‘Tinder experiments,’ as can be demonstrated by the screenshots above in *images 1-3*, which were taken from conversations one Incel had with multiple young women on Tinder, asking what kind of sexual experiences they have had, and whether they had

lost their virginity. Incels make fake profiles with pictures of random men found online, in order to encourage women to match with them, because Incels believe themselves to be too ugly to incur any matches using their real faces. This specific experiment was to prove that women are losing their virginity at younger ages as women's liberation continues to dominate society. Once again, they hone a right-wing and patriarchal mindset that is stuck in traditional ways of thinking, not wanting to sleep with women who have already slept with other men. Enforced virginity would make it more likely that Incels and virgin women would be able to lose their virginity to each other, and to subsequently remain in a monogamous relationship. Some Incels have also suggested that Western society should convert to Islam so that women become less sexually promiscuous and more under the control of men under Sharia Law.

[Ugly_equals_Death]: "Islam is the only sane ideology these days i think i will convert. If this country would adopt Islamic laws everything would change to the better. Western degeneracy is the worst. Think about it if we all would live under sharia law our lifes would be much better. Muslims have way better moral values. In Islam it is also forbidden to scam people on trade deals. And women are beneath men in every way just how nature intended it.

Islam is the cure for the west." (April 27th, 2019)

[Givingup20]: "Ok OP try living as a muslim for a month following the tenets of their religion to a T and get back to us afterwards stop fantasizing it's not a serious fix to most incels who want to experience casual sex i've been to fairly strict muslim countries and there are plenty of 40 year old virgins around it's still the goodlooking ones who get married". (June 14th, 2018)

Some Incels would argue that Islam would allow for a greater control of the women in Western society, and would push many of the values that Incels are already advocating for: a return to traditional values, monogamy, arranged marriages, etc. Others, such as user *Givingup20*, argue that the opposite is true, and claim that even within those who adhere to Islamic values, it is the attractive and wealthier men who end up with women, and the unattractive men continue to suffer because they continue to stray too far from hegemony. As is demonstrated by some of the Incels' proposed solutions, sometimes their habitus drifts from the societal field and only aligns with the habitus of the forum and its members. The proposed solutions aligning with the habitus of the societal field would be viewed as more appropriate and acceptable by the general public, whereas, other solutions would be deemed inappropriate and problematic by the public, as they only align with the habitus of the forum itself. Previously

discussed solutions such as, legalizing incestual marriages and introducing Islamic practices, as well as racial segregation, which will be discussed in a later section, all fall under the latter distinction.

Incels are able to shift their habitus on the forum by not censoring their thoughts and opinions because they know that racism, misogyny, and socially taboo topics are open for discussion. These previously mentioned solutions both seek to provide more conventionally unattractive men with sexual opportunities and partners through regulating women's sexual activity in a societally inappropriate way. Legalizing incest would give more men the opportunity to find a partner whom they are already familiar with, and know the sexual history of, which also would allow them a greater chance at sleeping with virginal, "pure" women, which many forum members desire in a relationship. Racial segregation is slightly different but still maintains the ultimate goal of decreasing the 80:20 hypergamous ratio so that men have a greater chance at a relationship. Geographically separating the races would mean that the racial hierarchy would be diminished, and multiple types of hegemony would emerge, as every different nation would have different standards of desirability based on their specific geographical population. Without an unfair racial hierarchy, men would not be inhibited by their race falling far from the hegemonic norm and would have greater sexual opportunities. Forum members are aware that these solutions to Inceldom would not be accepted in society, and therefore only discuss these within the forum's space.

As discussed in this section, Incels largely adhere to patriarchal, and subsequently, misogynistic values in society. These values and opinions do not originate in the field of the forum, but rather, they stem from internalized institutional misogyny in the societal field, which allows men to remain in power and women largely to remain subordinate. Incels import these external values into the forum and allow them to dictate many of their identified problems and proposed solutions to Inceldom. Many forum members hone an essentialist opinion of women – believing them to be biologically inferior and therefore, undeserving of the same rights as men, however, dominant right-wing values, much like hegemonic masculinity, are outwardly white, heterosexual, able-bodied, middle- to upper-class, etc., everything that Incels do not identify with (aside from heterosexuality, and whiteness in some cases). To clarify, in agreeing with and perpetuating patriarchal values, Incels are becoming complacent in their own oppression. They do this rather than advocating for more liberal, leftist values, which would likely benefit them

and their societal status. Advocating for greater acceptance would benefit Incels, but they do not see it this way.

1.1.2 Racism as a Not-as-Universally-Shared Underlying Value

Whilst Incels adhere largely to traditionally right-wing values and beliefs, which may lead to assumptions about their racial demographics, Incels claim to be racially diverse. White Incels are actually the most looked down upon by fellow Incels because they are defined as the standard of hegemony in society, meaning that whiteness is inherently attractive and desirable. Because white men dominate the sexual market in society, they are afforded the least amount of respect and capital on the forum itself. Incels view women as desiring white men (Chads) first, then black men (Tyrones) directly afterwards, which places black men as the second least respected on the forum. Their overall (but not necessarily completely agreed upon) stance on race is that whoever women find most attractive in society have the least symbolic capital on the forum, and their identity as an Incel is often called into question. With this being said, there is racial controversy on the forum. Although many Incels claim to be racialized minorities, there is racist and prejudiced language that often circulates in conversations and debates. They, at times, will use racist and problematic language to insult and discredit other users on the forum. Certain races are automatically awarded symbolic capital (brown men, Asian men, etc.) for being considered the least societally attractive by women's standards. This way of thinking perpetuates problematic racial stereotypes of non-white people being inherently less attractive than white people, going along with more traditional and ignorant values.

Pushing these stereotypes of non-white people automatically being less attractive and therefore automatically justified in their Incel status is part of what puts the Incel population at risk of being associated with the alt-right movement. Their acceptance of non-white men as lesser in the social field demonstrates that their doxa directly aligns with that of the most powerful group in society, white men. They do, however, reject this association with the alt-right because most of their racial views stem from misogyny, as it is women creating the standards of beauty and desirability that Incels fall victim to. Alt-right views instead stem from historical racism and white supremacy itself, with their goals mainly directed towards (some similar) means of racial separation and segregation. Whereas Incels focus on decreasing women's dictation of the social and sexual market, alt-right individuals focus on keeping white people in

power and separate from people of colour, therefore, these two groups adhere to fundamentally different outlooks and mindsets. Although some of their ways of thinking may converge, they cannot be logically conflated.

Some of the comments and discussions made on forum threads appear similar to those that alt-right groups would also engage in. The hateful comments that Incels frequently make about women, and oftentimes also about men of colour, can be attributed to a very old obsolete viewpoint surrounding the difference in IQ across a variety of races, as can be seen in the quotation below:

[ElliotRodgerHere]: “Because race is a useful way of grouping people. There are iq differences between races, physiological differences, along with behavioral differences that make for much better identifiers than something like blood type” (n.d.)

The type of thinking that the user *ElliotRodgerHere* adheres to explains the racist mindset of the forum, and some of Incels’ desires to encourage racial preservation, which will be discussed later on. It also lends itself to a potential explanation as to why Incels are vocally anti-Semitic but continue to reject an association with the alt-right. Some examples of anti-Semitism are included in the quotations below:

[Adolf_Hitler]: “The point isn’t really that Jews ‘offer a better deal’ for your people. The point is that Jews abhorrently lower the standards and quality of cultural potency wherever they go. They don’t care if you’re white, but they have had an easier time exploiting other peoples”. (May 8th, 2019)

[OccidentalFlabel]: “Whites are a minority in the world and soon in the west.”

[LastGerman] in response to [OccidentalFlabel]: “Jews are a minority in this world as well. We should actually kill all jews.” (n.d.)

Not all Incels feel the same as the users above, however, the comparison between Incels and the alt-right is logical as both of their usernames are associated with Hitler and the Holocaust, despite Incels claiming that they have intrinsically different views and values. While some Incels do agree with views of the alt-right, such as the following user, most would oppose this association, and believe their goals as Incels to be fundamentally unrelated.

[Unknown User]: “Just imagine what an alliance would look like. The Alt right and incels together could easily defeat the lying Jewish media (we both generally

have the tribe) and leftist degeneracy in general by influencing normies” (n.d.)

[EVILcel]: “Shit idea, the alt right is gay. I’d be embarrassed to be associated them” (April 28th, 2018)

[Façade]:

- *Strawmans*
- *We are not part of the alt right and are a multicultural multiracial community*
- *She does not understand cause and effect*
- *Elliot wasn’t made there (Family problems, bullying)” (March 8th, 2018)*

[mental_out]: “I know real life alt-righters and they fucking hate incels, they obsess over traditional masculinity and have a staunch hatred for ‘beta men’ as they call them. I dunno why incels keep getting lumped in with a group that hates them. Never mind the fact that a lot of incels are ethnics” (March 8th, 2018)

User *mental_out* claims that the alt-right is fixated on traditional masculinity, which would make their behaviour more hypermasculine-in-nature, and therefore not associated with Inceldom. Those who are considered Incels perform hypomascularity, not attempting to meet hegemonic norms and instead seeking to understate any masculine qualities they have and overstate undesirable qualities for the purpose of gaining symbolic capital, making them very different from Stormfront and other alt-right groups. Although race relations and racism are obvious elements of the forum, they are not the basis of Incels’ goals or their reasons for existing. While the alt-right sees people of colour as lesser and subordinate, Incels see women in this same light, and discriminate against white Incels the same way the alt-right would discriminate against people of colour.

Another commonly discussed issue that certain Incels identify with is the controversy over race-mixing in society. While some Incels believe that the white race should be bred out of existence, this suggestion causes many arguments, especially surrounding racial loyalty, which often goes hand-in-hand with tones of white nationalism. Those who want to breed whiteness out of the gene pool say it is because Incels would have a better chance finding a relationship and having sex if the population of attractive white men in society was decreased, as whiteness is the largest factor connected to hegemony. Less white men would also shift the hegemonic norm to accept different types of masculinity, as there would not be as many white men to maintain the

status quo. Incels become unknowingly complacent in their oppression because, rather than attempting to modify the status quo as it stands contemporarily, Incels would rather cling to a hope that men and women who *are* having sex will eventually have so many mixed-race children that the white race will ultimately become obsolete. This would evidently take generations and generations if it ever were to happen. On the opposite end of the scale, there are also certain Incels who advocate for the preservation of the white race:

[Unknown User]: The problem is that white genes are recessive white asian genes as some of the most dominant out there. Therefore whites destroy their own race by having offspring with nonwhites, while nonwhites continue it. Asian women are unknowingly continuing their race". (n.d.)

[Words2_live_bye]: "my WHITE daughter will only go with WHITE men, gotta preserve the beauty of the white race and not let it be washed away by shitskin ethnic mutts" (n.d.)

[Unknown User]: "Race mixing is sick. Anyone who advocates for it regardless of the combination (and believe me, white men mix more than anyone else regardless of what ((Hollywood))) and ((porn))) would have you believe) should be stoned to death" (n.d.)

As the above users demonstrate, much of the arguments on the forum stem from deep-rooted racism and prejudice against specific races who are "destroying" the white race by reproducing with it. Both groups recognize that increasing amounts of mixed-race children are being born, however, the former group sees this as beneficial to Incels, whereas the latter group sees it as detrimental and damaging. Many users ridicule the white nationalist Incels because they are loyal to a race that does not at all benefit them in the sexual market, some going as far as arguing that the hatred and suffering that white Incels face in their racial group is akin to people of colour experiencing racism in the societal field, as the following users allude to:

[Unknown User]: "Of course it would be beneficial to whites to get rid of jews and ethnics, but it doesn't really benefit incel whites, nor is it the problem of incel whites, that's the entire point of these threads, and the fact that you guys keep speaking of yourselves like you are normies, and not separate from normie whites makes it seem like you are coping.

*In actuality you should want your race to get fucked up for rejecting you, I want blacks to get wiped out for creating a thug worship culture where only men who act like n***** get easy access to sex, I don't care about any black allegiance BS, and that's what makes white allegiance incels seem like larpers or idiots,*

*because they are the only race who is so race obsessed that they can't seem to get that **THEY ARE NOT REALLY A PART OF THEIR RACE, THEY ARE THE ETHNICS OF THEIR OWN RACE**" (n.d.)*

[Unknown User]: "That's because the white race doesn't need saving, no race does, all need to be bred out of existence" (n.d.)

*[Unknown User]: "We aren't normies, we aren't part of their game, and race obsessed idiots like yourself (IF you are an incel) throw away the only perk of being incel – **NORMIE PROBLEMS AREN'T OUR PROBLEMS***

If a plague breaks out tomorrow that specifically kills black women, I would celebrate, and hope it mutates to affect all races" (n.d.)

Forum members who disagree with the preservation of whiteness argue that white Incels do not actually benefit from their whiteness. If Incels were to challenge this idea of whiteness as inherently attractive, hegemony would therefore no longer be a taken-for-granted reality, rather, there would be a potential to shift these norms, and subsequently alter the doxic reality to be more accepting of multiple masculinities, such as hybrid masculinities. On the other side of the coin, those who advocate for racial preservation also encourage racial segregation by nation. They give 'go back to your country' a new meaning, suggesting that it would be beneficial for each racial group to return to where they originated from in order to avoid race mixing and give everyone a greater chance to reproduce within their own racial group. This would significantly decrease sexual competition from men of other races.

*[Unknown User]: "Your way: Separate the races
My way: Interbreed to the point that race is virtually indistinguishable
My way though it would take longer, and we'd never see that era, it would actually be a permanent solution to the problem you point out here, your way just pushes this problem further and further into the future, so long as people are significantly different they will have something to fight about, so these separate groups will still be trying to fight and kill each other, just in more underhanded ways.*

Your way does not lead to any peace, which you seem to be deluding yourself into thinking, if humans are truly as tribal as you guys keep speaking of, them quite obviously just separating the races isn't going to stop us from warring against each other.

Inceldom will never end so long as there are separate races" (n.d.)

[DeformAspergerCel]: “reductionist bugman argumentation. Different races cannot coexist under the same nation without succumbing to the racist conflicts that emerges from said coexistence. This is evident where ever on the globe one looks, whether it'dbe in Australia, North America, Europe, Africa, Asia, South America or even this forum. A functioning society has to always incorporate biological reality into its building blocks. The difference between the races are simply too vast for any peaceful coexistence to be reached. That's primarily why I'm a White Nationalist. It isn't that I don't care about my own reproductive success or give priority to one over the other, it's simply the recognition that this society is rotten to its core, and that the same forces that has spread degeneracy and sexual liberation are also engaged in an active genocide against the white race. Any attempt to resist these forces and regress back to a traditionalist society is ultimately futile unless one is absolute in one's resistance. No collective cohesion or organized resistance can emerge between the cesspool of different races that have been recruited for the purpose of destabilizing the white man's country and the white man himself.” (May 4th, 2019)

Forum users, like *DeformAspergerCel*, believe that as long as races are trying to co-exist in one place, there will be conflict and genocide, so the solution is to segregate each race to encourage peace and give more men a chance for sexual reproduction. A similar solution to the identified problems with race mixing includes legalizing incestual marriages and/or relationships, as discussed earlier on in this chapter. This is problematic in terms of the well-known and researched issues surrounding incestual marriages (e.g., deformities), but is desirable for Incels because not only would it enable them to have a long-term relationship and preserve their race, but they would be able to guarantee that most of their genes are pushed forward to the next generation. This is desirable for the white nationalist Incels because it would guarantee the preservation of the white race and keeping their bloodlines “pure.” However, many forum members do not have an interest in reproducing because they would rather not run the risk of their offspring inheriting their undesirable features, and consequently suffering in society as a result.

Oftentimes in tangent with a patriarchal mindset comes right-wing attitudes, frequently including racist views, as has been discussed above. Their ideas surrounding what is and is not attractive are imported from the societal field, meaning that just like the general public, individuals on the forum subscribe to the ideals that whiteness is inherently the most attractive race to women. These standards are imported into the forum, dictating a portion of their internal hierarchy, and subsequently, how much or little symbolic capital they can gain within Inceldom.

Racism is also a tactic of some forum members to discredit others' thoughts and arguments without having to give them actual consideration. This hierarchy inevitably leads to racism and racist insults being used as a means of discrediting each other's arguments and opinions. There are consequently two emerging types of racism on the forum, one of which develops within the field of the forum, and the other which relates to general racism in the societal field; both being blamed on women and their sexual dominance. Because racial minorities are at the top of the hierarchy on the forum, they oftentimes become targets of racist insults and language. Hegemony is always white in contemporary Western society; however, it can be a crediting or discrediting feature depending on which field is being considered at a given point in time. Because Incels are not conventionally attractive, women do not find them desirable, and consequently, they do not benefit from their whiteness in either field.

1.2 Competing Schools of Thought: Bluepill vs. Blackpill

In the previous section, values and opinions imported from the societal field were discussed. The following section will be dedicated to examining internal beliefs and values, which have been birthed within the forum itself.

In terms of this forum, 'Incel' becomes an umbrella term, which encompasses a variety of different mindsets, worldviews, and experiences. Incel, by definition, is involuntarily celibate; even when the definition itself is debated, every forum member considers themselves to be an Incel. It is a self-proclaimed label and identity. Under this broad category emerge two different schools of thought: bluepilled and blackpilled. This metaphor originates from the film *The Matrix* (Wachowski & Wachowski, 1999), where to swallow the bluepill means to live in blissful ignorance and swallowing the redpill means gaining the power of knowledge. Incels have taken the redpill a step further and created the blackpill, which is the knowledge of the hopelessness of society, and the acceptance of said hopelessness. Whereas being blackpilled is a way of belief and a perspective that Incels claim themselves to have, bluepilled is more of a patronizing label that others bestow upon certain Incels who they believe to be fakecels⁹, and not representative of Incels' beliefs and viewpoints.

⁹ Forum members who are not blackpilled and therefore, do not have the same views or values as actual Incels.

One of the largest concepts/worldviews on the forum emerges based on the mindsets of forum members: blackpilled and bluepilled forum users. Individuals in this field who hold onto the belief that they, and others, can work to become attractive enough to be romantically pursued by women are bluepilled. These users utilize many different mechanisms of self-improvement, often including hypermasculinity, as a process of becoming more societally hegemonic and conventionally desirable to women. Other users who have given up all hope of self-improvement are referred to as blackpilled. To take the blackpill is to accept that society is hopeless and any attempts at self-betterment are futile. They believe that being bluepilled is dangerous to one's mental health because when they ultimately fail at self-improvement, they will blame themselves, rather than the unrealistic standards of hegemony.

On the forum, blackpilled users have more symbolic capital and are much more respected as they are seen as being socially self-aware, whereas bluepilled users are seen as ignorant. Within this designated blackpilled group, there emerges an even smaller and more prestigious group of forum members: truecels. This is a coveted position on the forum because they are distinguished as the absolute least desirable and must be recognized by their forum peers as such in order to claim truecel status. These Incels are often described as KHHV (kissless, hugless, handholdless, virgins), essentially never having had any romantic or sexual contact with a woman whatsoever. Many truecels send their pictures to other well-known and respected forum members as a means of being recognized as one of the most societally unattractive people, and have their truecel status approved, giving them the most symbolic capital on the forum. They are the most hopeless group and make no attempts at self-improvement. Both truecels and blackpilled users look down upon bluepillers, using the term as an insult in order to discredit them. They do not believe bluepillers are true Incels, and they therefore should not be permitted on the forum, or able to participate in actual Incel discussions. They are often discredited and other Incels attempt to have them blocked and/or removed from the forum. This battle of identities demonstrates the intricacy of forum membership, and how some self-proclaimed Incels are not considered to be Incels by other forum members with greater symbolic power.

1.2.1 Bluepilled School of Thought

Users who self-label as bluepilled or are labelled by other users as bluepilled do not see the world as hopeless or past the point of positive change. They would agree that beauty

standards for men are dictated by women and that the failure to live up to them results in Inceldom, but they do not blame women and feminism wholeheartedly. For them, becoming a Chad or Tyrone is unattainable, but putting in enough effort towards improving themselves (e.g., through fitness, plastic surgery, money, social skills, etc.), to be desired by some women is possible. They typically consider themselves to be currently Incel but are still wanting to improve themselves enough to be considered desirable. Certain Incels are struggling with their mental health and assert that this is the reason they lack the confidence to be able to approach women or put the work in to improving themselves, rather than struggling with their physical characteristics. Their outlook on their own futures remains one of hesitant hopefulness. They have a desire for a relationship but have a hesitancy to approach women because they lack confidence and do not compare to hegemonic men. They do not want to stay Incel or be a part of this forum forever, just until they are able to achieve their goals of sexual or romantic intimacy.

The most predominant worldview associated with someone who is bluepilled is their unwillingness to accept the hopelessness of society and the hopelessness associated with being an Incel. As stated previously, they often try to improve their appearance through tactics such as going to the gym to improve muscle mass, bodily appearance, (gymcelling/gymmaxxing¹⁰), making money to either directly attract women who like rich men, or to pay for plastic surgery to appear more attractive in general, more actively engaging in dating apps, doing a lot of “cold approaches,” etc. These attempts at ascension through self-improvement take many different forms, all for the purposes of attracting women, as stated in the quotation below:

[Unknown User]: “In looksmaxxing I include diet, healthy life style, exercising, simply taking care of yourself and being as good of a version of yourself as you can and for that you do need to spend some money, albeit not too much and effort which takes time, and as many know time is money to a degree. I like wearing nice clothes, they don’t have to be expensive. Personally I know that by doing things that I do, in terms of looksmaxxing, is not going to magically give me gf, nor do I expect that to happen. It makes you just feel better about yourself and it’s simply not a wrong thing to do, I don’t believe that investing is the only thing you truly have/own (read your own body) on this damn rock is a wrong choice, it’s just the most” (n.d.)

¹⁰ Going to the gym frequently to get as fit as possible to increase chances of being found attractive by a woman.

Many bluepilled forum users who are trying to make the above physical improvements are engaging in hypermasculinity, accentuating and over-exaggerating any and all of the masculine qualities they may have. Other men who fall into this category are not making attempts at self-improvement but are simply lonely, depressed and still carry the hope of one day having a girlfriend or having sex. Regardless of whether an individual is engaging in hypermasculine performance, or just on the forum until they can find a partner, they are considered to be bluepilled because both groups continue to be hopeful about a future sexual or romantic relationship with someone. In essence, their hopeful outlooks and habitus are what associate them with the bluepill. They are still fighting for social capital in the societal field, rather than endeavoring for symbolic capital on the forum. Their attempts at becoming richer, becoming more confident, and physically altering their bodies are all ways in which they are trying to exaggerate any possible aspects of themselves that could potentially be viewed as masculine. It can also become toxic to other forum users when they claim that the reason blackpillers cannot find a partner to be sexual or romantic with is that they overexaggerate all of their worst traits or are too afraid to make any effort and have become comfortable in their misery. They claim that blackpillers could ascend if they just made an effort, but they would rather find misery in the company of others with similar experiences.

1.2.2. Blackpilled School of Thought

Blackpilled schools of thought, on the other hand, encompass the belief that, within the overall social space of society, humanity has largely failed. This view becomes the essence of the blackpill once one believes and embraces the idea that there is no achievable solution for the issue at hand. They claim society is hopeless for Incels, and it is therefore pointless for Incels to attempt to change it, because any change would only benefit “normies,” or those who are close enough to hegemonic to be considered attractive. This is how they become unknowingly complacent in their own suffering and experience symbolic violence.

On an individual level, this also includes the belief that escaping your Incel status is impossible and not worth the effort in trying. They would argue that this is a result of the failure of your own genetics to live up to standards of beauty in society, the inability to change your physical attributes, and the subsequent hopelessness associated with not being able to improve. The principles of the blackpill include the acknowledgement that, not only does the world dislike

and discriminate against unattractive men (by mainstream standards), but also that there is no hope of upward social mobility for these men. Incels who have accepted the blackpill recognize that there is no purpose in attempting to change because they will never be able to improve substantially enough for society or women to recognize them as attractive sexual contenders. With this being said, being blackpilled is not enough for one to automatically be considered Incel, there emerges a difference between those who are blackpilled, Incels, and truecels.

Blackpilled forum users see women as being the cause of many of their tribulations and blame them for creating a society that does nothing to benefit people who are unattractive. Their outlook on the future is therefore the polar opposite of bluepilled users, fully hopeless and not worth trying to make progress. They would prefer to accept the world as is, and their lives as they are, and simply survive day-to-day until they eventually die. The solutions they pose to the problems they identify are not at all feasible, and they are fully aware of that. Accepting the hopelessness of society is blissful and gives one the knowledge to cope through life in a way that is not toxic or damaging.

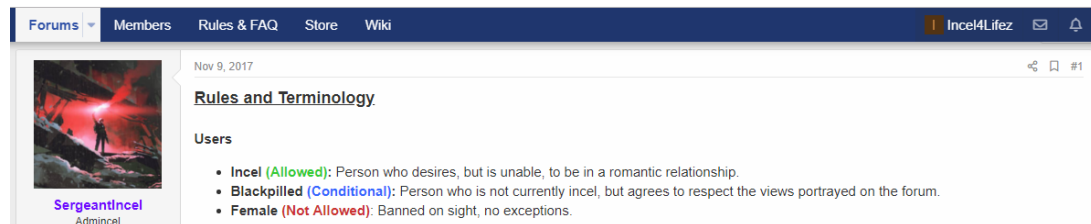


Image 4: Forum's description of an Incel and description of blackpilled.

The terms in *image 4* are widely debated on the forum, but overall, blackpilled users have swallowed the truth of reality, realize how hopeless the whole of society is, and how they will never be desired no matter how much or how little effort they put into themselves and their appearance. Unlike bluepillers, they do not believe in love or affection and do not think they will ever have any sort of romantic relationship. They argue that any attempt at physical improvement is considered a cope and a waste of time and effort because they will never compare to a Chad, as the user below states:

[Unknown User]: "JFL at the irony of considering yourself black pillled and still wanting relationships with women" (n.d.)

As stated in the above quotation, those who follow blackpill ideologies no longer hope for relationships with women. They have a shared belief that there is no hope for Incels because, regardless of how hegemonic standards are unfixed and everchanging (Dauw & Connell, 2020), Incels will never be desirable. Their acceptance of the hopelessness of society hurts them because rather than fighting and advocating for non-traditional masculinities, they accept the current social order, unknowingly accepting their exclusion in the world. Some of the views of blackpilled users are depicted in the quotations below:

[RageAgainstTDL]: “I would agree the blackpill can save your life. Once you realize it’s not your fault and there’s nothing you can do it’s much easier to just accept your life for what it is. It’s all the lies that create self-blame and the perception of failure.

You didn’t really fail if you never had the tools needed to succeed in the first place. You were just born into the condition you got.

That’s a much healthier perspective than society’s ‘Everything is all your fault!’ they like to scream at us. Because we all chose to be short/ugly/ethnic/mental, right?

Let that shit go and embrace peace.” (May 31st, 2018)

[TheCrock]: “Also, I wish you had touched the blackpill a bit more. Should’ve mentioned how better looking men are treated like a superior race, compared it to racism basically. That probably would’ve turned some normie heads” (April 26th, 2018)

RageAgainstTDL and *TheCrock* include some of the views of the blackpill, and how it can impact one’s life. A blackpiller’s view of their own status is very much based upon society’s physical standards of beauty, attractiveness, and masculinity. Their unattractive and undesirable status encompasses physical, and sometimes mental, attributes that they are unable to improve, e.g., facial structure, body type, height. Their inferior status among men, and inability to attract women as a result, is an outcome of their substandard genes, something they are unable to control.

1.2.3. Dynamics Between Blackpilled and Bluepilled Forum Users

The users below discuss how the bluepilled mindset is more toxic to an individual than taking the blackpill, because it ends in self-blame and a destructive mindset:

[Robineye]: “The blackpill made me realize that I have been rejected over something I had no control- my looks. It’s the load I have been burdened with. However, in my bluepill years I used to constantly blame myself for not getting positive results, this type of self blaming drives you crazy. I think this may have happened to him” (June 1st, 2018)

[immaculate]: “The more you take the blue pill, the more suicidal you are” (June 3rd, 2018)

[Unknown User]: “Bluepilled advice works for people with good genetics. ‘Just go talk to her bro,’ ‘be confident’, and ‘be yourself’ are the only things you have to do if you have good genes.

The blackpill is if you don’t have good genes nothing you say or do will work. Same applies here. If you gain large amounts of muscle quickly from exercise consider yourself lucky you don’t have to live the hell that I do.” (n.d.)

As is demonstrated by the comments and discussions in the quotations above, these forum members cling to the hope of a better life, which becomes the demise of their mental health. While other forum members see their unchangeable genetics as responsible for their inadequate looks, bluepillers deem themselves responsible for doing whatever they can do to be found more attractive. When they are met with rejection, bluepillers see it as their own failure, and this negatively impacts their mental health and view of themselves. Bluepillers are often encouraged to leave the forum and join a PUA (Pick-Up Artist) or MGTOW forum instead because their worldviews do not directly align with those of the blackpilled Incels. They cling to the hope that one day they may be able to find love or have some sort of sexual relationship, to which most users have responses similar to those of the following:

[Unknown User]: “JFL at all you so called black pillers that still have a blue piller normie mindset, and you want to ‘fall in love’ or ‘feel affection and validation’. If you were truly black piller you’d already have acknowledged that shit doesn’t really matter and love doesn’t really exist” (n.d.)

[Unknown User]: “Now I know for a fact you are blue piller, love doesn’t exist, its not a real thing, stop coping, its all just chemical reactions in your brain, lust is more real than love is, and even lust is just a chemical reaction, but at least lust has no ‘moral constraints’ on it and it is congruent with our biology. Lust is logical and straight forward, ‘love’ is emotional and illogical” (n.d.)

If those who do make attempts at self-improvement are able to ascend¹¹, then they were never true Incels; if they are unable to do so, then it is because their genetics are genuinely inferior, and they must take the blackpill and understand that it is not their lack of effort that has caused their despair. If they continue this hope, it continues to deteriorate their self-confidence, as the users in the following quotations claim:

*[Unknown User]: “The bluepill makes you depressed
The redpill gives you false hope and is many times bluepill disguised
The blackpill may or may not save your life” (n.d.)*

[Evildoer]: “Blackpill hurts more, but it’s not as dangerous as bluepill, as it makes people suicidal because they keep trying, shower more, improve personality and nothing works. Blackpill (reality) may be hard to accept at some point, just as cucktears numale cucks don’t want to accept it, but life become much more easier, when you do” (June 1st, 2018)

Apart from potentially encouraging Incels to destroy their bodies through rigorous plastic surgery to improve their appearances, other users claim that the bluepill causes so much self-blame and self-hatred that it can lead to suicidal thoughts and tendencies. Blackpillers also contribute to this toxicity by ridiculing bluepilled users, which is why “bluepiller” is often used as an insult and degrading term. They are perceived as weak and in denial of the realities of the world and realities of being an Incel. Referring back to *The Matrix* analogy, to be bluepilled is to be blissfully ignorant, which is only half true in Inceldom; while bluepillers are seen as ignorant to the hopelessness of society, and their own unattractiveness, blackpillers do not see them as blissful, quite the opposite in actuality. Bluepillers are viewed as having awful mental health and often being suicidal because of their refusal to acknowledge and admit that their hope is misplaced and delusional. Many of the Incels on the forum went through this same period of denial, believing what media pushes on everyone in society, that with some self-improvement, anyone can be more attractive. It was not until they realized that they were simply afflicted with inferior genes that they began to feel less hatred towards themselves, and more hatred towards those who have categorized them as undesirable.

¹¹ Leaving the forum because you have found a partner, or because you have been successful enough in your self-improvement to be considered attractive.

Inceldom, whether it be bluepilled or trying to be recognized as truecel, can be damaging to mental health and self-esteem, both ends of the spectrum rely on approval and acknowledgement from others in order to be recognized as legitimate. Bluepillers often engage in hypermasculinity in order to accentuate any hegemonic traits they may have in an over-the-top way, and blackpillers often engage in hypomasculinity, accentuating all their undesirable traits, and understating any hegemonic ones. Ultimately both behaviours are toxic and damaging because one way or another, they stem from doxic reality of patriarchal society, either by attempting to be as close to hegemony as possible, or believing that hegemony is fixed, and attempting to embody the complete opposite. Both worldviews accept the contemporary version of hegemony put forth in society, and therefore participate in their own oppression.

2. Identity of an Incel on the Forum

Many forum members attribute their own individual meaning to the term Incel. Despite this, all individuals on the forum identify as Incels, whether it be bluepilled Incels, blackpilled Incels, or truecels. Whilst truecels often must gain recognition from other forum members to validate their identities on the forum, most other members must negotiate how they see themselves versus how the rest of the forum views them. Truecels are acknowledged as such by their peers, so their identity negotiation is simpler, how they identify directly aligns with how others view them. Others, especially those who are labelled as bluepillers, struggle to be recognized as how they identify because they have attributes that are socially crediting, and therefore, discrediting on the forum. The recognition (or lack thereof) that they receive from their forum peers, further places them into distinguishable categories: non-Incels/fakecels (or volcels¹²), bluepilled temporary Incels, blackpilled Incels, and permanent truecels.

Mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion on the forum stem from a desire to gatekeep certain statuses which are prestigious and difficult to attain for many members. Similar to the ways in which hegemonic masculinity is gatekept in society, the dominant habitus on the forum is to gatekeep truecel status and hypomasculinity. The most hypomasculine forum members have the most symbolic capital and can utilize this symbolic power to gatekeep their status, and exclude others from the forum, and Inceldom itself. Lack of desirability in society is the most desirable trait on the forum. The language that truecels will utilize to exclude and discredit

¹² Short form of voluntarily celibate.

bluepilled and temporary status forum users (e.g., soyboy¹³, cuck, etc.) ridicule these users' masculinity in similar ways to how hegemonic men ridicule those engaging in alternative masculinities. However, hegemonic men have the capital and power to exclude subordinate men within the societal field, maintaining hegemony as the norm; truecels only carry symbolic power to do so within the forum, they continue to lack social capital and power in the societal field.

Forum members have created an internal vocabulary to describe users and phenomena that they observe and analyze in society. Some of the most used terms are utilized to describe, and sometimes alienate, the type of Incel a user is. For example, "ricecel" used to describe Asian Incels, "heightcel" used to describe men who are Incel based on their height, "mentalcel" used to describe those who are Incel as a result of a mental illness or disability, and so on and so forth. Other terms have been created to describe specific behaviours that Incels engage in. For example, "moneymaxxing" describes those who work as much as they can so that their wealth makes them more attractive to women. Other terms are used mostly to insult and discredit other users, such as "cuck", "white knight", and "orbiter", all of which describe someone who defends women's actions and wants to protect them: a "volcel" (someone who is voluntarily celibate because they do not try hard enough but are not unattractive enough to be Incel). They have created an extensive vocabulary to describe many phenomena that are specific to their social world and use said terms within their everyday discussions. These terms give those with symbolic capital the ability to gatekeep their coveted status by discrediting other users, and give Incels language to describe their experiences, opinions, problems, and solutions with greater clarity. Oftentimes, the language that they have imported from the societal field is used as a means of exclusion, further perpetuating toxic masculinity.

2.1.1 Not Every Incel is an Incel

The lack of consensus surrounding how to define the term Incel leads to many arguments and debates over who can claim this identity. Because every member has a unique definition attached to the word, many Incels become questioned by other forum members, and discredited based on definitions that do not align with their own. These arguments lead some Incels who want to distinguish themselves as suffering more than their bluepilled counterparts (specifically) to align themselves with an even narrower group of Incels, the truecels. Adopting the truecel

¹³ Soy is equated with estrogen, therefore a soyboy is someone with feminine qualities.

label, and specifically those who are KHHV, sets them apart from those who have had sex but are experiencing a “dry spell,” those who are virgins but have had some sexual experiences with women, and those who feel like if they improve themselves, they would be able to have these experiences. Truecels emerge as the lowest of the low in the field of society, being the absolute least desirable and therefore having the least social capital. Incels’ habitus therefore aligns directly with that of the most powerful groups in society, truecels are the least attractive people according to the standards of the hegemonic and the powerful. Incels stem from hybrid masculinities, and it is in this way that they refuse to attempt to achieve the hegemonic ideal, and become complacent in the perpetuation of toxic masculinity, and their own exclusion, in the process (Dauw & Connell, 2020)

Incels view their oppression from the perspective of hegemonic men (Thapar-Bjorkert, Samelius, & Sanghera, 2016). The domination that results through symbolic violence in society leads the dominated (Incels) to not question their subordination or the power relations at play (Thapar-Bjorkert et al., 2016), as they have accepted a hegemonic doxa. Their acceptance of hopelessness leads them to believe that they are the most aware of society’s injustices, when in reality they are misrecognizing their complacent oppression as being the only ones who are conscious of how society has failed and led them to be in this excluded position. Remaining in this oppressed position may be seen as beneficial for some forum users because it has allowed them to gain symbolic power and prestige amongst their peers on the forum, which may be the only place that they can exercise such power in their lives. They thereby perpetuate both their own exclusion, as well as toxic masculinity through the negative ways they treat each other on the forum, often using their power for exclusionary purposes.

2.1.2 Hierarchies of Attraction and (Un)Desirability

The rise of the internet, and subsequent increased social media usage has heavily influenced the ideas surrounding male desirability and what a man is supposed to look like in order to be considered appealing to women. The categories of physical distinction (e.g., race, height) that are considered hegemonic masculine norms, are essentially oppositely reflected on the Incel forum, and afforded symbolic capital accordingly.

With regards to desirability, the majority of Incels claim that face, race, and height are the three most important categories of attraction, respectively. However, it is important to note that

all of these hierarchies are fluid because of the convergence of multiple identities that each Incel associates with. They can be discredited based on one attribute but regain status on the basis of another (e.g., an individual may be Asian, which is societally discrediting, but is also tall, which is societally crediting). Every user will hold a different status and position in the Incel hierarchy depending on what characteristics are being discussed at a particular moment in time, and which attributes contribute to one's Inceldom.

These different distinctions, and one's second position (where one stands on the forum itself) encompass the types of "cel" they can be labelled as, which automatically give or take symbolic capital within the forum. A user's identity on the forum can encompass multiple different "cels," associated with race, height etc., each of these being based on the physical or mental attribute that one associates the most with their reason(s) for being an Incel. Most Incels tend to attribute their Incel status to one physical trait more than others, which essentially becomes their primary identifying characteristic on the forum. This identity is normally associated with race for the majority of Incels who are not white or black, because one has less symbolic capital as an Incel if they belong to one of these two races, which will be discussed later on in this section.

*[Bagelcel]: "Racepill would argue
Face > Race > height/frame*

*[13k]: "cope week is 5'10"
which is shorter than the average but not a deal breaker. I've neber thought it
was my height made me incel. im 5 10 myself
face > race > height > frame" (n.d.)*

While race, height, and face are said to be the three most important categories in determining attraction, they are not always widely accepted as being in the following stated order of importance: face, race, height. The debates over this order can be seen when looking at the opinions stated above, versus the opinions stated below. It becomes difficult because face and race can be conflated in some instances, and height and face have also been said to be more important than race, demonstrating the fluidity of each category and one's position in each hierarchy.

*[Unknown User]: Definitely Face/Height are both the top qualities and they are
interchangeable and at times equal. People get mixed up by thinking race is #1*

because girls aren't going for asians and curries. They aren't avoiding them cause of their race they are avoiding them because their face and height is fucked up" (n.d.)

[manletbaldcel]: "Race and face is correlated though The average white guy is most likely better looking than the average Asian guy." (July 9th, 2018)

[Unknown User]: "Mate I'm an ethnic who's 6'1 and yet I'm mogged by twinkcels like ItsOver simply because of my lack of whiteness. Height doesn't mean shit if you're ethnic. I wouldn't be a kissless, handholdless, hugless virgin if height mattered over race" (n.d.)

[Unknown User]: "YOUR RACE IS A HUGE PART OF YOUR LOOKS. it IS the looks. It determines your facial phenotype your skull shape your average height your average dick size your skin color and more." (n.d.)

The user in the quotation above argues that face and height are physical features that are both influenced by one's race, as many races have certain distinguishable features. These users claim that race is therefore of the lowest importance in these three categories of attraction because race itself is not what is found to be (un)attractive, but the physical features that it has genetically produced or influenced (height and face). The user *manletbaldcel* does not rank these categories in order of importance but claims that face and race are directly correlated because even an average-looking white man would be considered more attractive than an average-looking person of colour. This would arguably imply that it is race that is the most important factor of attraction. For the purposes of this analysis, the hierarchical ranking of importance will be discussed as face, race, height, respectively.

The prevalence of symbolic capital on this forum is often determined by where someone falls on the 10-point scale that Incels frequently use to rate attractiveness, though it should be noted that this is very subjective, and therefore not widely agreed upon. The scale one user has created is represented below:

*[Unknown User]: "This is using my rating scale
Sub 4= incel
4-6= normie
7= chadlite
8= Chad" (n.d.)*

*[Unknown User]: "If the rating is about harmony, phenotype and how the person's facial features blend with each others to make him attractive, then sure. But if it's about how wide the jaw is or how high the cheekbones are even if they look like shit on the person's face, then that's pretty much r*****" (n.d.)*

The breakdown and supposed science that goes into labelling someone on a seemingly simple 1–10-point scale is quite interesting. There are many contributing factors and features that are taken into consideration when determining someone's attractiveness and desirability. In terms of face, there are many different subjective factors that fall within this hierarchy, but at the top of this rating scale would be people with a "golden face ratio," these people are white and are considered "Chads." Following Western standards of beauty, people are inherently more attractive if they are white, even if your face may not be as attractive as some people of other races. It is for this reason that white Incels, unless bearing some sort of obvious physical deformity, are generally argued to be volcels or fakecels, because whiteness is inherently attractive to women.

[Unknown User]: "Unless you are literally deformed you cannot be incel as a white, even then maybe some noodlewhore or currywhore will suck you" (March 29th, 2018)

Within the category of race, white Incels have the least symbolic capital in the field of the forum, and often struggle to convince other users that they are indeed, Incel or truecel and not fakecels, volcels, or bluepilled forum users. This is because Chads are the epitome of what women find appealing and what hegemonic masculine standards stem from. One user explains this in the quotation below:

[hehe xd]: "my theory is that due to the anglo-saxon empire conquering the world, people find anglo features as the ideal of attractiveness, which is why people ALWAYS look better with lighter skin, eyes and hair. u can deny it, but its a matter of fact that women prefer whites and asians/ethnics worship whites evne if they are average at best" (March 8th, 2018)

As a result of white people having the most power in the social field, and the most control over media, it is easy for whiteness to be equated with beauty and success. White features are considered the standard to which everyone should be measured against and compared to, it is for this reason that white Incels are discredited, their social capital in the field of society eradicates their potential symbolic capital in the field of the forum. Some of the discreditation of white Incels can be seen in the quotations below:

[Unknown User]: "Exactly. We need to make clear that all whites are volcels somehow" (n.d.)

*[Unknown User]: "I don't understand, is this 'fakecel' shit done ironically or what? If you're a KHV the i'd say regardless of if some guy thinks you're a 5/10, you're an incel, i'd argue a truecel at that.
Hey, while we're flinging around accusations, if you're white you're not an incel because you can bang women literally anywhere else in the world that isn't the west" (n.d.)*

The user above is referring to Just Be White (JBW) theory, which is widely discussed on the forum to negate the experiences and existence of white Incels. It is argued that not only is it much easier for white Incels to have sexual relations in Western society, but even if they were unable to have sex in this geographical location, it would be easy for them to travel abroad and have sex in other countries because they embody the beauty standard simply by being white. White Incels often counter this with JBE (Just Be Ethnic) theory, claiming that to be ethnic in Western society is desirable because women like to have sexual relationships with people of colour in order to reject the norms of white men as the standard of attractiveness.

Black Incels are second in the societal racial hierarchy, with attractive black men being called Tyrones, one step below Chads based on their race being less attractive than whiteness, but still the next race that women will choose to pursue, specifically if they are able-bodied and tough.

*[Bagelcel]: "Alot of Whitecels don't want to acknowledge when it comes to the dating scene, they're by far the most desirable. They'll cope by saying 'but but but...she just wants chads and chadlites not me'
An ethnic indian guy has to be chadprestite to have the same SMV as a lower tier normie white guy
And even if the white guy is a legit 3/10 with no SMV he has the option of*

travelling anywhere in the world to be treated like a walking god JUST cause of his skin colour.

Ethnics don't have this luxury at all, especially indians/asians.

Blacks have the caveat of 'being thug/sounding black and having BBC' but their SUV drops to curry level if they don't have/do all three of those.

If you take the world world into account and not just the west, 95% of white incels here have infinitely more SMV than any chadpreet indian or asian.

Girls will literally climb over Tyrone-Lite and his 8 inch BBC and Chadpreet-lite to get to one of the white incels here" (n.d.)

As can be seen through *Bagelcel*, Incels import racist ideologies from the societal field. They would argue that black men are desirable to women because they represent an element of “danger,” and that dating a black man is a form of rebellion against their parents who may inadvertently adhere to racist and traditionalist prejudices. Black men are reduced to violent stereotypes (thugs, deviants, etc.) when measured against the hegemonic masculine norm. In terms of the societal field, black men come directly after white men in Incels’ opinion because they have as much patriarchal power as white men do. However, black men do not have the same institutional power that white men have, and realistically, white masculinity negatively impacts black men who engage in any form of alternative masculinity. Nevertheless, Incels consider this stereotype to be what gives black men the most social capital, because these dangerous stereotypes are what make them the most desirable specifically to white women (termed Staceys) who have the biggest control over the sexual market (Bryan, 2019; Cheng, 1999). Once again, these interpretations of the world stem from the habitus of the powerful in society, those who believe that whiteness is inherently superior, and therefore, the most important aspect of hegemony.

On the other hand, brown men, often self-identified or identified by others on the forum as “currycels,” are considered the least attractive to women, and therefore have the least social capital and the most symbolic capital on the forum when it comes to the racial hierarchy. Their Incel status is rarely ever called into question because it is agreed upon that women are least attracted to brown men amongst all other races, and that they fall the furthest from being able to adhere to the hegemonic norm.

[PhenomSkillz]: “an attractive curry”

[tehgyrncel420] in response to [PhenomSkillz]: “No such thing.” (July 31st, 2018)

[Unknown User]: “Yep, currys are not even on the radar. Even \$1Billion wouldn't be enough for a Stacy to fuck a curry” (n.d.)

*[Avoidant]: “Only sand [n*****] are too low IQ to realize this Women see you all as dirty, smelly brown dune coons” (March 11th, 2018)*

In terms of other races being represented on the forum, there is not always a clear distinction surrounding where exactly they fall within the racial hierarchy, but it is always agreed that in the field of the forum, brown men have the most symbolic capital, and white men have the least. Brown Incels therefore rarely must convince other Incels that their Incel status is legitimate. Standards of attractiveness amongst different races are often debated, some forum users even argue that nutrition can be a contributing factor as to how attractive people of colour can be by mainstream standards:

[Unknown User]: “Mega cope Currys are ugly because they barely have any nutrition. Look at Asians. They're getting taller because they're getting richer and more developed. China will fucking dominate the world in a few years.” (n.d.)

Certain Incels have stated that men in other countries and continents, especially those in developing countries, have not necessarily had access to proper nutrition the same way that people in fully developed countries have, and that this is a contributing factor to their lackluster physical features and genetics. They posit that second and third generations immigrants are much more fortunate than the first generation because proper nutrition has allowed them to develop more masculine features that women consider to be attractive (e.g., they are taller, more physically strong, etc.). One of the main features influenced by nutrition is height, with short Incels having the most symbolic capital because women are not stereotypically attracted to short men. The taller an Incel is, the less symbolic capital they have on the forum, up until a certain point where they are considered to be too tall to be desired. This is discussed in the quotations below:

[Unknown User]: “Women live for tall white guys. I have maybe met one or two dorky tall white guys who had trouble with women in my entire life. Every other tall white guy has gotten easy sex.

Being tall and white are the two most important things, and very expensive to try to compensate for. Almost impossible.” (n.d.)

[Unknown User]: “it’s over. Also everyone below 5’7 is incel no matter how they look.” (October 26th, 2018)

*[Unknown User]: “tl, dr: if every woman thinks **someone else** would date short men but **NOT** herself that basically eliminates **BY DEFAULT** most women from the dating pool for shorter men” (n.d.)*

Although many women in society will claim to accept men of all heights or say that there is nothing wrong with men being short, often women assert that although they personally would prefer not to date a shorter man, there is nothing specifically undesirable about short men. As a result, the dating pool for short men is limited.

[mylifeistrash]: “ ‘girls don’t care about height bro’

**ignores the billion memes of girls on twitter openly shitting on men under 6’*” (June 5th, 2018)*

Social media is one of the reasons that the undesirability of shorter men has become so prevalent in society and subsequently has caused stress for many of the Incels on the forum. User *mylifeistrash* describes a commonly recurring topic on social media platforms, there are many memes and posts on all types of social media regarding how most women prefer to date a taller man, rather than a shorter one and especially not a man shorter than themselves.

In addition to the three hierarchical categories discussed previously (face, race, and height), mentally ill Incels have a unique struggle in being recognized as Incels by other forum members. Many Incels claim to have depression, anxiety (social and/or generalized), or other diagnosed intellectual disabilities, such as autism, ADHD, etc.

[Unknown User]: “I’m not a truecel but I’m a rotting mentally ill manlet KV” (n.d.)

Although the user above claims to not be a truecel based on their looks or features, they do suffer from mental illness, which is something that holds them back from being able to have any successful interactions with women. One of the reasons that mentalcels may not be seen as real Incels is because their diagnoses are not necessarily appearance-based, and therefore, they

do not experience rejection due to attraction and desirability, which is the basis of Inceldom and the blackpill. In general, they are not being rejected by women automatically because of the way that they look. However, mentalcels would argue that their diagnoses (or lack thereof) prohibit them from being able to approach women, hold any meaningful conversations, or maintain a meaningful relationship.

[Twisted]: “Completely disagree with the mentalcels part

If you have legit autism like me, then you need to be at least chadlike to compensate

So I guess looks still hold me back but only because the bar is raised higher for me.” (March 8th, 2018)

User *Twisted* claims that in order to be desired by women when you are experiencing something like autism, your looks must be even more appealing to make up for your lack of social skills. Mentalcels do not have a lot of symbolic capital on this forum, and constantly have to be providing alternative reasons as to why their Incel status is valid. This demonstrates yet another way that it becomes a competition for forum users to gain the most symbolic capital on the forum by being the least desired in society.

2.2 Battle of Identities: Temporary vs. Permanent Status Incels

Temporary status and permanent status heavily coincide and correlate with the hierarchies of desirability, as well as the bluepilled and blackpilled schools of thought, respectively. Those who belong to this so-called temporary status group on the forum are considered volcels, or users who are Incel “by circumstance”; they may have experienced rejection and see themselves as too genetically inferior to be desired, but they are still attempting to either improve themselves in order to ascend or are simply hoping to one day have some sort of sexual or romantic relationship with a woman. The forum is more of a pitstop for them on their way to ascension, as described in the quotations below:

[kkt8]: “Do you know what it means to ‘ascend’? To mangle your body with plastic surgery, to destroy and contort everything about you so that you’re presentable to some superficial whore? Whether that means demanding all of your accumulated experiences and personality to be ‘neurotypical’ or turning your back on any personal style you have developed to just dress in generic expensive clothes and get the generic ‘trendy’ haircut, to ‘ascend’ means to kill

who you are and become the generic superficial meat doll a femoid wants you to be.

Why? Because women don't care about who you really are. They care about what you look like. That's why every aspect of 'ascension' and 'self improvement' is physical. Can you not see how lustful and unloving that really is? There is no love involved, to 'ascend' means to acquire physical attractiveness and appeal to a whore's animalistic lust. To 'love' someone means to be validated and adored for who you really are as a personality, not for what shape your nose is or what your fucking haircut looks like. Women are not capable of that. Women are not capable of love. Women are only capable of lust.

Think of the most introverted, naïve girl you've ever known. I don't know her, but I can say without a shadow of a doubt that she's getting fucked by multiple men who look better than you. It doesn't matter if your personality is closer to hers, she doesn't care. She wants men who LOOK GOOD THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS LOVE, EVERY WOMAN IS HYPERGAMOUS, NOW GET THE FUCK OUT YOU BLUEPILLED COPER.” (n.d.)

[ItsOVER]: “Most of you would drop your blackpill ‘beliefs’ as soon as a roastie as much as smiled at you. Embarrassment to the forum tbh” (n.d.)

[KillerCel]: “Gonna lose some weight, potentially get some facial surgery and go on an epic trip to PH to slay as much as i can and get a relationship for the first time in my life to finally feel like a human being” (n.d.)

Many temporary status forum users have made comments stating that they are currently very lonely, or have experienced a lot of rejection, but have not given up all hope for themselves. They instead come to the forum for a sense of community while they work on themselves in order to ascend, but, if given the opportunity, would leave the forum if a woman gave them a chance.

Methods of labelling temporary status Incels as bluepilled are exclusionary but not always in a deliberately negative or derogatory way. Some forum users have been blocked from the forum simply because they are young and, from the forum's perspective, have enough potential that they could harness in order to ascend and improve their lives. Others are referred to as volcels and fakecels, and risk being blocked from the forum because they are not blackpilled and are therefore seen as LARPing (Live Action Role-Playing), which makes the truecels feel as though their status is being ridiculed, and not taken seriously.

[masterwizard]: “You look like a Sears catalogue model. Do us all a favour, shave your subhuman beard and ethnic gollywog hair, because your bones are absolute god tier and you have the frame of a fucking space marine.” (n.d.)

[KilluminoidBR]: “You are not incel, at least not yet.

Leave this place before it destroys your mind.

If you are still virgin at 20 yo-even being functional in society and after 20+ approaches, then back here” (November 7th, 2018)

[Fontaine]: “I deeply sympathize. If I could tell you something that may have helped me when I was your age: stop seeing studying as a social thing. Try to study just for the purpose of knowledge, try to completely black out everyone and focus on work. Also, admit you will never have a normal youth, ‘embrace’ your abnormality (instead of despairing over it) and aim for betabux game in your later life.

It is also vital that you exercise regularly (running or lifting is ideal). It helps with brainpower and to keep depression at bay” (May 22nd, 2018)

[Stanx22]: “I think someone like you has a great chance tbh. You’ll regret all this when you become 40 or something and you don’t have another chance. I’m not saying this because i dislike you or want you out because believe me i’m not, I just don’t want you and others to suffer when you can escape the hell. You only have one life.” (n.d.)

Although user *masterwizard* does make some disrespectful comments, they are ultimately advising another user to leave the forum and embrace the features that they have before they become hopeless and no longer have the will to pursue women or live their lives. They do not want these young users to become too enthralled with the blackpill, and therefore position their comment as saving them from a life of hopelessness. The users *KilluminoidBR*, *Fontaine*, and *Stanx22* similarly encourage other users to embrace their youth and make the most of what they have, rather than taking the blackpill right away and giving up hope. These are methods of gatekeeping and exclusion but are positioned as positives for the users involved, they are told that they do not belong here and need to make more of an effort before they are stuck being reliant on the forum like the permanent status Incels are. The permanent status Incels are suffering both on the forum and in life, they do not want to see users who may have a chance at

ascending waste their lives and give up hope so easily. Other users are harsher in their exclusion, demonstrated in the quotations below:

[refm.d]: "i'm 37 and never even held a girls hand

I feel like there is no one out there who's been through what i have, someone genuinely rejected by all females, not even friendzoned

all these guys talking about rejection then they drop the bomb about being young guys who are larpceling" (n.d.)

[fitsogrecel]: "Kys fakecel. Fucking disgusting how people like you are allowed here. I've never even hugged a girl and then there's motherfuckers like you who have had sex, are not an incel whatsoever, and are at minimum average looks wise. Fuck you." (n.d.)

[Unknown User]: "Fucking fakecel piece of shit scum of the earth motherfucker. Go fucking kys fakecel, I hate larping normies like you who come here just to get ego boosted from truecels and shit on them" (n.d.)

As is demonstrated in the quotes above, some users who consider themselves to be permanent status, otherwise referred to as truecels, do not appreciate the bluepilled temporary users on the forum giving their thoughts and opinions, or being on the forum in general. Their methods of excluding these users are much tougher, insulting them and accusing them of being fakecels and LARPCels, all while reiterating and reaffirming their own status as truecels. They feel as if these temporary status users are mocking the forum and mocking those who are true Incels and have suffered immensely as a result.

[whogivesafucc]: "I think having inceldom being totally based around the way someone looks is rather facile

It should rather be the sum of all your experiences with the opposite sex, it doesn't matter if someone is good looking or bad looking or average, etc. are you a KHHV? welcome aboard, my friend, have you literally never had an IOI? welcome aboard, my friend/" (March 21st, 2018)

As stated by *whogivesafucc*, Incels should all be KHHV, but not all are, which is why the truecel term has been created to distinguish those who have never had sexual relations, from those who have. Truecels will never ascend, they have accepted defeat and hone a "LDAR" (Lay Down and Rot) mentality. The two alternatives to the LDAR mentality both end in the demise of

the Incel: roping or “going ER.” Roping refers to committing suicide, which has been a controversial topic of discussion on the forum, with some Incels saying that if you have no hope at all then it is the logical way out, as there is no reason to postpone the inevitable. Others would like to end their lives but choose not to, due to the guilt of hurting their families, and not wanting to imagine their parent(s) finding their body, so they elect to LDAR instead. The phrase “going ER” refers to the mass murder-suicide of the Isla Vista killer, Elliot Rodger. It essentially refers to an alternative route to suicide that is encouraged because if an Incel is already deciding to take their own life, they might as well make a statement by targeting women or Chads before inevitably committing suicide, just as Elliot Rodger did. These opinions are demonstrated in the quotations below:

[Unknown User]: “If you had given up completely then there is only one option, not LDAR, stop dancing around it, the only option is to just kill yourself. So none of you have “completely” given up either, you’re like in this weird state of limbo where you’ve given up doing anything to benefit your own existence, and yet you won’t just end said existence.” (n.d.)

[The Abyss]: “Welcome to your new home.

Shave your head dude, that style isn’t cutting it in this century

Forget women, just focus on your hobbies and accept it’s over for you with women in your country

Cope, cope and cope some more or go ER but doubt you’ll do that as you said you dislike the thought of hurting women

Rope as a last resort.” (n.d.)

[diogenes]: “If you have not completely given up, you’re not truly blackpilled. I can’t see how, after taking and digesting the blackpill, one can ever do anything but give up totally and either LDAR cope or ROPE.” (November 12th, 2018)

*[Unknown User]: “...will any real change occur, hence it is our duty to push them into that corner. Accelerate hypergamy, do your best to extract as much resources from society while contributing as little as possible, be a strain on the safety net if such a thing exist in your country, shoplift, do your best to starve people of joy by whatever means necessary. Only once enough men do this will the ball finally start moving in the right direction, to hell with your [fa****] understanding” (n.d.)*

These users explain the way of permanent status truecels, as well as some of the opinions surrounding LDAR, coping, and roping. Most truecels no longer cling to any hope, they are just coping, doing what they can to survive, but not living or hoping for anything better by any means. As previously stated, the permanent status Incels often debate over whether coping or roping is the best strategy, but with suicide being the ultimate permanent status, many would rather continue suffering in order to spare the feelings of their families and avoid killing themselves or killing others in the process of ending their own life.

Those who are recognized as truecels and are permanent status often use their prestigious label to call attention to, and exclude, the temporary status and bluepilled Incels who do not measure up, because while truecels will be there forever, temporary status Incels' journey on the forum is potentially a short one, simply a pitstop on the way to salvation. In order to keep their positions on the forum exclusive and only attainable by a small number of people, they must discredit other self-proclaimed Incels, minimizing their symbolic capital, and tarnishing their reputation in this field. Truecels therefore simultaneously rely on the existence of bluepillers on the forum, and their ability to continuously discredit them in order to maintain their status and power.

Although the hopelessness of being a truecel can be very debilitating, there is also a positive distinction that comes along with this status in the field of the forum. The prestige of being recognized as a truecel is a parallel reflection of the prestige that men who encompass the societal hegemonic ideal have; it is situational and dependent on what social field one is able to exist in (Bourdieu, 2013). Symbolic capital is dependent on what social field one belongs to, and what position each individual holds within that social field. Being considered a hegemonic man affords an individual social capital within broader society, the same way being considered a truecel affords symbolic capital within the field of the Incel forum. Everyone in society is simultaneously a part of dominant and marginalized groups, even on the forum, where they must exaggerate their marginalized identities over their dominant ones in order to be considered truecels (Cheng, 1999). The smallness of each hegemonic group is indicative of hegemony not reflecting the most common presentations of masculinity, or lack thereof, but the highest ideal, to which every man is measured up against (Johnston & Morrison, 2007).

3. Internal Dynamics

3.1 Mechanism of Protecting the Purity of Inceldom: Exclusionary Gatekeeping

Elements of gatekeeping can be directly related back to themes of exclusion when discussing permanent versus temporary status forum users. Those who are defined to be undeserving of symbolic capital on the forum, for whatever reason, are generally those who are white, are volcel, have expressed opinions not adhering to blackpilled schools of thought, or have not been on the forum long enough to understand what it is like to truly suffer as an Incel. Their opinions are discredited on the basis of other Incels not affirming their status and therefore not allowing them to gain any sort of symbolic capital in the field of the forum.

[Genecel]: “All of you wankers deserve all the pain and suffering, JFL at having standards like race match and looksmatch. If you wouldn’t fuck this literal WHALE then you aren’t incel you’re just a larper. Personally I have the capacity to fuck her and so do you, if you all did nofap for a few weeks you’ll get so horny that you’ll wanna fuck this orca. Personally I’m going to start gymcelling soon so I can bench press her fat rolls out the way while we’re having sex. If you wouldn’t smash this beast into pieces then I have no sympathy for you.” (October 28th, 2018)

[tehgymlcel420]: “ALL whites are fakecels, not just this guy.” (March 30th, 2018)

[Unknown User]: “every member should be forced to post his skin color first. if they can prove they are not white, they shouldnt have to dm their face to mods.

If they can’t prove they are shitskin, then they should be obliged to send their full face pictures to mods and if they have a face north of 3/10, then their application should get rejected” (n.d.)

The user *Genecel* posts a picture of a severely overweight woman, claiming that he would have sex with her, and anyone on the forum who would not is a volcel. This opens a discussion that draws attention to any and all Incels who consider themselves to have standards in terms of who they would have sexual relations with and therefore discredits their Incel status. Those who would refuse sex with any woman are not considered truecels, they are labelled as volcels, fakecels, or LARPer on the forum, and have no place in Inceldom discussions. The users in the last two quotations both state that white Incels are fakecels automatically, because whiteness is a key aspect of hegemonic masculinity, and they therefore have a leg up in the sexual market. Certain other users would recommend that every white user should have to send a

picture of their face to the moderators on the forum in order to determine whether their appearance negates their white skin tone enough to be considered an Incel and to belong on the forum. The Incels doing this kind of gatekeeping believe that, even if white Incels are KHHV, they are not legitimate Incels unless they have such extreme physical deformities that their skin colour would not actually benefit or afford them any social capital. Another category of Incels that tend to be discriminated against on the forum are those who are younger, especially those under 20 years old, which can be seen in the quotations below:

[nice_try]: "Get more youngcels on this forum, please. It's entertaining to read fakecel content and see them banned later." (November 9th, 2018)

[DeformAspergerCel]: "to anyone doubting the necessity of an age restriction of this site I hope this thread serves as a perfect illustration why it's needed" (August 14th, 2019)

As was briefly discussed in the temporary vs. permanent section, younger Incels on the forum are almost always discredited because they have not experienced life enough to be considered blackpilled or to be truecels. Rather than insulting younger Incels directly, truecels oftentimes entirely ignore their comments and instead direct their responses towards the rest of the forum, not giving the youngcels any attention whatsoever, which can be seen in the comments by *nice_try* and *DeformAspergerCel*. The user *nice_try* completely discredits a youngcel by saying that they only serve the purpose of entertainment because everything that they say is ridiculous and laughable. User *DeformAspergerCel* yields a similar opinion, stressing that the forum should require an age restriction in order to avoid having youngcels giving opinions and making comments about things that they do not know anything about, having not been Incel for long enough to experience actual rejection or suffering that truecels experience daily. Like younger Incels, those who have only recently joined the forum and decide to chime in in conversations are often compared to young Incels, as if their life on the forum is akin to their age outside the forum.

*[Unknown User]: "a maycel just called someone a [newf**]" (n.d.)*

[churdurbudur]: “WTF is this post? Maycels and aprilcels should not be allowed to post until he lurks on this forum at least for 6 months.

Dumb fuck post from a dumb fuck weeb” (May 28th, 2018)

All opinions from those who have recently joined the forum are easily targeted as being naïve and out of touch with the worldviews of the blackpill. Unlike most of the other hierarchical categories, the date that an Incel joins the forum is always visible below their username whenever they make a comment on a thread, which makes them an easy target for disrespect. Join date is the one trait that cannot be hidden, exaggerated, understated, or lied about, because each user has no say in it, it depends solely on when they discovered and decided to join the forum. Even if a forum user is a 30-year-old KHHV, if they only joined the forum a few months prior, they still run the risk of being completely discredited simply because of their join date, even though under other circumstances they would likely be acknowledged as truecels. This demonstrates that individual circumstance is often ignored on the forum as a mechanism of gatekeeping the truecel status, it is much easier to simply discredit someone on the basis of their joining date rather than wholly considering their opinion and potentially being forced to acknowledge a users’ symbolic capital, which could threaten other truecels. Oftentimes on the forum, rather than the truecel status having some vague criteria that users should fall into, the users acknowledged as truecels by other users will make certain distinctions in order to limit the amount of forum users who can be labelled as truecels, as if the more users who are truecels, the less prestige this distinction has. The following quotations demonstrate that even those who hone the truecel label feel the need to narrow the criteria down through gatekeeping so that there are less and less users who have the amount of capital that they possess.

[Unknown User]: “the only truecels are people with more than 1000 posts and very depressed and nihilist with short posts and few topics, all of them about desperation and loneliness” (October 21st, 2018)

[ICanOnlyFapToBDSM]: “‘everybody is fakecel except me’ thread #3304” (November 12th, 2018)

The user in the first quotation is clearly someone who is considered a truecel, and perhaps being insecure in this position, they attempt to narrow the qualifications for being a truecel so that less and less forum users possess the same label. They are using the symbolic power that

they have on the forum in order to gatekeep the coveted label of being a truecel. This user narrows the playing field so much through the qualifications they state that it would be extremely difficult to attain such respect and recognition on the forum. On the other side of the spectrum, the user *ICanOnlyFapToBDSM* alludes to a common trope on this forum, that an astonishing amount of Incels claim that they are the only truecels or claim that they have it much worse than a variety of other users in order to discredit others. Every Incel wants to make it seem as if they have it worse than everyone else to gain a chance of their status being affirmed by other Incels, giving them the opportunity to create and enforce the parameters and qualifications for being a truecel. The Incels who engage in gatekeeping often appear to be insecure in their own status on the forum, which some other Incels recognize and decide to draw attention to:

[Algeriancel]: "Piss off gatekeeper. Age isn't what determines your inceldom. Your shit genes, facial structure. Height. Social status and breathtaking personality do." (May 18th, 2019)

*[RopeMaXXer]: "I agree but I realized gatekeeping is [r*****] and instead of discouraging people who don't belong there it makes people with legitimate grievances feel illegitimate. They'll sort themselves out" (May 19th, 2019)*

[Oregon1683]: "Joined August 2nd, 2019"

[overload] in response to [Oregon1683]: "Says the 2019cel. Give him a chance" (n.d.)

[kvn]: "Mentalcels are as legit as truecels. Fuck off with the gatekeeping" (March 24th, 2018)

The users *Algeriancel*, *RopeMaXXer*, *Oregon1683*, and *kvn* are those who are secure enough in their positions on the forum that they not only do not feel the need to cut-down other Incels, but also attempt to argue against, and ridicule, those who are unfairly mocking others. The user *Algeriancel* recognizes that Inceldom, and being considered a truecel, has nothing to do with age or when someone has joined the forum, rather, it surrounds experience, appearance, and how far one's first position falls in comparison to the masculine norm. Rather than there being a limited amount of Incels who can claim the truecel label, this user recognizes that, so long as your genetics have cursed you in the looks department, and led to your demise, you are a truecel

and there is no need for others to be gatekeeping this classification. The user *RopeMaXXer* argues that gatekeeping discourages people who might be suffering as a truecel but risk being discredited based on made up gatekeeping rules and criteria. They essentially claim that every Incel should be more focused on their own lives and places on the forum, rather than being focused on other users, because ultimately these users will leave or be blocked if they have not endured the awful experiences most truecels have. Rather than drawing attention to those who do not belong on the forum, users should simply let them live their lives and eventually their conduct on the forum will end in their downfall if they do not truly belong there.

The user *kvn* states that gatekeeping is illogical, while defending those who are far too often discredited on the forum: mentalcels. As discussed previously in terms of the various hierarchies on the forum, those who consider themselves to be Incels on the basis of mental illness or intellectual disabilities are far too often discredited as Incels. Because those who are blackpilled are suffering on the basis of physical attributes, when compared to hegemonic masculine norms, those who identify as Incels as a result of non-visible struggles are often easily dismissed on the forum. Mentalcels are an easy target of gatekeeping because of their controversial status on the forum and are clearly targeted because of their struggle to gain any sort of symbolic power.

These processes of exclusion are clear and well-known on the forum and explain why many Incels make the conscious choice not to disclose all of their personal experiences, and why “bragging” is against the rules and can get users banned from the forum permanently. The more personal information and stories about their lives that forum members choose to share, the more they put themselves at risk of having every detail they share being analyzed by other users. Members who claim the truecel label pick apart every detail of other members’ stories in order to find ways that they can discredit them, reinforcing their prestigious position and symbolic power in the process. Additionally, when users talk about hopes of ascending, they are immediately ridiculed and told to leave the forum, as their views are not blackpilled. Regardless of how much some forum users may claim to have suffered in their lives due to their appearance, without affirmation from other Incels, and particularly if they are relatively new users, they still may experience exclusion. This ostracization mirrors the ostracization that Incels themselves feel

from those who exert symbolic power from their ability to meet hegemonic masculine standards in society.

3.2 Competing for Symbolic Capital: Competitive Victimization

This victimization works directly in tangent with the hierarchies of privilege and desirability discussed previously, the more “undesirable” categories of the societal field that an Incel belongs to (e.g., racialized, mentally/physically disabled, short stature, etc.), the more symbolic capital they are afforded. As stated previously, in order to gain symbolic capital and approval from other Incels, these forum users understate any desirable traits they may have and overstate every and all undesirable traits they have. There are different ways of going about this, some Incels will state and recognize how certain traits they possess would *technically* be interpreted as desirable, and choose to combat this with how their traits are *realistically* undesirable, as can be demonstrated in the quotations below:

[engineerescortceller]: “depends on country. Taller than 80% of males to say a number. In some parts of the netherlands it’d be being 6ft+ but in america and europe 5’11 and 6’0 and up is considered tall”

[Curious0] in response to [engineerescortceller]: “I would only consider 6’2+ tall. I’m 6’ and one of the shortest in most of my classes. Even most parts of Asia, 6’ isn’t really tall. Height only starts having a positive effect if you could seriously be considered tall, which requires AT LEAST 6’2” (n.d.)

[Curious0]: “Well I got measured at 17 (1 year ago) for my passport and it says 184cm, reducing the shoe height it makes me 5’11,5 or 6’. Young people are just really tall nowadays and most outgrow their parents. Some boys are literally a head taller than their fathers. I’m shorter than my father for some reason. I still hope my growth plates aren’t fused which is a cope anyway. I’m seriously considering leg lengthening surgery because I cannot stand the mogging” (n.d.)

[Skindiana Bones]: “Half asian half white but look 100% rice” (September 27th, 2018)

The users in the first two quotations above are the average height in society for men. Apart from simply being above the average height, as discussed earlier, women tend to desire men who are taller than they are, and with women’s average height being lower than men’s, it is not very difficult for men to be a desirable height for many women, so long as they meet the

male average. Independent of women's standards, being just under or slightly over six feet tall for a man is not considered hypomasculine by contemporary hegemonic standards, it is actually a desirable trait. Clearly these users recognize that their height is a desirable trait within the societal field, so they subsequently attempt to backtrack and explain why their societally desirable trait is, in reality, undesirable. The user *escortceller* establishes a height threshold for attractiveness, making it two inches taller than he measures himself, justifying it by saying that most of his classmates are taller than him, and that in Asia (a statistically shorter continent), his height is still below the average, which is factually untrue (Roser, Appel & Ritchie, 2013). The user *Curious0* acts in a very similar way by "reducing the shoe height" in order to make himself appear shorter and therefore less desirable. He continues by claiming that young people nowadays are just taller on average, and tend to be much taller than their fathers, which he is not, therefore justifying how this typically desirable trait is not truly desirable in his case. The user *Skindiana Bones* is representative of many Incels who do not want to risk being discredited on the forum; he describes that he is biracial, but instead of leaving it at that, he specifies that in terms of his racial appearance, he has no identifiable white features, because this would make him more attractive and eliminate much of his potential symbolic capital on the forum.

Other users, rather than entertaining the possibility that some of their physical traits could be seen as desirable, choose to only discuss how awful all the features they have are, and position these traits as the causes of their Inceldom.

[outherebrothers]: "[It's Over] No-one on this forum has a smaller penis than me, 1.5-2 inches at best plus under an inch girth.

I can prove it too, will DM pics on request. This started on another thread but I thought I'd make one of my own. I have to sit down to piss as it's so small I can't aim and it goes everywhere, plus I can't fap properly due to size. I have to play with it like a clit if I wanna cum. It will make you fellow incels feel better knowing that it couldn't possibly be as over for you as it is for me" (July 8th, 2018)

[Incel_Dkahit]: "Yso did you even tried to approach a 2/10 lmfao i know the answer is no"

[TheRealChinzel] in response to [Incel_Dkahit]: "I've approached about 100 2/10s and received some harsh rejections" (March 21st, 2018)

[Veganist]: “Our class was once supposed to surprise a fellow student who had birthday in a trip and we hid in a room. So one girl tried to hide where I was hiding and she literally started crying over how ugly I am when they asked her to hide with me. This is how disgusting my fake looked (and still does)” (June 2nd, 2018)

Differing from the previous forum users, rather than attempting to understate potentially attractive traits, the users above instead describe their traits exactly as they appear, because they are bad enough to justify Inceldom and award symbolic capital. Rather than just discussing physical traits, they will often tell personal stories surrounding how their lackluster traits have caused notable rejection in their lives. Other Incels, rather than simply discussing their own lesser traits, instead make attempts at acknowledging the status of other Incels whilst simultaneously reaffirming their own Inceldom by claiming that these specific users are not suffering nearly as much as they are. Multiple examples of this can be seen in the quotations below:

[Total imbecile]: “Ive been trying not to look at that thread because its pure sui fuel, but being that its almost 50 pages now Ill have to scroll through

The thing is though if youre willing to post your picture on this forum theres a 99% chance youre not actually a KV. I would never ever post my picture because I know it would immediately be crossposted somewhere else and Id end up another poster child for ugly incels like jsanza or blackopscl” (n.d.)

[Unknown User]: “if only they just ignored me

i got spat on by a random female cashier, in High school and university called countless names and slurs, got rejected and shut down many times when i asked them out etc etc etc.

Who did you meet with?”

[RREEEEEEEEE] in response to [Unknown User]: “Spat on? Why? Also you’re lucky that they just ignore you. You’re probably a 4/10 yourself instead of sub 3 if women just ignore you. No way they don’t avoid you at sub 3, that would mean I’m a 0/10. PM your pics.” (n.d.)

[churdurbudur]: “Holy fuck, it’s so over for him. I feel you man.

Mogs me to seventh realm of hell and back though.” (October 28th, 2018)

[LilFatty]: “If this is real, i dont know why the fuck this [n****] was bragging tbh. Still mogs me tho” (October 27th, 2018)

The users above all choose to recognize the unattractive features of other Incels on the forum, while simultaneously claiming that they have it worse. This is somewhat of a defense mechanism, attempting to avoid being called into question themselves, which they would run the risk of if they simply discredited other users while affirming their own statuses. Minimally confirming someone else’s status on the forum by acknowledging their unsatisfactory features gives these Incels more reverence with other forum users and gives them a greater platform to discuss their own physical shortcomings without being immediately dismissed. While many Incels want their truecel status to be confirmed by other users, the user *Total imbecile* says that those who are truly kissless virgins would not do this, they are simply too ugly to ever post their pictures anywhere. Rather, to be confirmed as truecels, they would only be comfortable sending their pictures in a direct message to someone reputable on the forum. This is reiterated by the next user, who asks another user to send him his pictures in order to rate him and see what he looks like, which would likely result in him claiming that he himself is less attractive than the user sending the pictures. He claims that if Incels are ignored by women, then they may be ugly, but not as ugly as someone who is targeted by women because of how unattractive they are.

The users *churdurbudur* and *TotalFatty* both take the same approach of acknowledging that those they are responding to are unattractive Incels but still feel the need to add in a comment to say that they are even less attractive. They both say that the Incels in question “mog” them, which in essence means that the Incel “mogging” them has superior looks to them, for example, for an Incel who is taller than another, the shorter Incel might say they are “heightmogged” by him. Those who can acquire symbolic capital and be affirmed as truecels by fellow forum users often use this symbolic capital to discredit other users and keep their truecel status as something to aspire to.

Ultimately, an Incel’s reputation relies on two things, their first position within the field of society, and their second position within the field of the forum (Bourdieu, 1989). The position of every individual within each field relies on systems of comparison and hierarchy, both of which run on masculinity and one’s ability to either sufficiently present it or suppress it, depending on which field is in question. Symbols of distinction that afford capital are therefore

double determined; they are dependent on one's first position, which is determined by how far one strays from hegemonic norms in society, and their second position, which is how far one strays from hegemonic norms on the forum (Bourdieu, 1989). Chads and Tyrones use the power acquired from their social capital to exclude the rest of the men in their social field who fall short of hegemony, typically by using language related to these shortcomings.

These two fields exist at opposite ends of the spectrum of masculinities, but their systems of gaining capital and power work in parallel ways. Both fields are "masculinized" in their own ways, but privilege is ultimately dependent on the type of man one is or claims to be, always benefitting one type of man and masculinity over another (Collins, 2015). The patriarchy is inherently male-dominated, and the fields within it are masculinized, meaning that they depend on what type of man one is and how their masculinity is presented under the guise of the patriarchy. The position of each individual agent within a given field are not fixed but relational and defined by the positions of others within that same field (Topper, 2001). The qualifications for each field are determined by the members within it, and every member typically has a common shared interest and goal of achievement. Despite these two groups of men being at two opposite ends of the spectrum, they both enact symbolic power in a similarly toxic way within their given fields. Men who achieve the hegemonic standard enact toxic masculinity against men who are unable to meet this same masculine norm, whereas Incels enact symbolic violence because they are not only complacent in their subordination, but they also perpetuate hegemony and toxic masculinity through their exclusion of men who fall short of hegemony in their field.

3.2.1 Incels' Need for Reaffirmation and Validation

As a means of affirming their status as Incels, and truecels especially, members often need validation from outside sources to confirm that they do belong on this forum. In cases where they may not be receiving as much validation of their Inceldom as they need, Incels at times appear to seek out this reaffirmation by setting themselves up for failure in order to prove preconceived assumptions that they will be rejected. A common way of doing this is setting up Tinder experiments, as can be demonstrated in the quotations below:

[PhenomSkillz]: "Need pictures of an 8/10 Arab that can't be reversed search, and pictures of a 5/10 white that can't be reversed search."

Let's see if the -3 theory is actually true or not, and I live in the most liberal state in America

Also give me the same descriptions for both. They need to have the same status and height.” (July 31st, 2018)

[Unknown User]: “I JUST SET UP AN ACCOUNT FOR TINDER AND USED



THIS PIC

*i got 10+ LIKES IN THE BAR
LITERALLY AFTER FINISHING THE BIO
ALMOST EVERY SWIPE IS A MATCH
this destroys my experiment with lakowski
with bateman
with everybody
i literally want to to ER right now
this is insane
will post pics as soon as i can” (n.d.)*

*[Richard spencer]: “It’s actually over...
She must have worked on her personality is that a new haircut?
Maybe it’s the smile you incels just need to smile bro.
She’s fun fit and flirty, what more could you want?
QUEEN QUEEN QUEEN QUEEN QUEEN QUEEN QUEEN YASS SLAY
QUEEN!!!!” (June 3rd, 2018)*

User *PhenomSkillz* is discussing needing pictures for an experiment surrounding the desirability between different races and the given attractiveness based on their 1–10-point scale rating, as discussed in a previous section. These are common experiments conducted on the forum, this one of which is trying to prove that a 5/10 white man will still get more matches than an 8/10 brown man, because whiteness is inherently attractive. They set up such experiments to prove theories that they already believe to be true, in this case, in order to demonstrate to others on the forum that whiteness benefits even the most undesirable Incels. The following users are discussing a Tinder profile one user had set up for an overweight woman, in order to see how many matches she could easily get, when Incels struggle to get any. As can be seen, she gets quite a few Tinder matches in a very short period of time, which the Incels believe to be an indication of women having an advantage in the sexual market, never struggling to find men who

would have sex with them regardless of how they look. They go on to explain the irony of this situation, with Incels constantly being told to improve their personality, get a haircut, take a shower etc., but women can be overweight and subjectively unattractive by societal standards and still have no issue getting matches.

[VL O]: "Matches don't mean anything unless you actually go and fuck them. A lot of them ghost you after 1-2 messages. And honestly, where's your proof outside of tinder? Tinder this and Tinder that, almost as if the real world doesn't exist outside it. Anyway, you're just trolling so go fuck yourself. You're not a real jew, you're probably some pathetic white guy with an inferiority complex. Just rope yourself." (n.d.)

As user VL O recognizes, Tinder is not a sure-fire way of proving theories that the Incels on the forum hold, especially because getting matches does not necessarily lead to anything else (dating, sexual experiences, etc.). However, most Incels would argue that they are too ugly to even get matches in the first place, let alone get any further than that. This need for reaffirmation encourages negative and toxic behaviour both on the forum and from the outside world.

3.3 Toxic Masculinity on the Forum

As can be deduced from many of the interactions and discussions on the forum, the site itself can be very toxic and can ironically perpetuate toxic masculine standards masking as exclusion and gatekeeping. When Incels' already-existing beliefs that they are hated and misunderstood in society become reaffirmed, this forum quickly becomes the means to an end whenever toxicity reigns. Hegemonic masculinity in society leads to internalized toxic masculinity and Inceldom itself, but Incels rely on the inaccurate media representations of themselves in order to reaffirm their status as cast-aside beings. The misrepresentation they face in the media, as well as on other discussion forums, reiterates to Incels that they are hated, misunderstood, and unwanted in society.

Tinder experiments that Incels often conduct, especially when they involve women, also bring out not only misogynistic comments about women, but also encourage toxic masculinity when it comes to discussing the men who match with, and potentially attempt to have sex with, the women in these experiments.

[NewFuture]: “This is the most sick thing I have experienced on the issue of dating between the two sex I am literally disgusted how can this men be that desperate? its much better to masturbate than fucking her my dick will not even get up” (n.d.)

[Unknown User]: “I strongly believe in shaming men for fucking fat ugly women. Why? Because they are literally part of the problem.” (June 5th, 2018)

The Incels on the forum begin to blame and shame the men who decide to pursue women who do not live up to conventional standards of femininity. According to their beliefs on only dating one’s looksmatch, it should be Incel-like men who pursue unconventionally attractive women, in order to reduce hypergamy, which is why they become incredibly frustrated with attractive men who pursue conventionally unattractive women. They blame these men for perpetuating hypergamy whilst also saying that they would not stoop to this unattractive of a woman to have sex with. The toxic masculinity surfaces when they start to use terms that would typically be used by hegemonic men to shame Incels and other subordinate men.

[Manletmanoer]: “Cucks piss me off more than foids tbh. I would punch a cuck right now if you gave me one” (April 1st, 2019)

[KingOfRome]: “And she has one. Because you’re too much of a pussy soyboy to ghost her like a true blackpilled incel. Just save us all the trouble and make a post on Inceltears about how we’re so toxic and you’re no longer an incel despite being a 5’2 pizza faced cuck boy virgin” (n.d.)

[Unknown User]: “In short grow some fucking balls and try to remember what it felt like to be a man who was capable of standing up for something beyond just his hurt feelings” (n.d.)

*[Nautical1883]: “Lmao, [f*****] I have no sympathy for normscum” (March 31st, 2019)*

The above quotes reveal that at times, Incels appear to think lesser of other emasculated men, which stems from ingrained hegemonic masculine norms and toxic patriarchal misogyny. This quickly turns to toxic masculinity, which can frequently be seen on the forum itself, particularly through the use of language. As stated earlier on, Incels have internalized the habitus of hegemonic men, and therefore continue the vicious cycle of trying to emasculate other men

who, like themselves, fall short of whatever expectations exist in the specific field they are in. Language is often used to tear other forum users down in order to decrease their symbolic capital and diminish their symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1989).

Incels derogatorily refer to men who choose to pursue women in a respectful way, and let women have power over them, as cucks, which relates to a bluepilled rhetoric. Any Incel who demonstrates more bluepilled ways of thinking or mentions the desire for a relationship or interaction with a woman in their everyday life would also be termed a cuck, as can be seen in the quote from *KingOfRome*. This man was having interactions with a woman who wanted him to want her but did not want a relationship with him. This can also be seen in the above quotation, where the user is told to grow some balls, and is ridiculed for talking about his feelings, rather than being emotionally tough like a real man should be. By making these statements and using this specific language, Incels are not only creating toxicity on the forum itself, but they are also participating in the continuation of hegemonic and toxic masculinity in broader society, and subsequently participating in their own oppression and hate towards hypomasculine men in general. Unfortunately, for a lot of the Incels on the forum, whether they have been accepted as truecels or not, feel that this is their only place of community, and their place on the forum therefore becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Those on the forum oftentimes appear to be dependent on the toxicity that it fosters. They seem to become comfortable in this environment and therefore do not make a great effort to ascend, as they fear losing their sense of community on the forum.

[Ellsworth]: "Let's be real, things are bad and getting worse as far as hypergamy contributing to incelldom. However being on this site leads one to believe that things are worse than it really is because we are not allowed to discuss any successes here as it is considered bragging."

Obviously there are guys getting some female attention and dates here but we just can't be made aware of it. I'm not talking about the fakecels but rather the legit incels who are still sexless but have minor successes with foids." (June 29th, 2019)

[mylifeistrash]: "So much hatred when an incel finds happiness" (March 11th, 2018)

As can be seen in the quotations from *Ellsworth* and *mylifeistrash*, the rules of the forum, especially considering those associated with bragging related to (potential) ascension, encourage Incels to remain silent about any positive experiences, and only discuss the negatives amongst each other. Those who may decide to bring up experiences with women, even if it is for the purposes of seeking advice, risk being temporarily or even permanently banned from the forum. Incels often appear to internalize the toxicity they feel from society, and from the forum, and either choose not to pursue women, or choose to approach women with the preconceived belief that they will face rejection, so when they do get rejected, it only reaffirms what they already believed. They therefore let toxic masculinity live through them and perpetuate it at the same. While it would make sense for Incels to fight against rigid standards of masculinity to solve many of the problems they identify, they instead participate in the cycle of symbolic violence through their willingness to weaponize toxic masculinity against fellow Incels and emasculated men.

Incels' very pointed hatred of women and feminism masks the subtle power and dominance of hegemonic men, who have the greatest control in society when it comes to the social and sexual realm. Rather than viewing the nearly unattainable masculine standard as the cause of many inferior and oppressed masculine groups, these power relations are readily accepted and instead, women and their pursuit of their human rights has been viewed as threatening the male role, and the cause of subordinate groups of men. Because hegemonic masculinity is the dominant discourse in society, it essentially works to silence any and all other discourses surrounding gender relations and gender presentation, allowing processes of symbolic violence to creep in by making this domination seem like the natural way of things.

They enable hegemonic men to keep their power and social capital by unknowingly allowing these men to speak through them, bullying each other rather than redirecting their anger and frustrations towards society's unachievable expectations. Their belief is that hegemony is an unchangeable given, so they accept their Incel fate as inevitable and forever unchanging. They use the same language and insults embedded in emasculation and misogyny, unknowingly continuing the cycle of oppression and aggression that toxic masculinity creates. These men use language as a means of symbolic domination, which reproduces existing power relations (Bourdieu, 1989; Thapar-Bjorkert et al., 2016).

Language is one of the biggest indicators of their unknown complacency, and when truecels use their symbolic capital and power in order to posit themselves as an authority on the forum, ready and willing to exclude anyone they view as not meeting their standards, they are perpetuating symbolic violence within the forum itself (Johnston & Morrison, 2007). Doxa remains as the common-sense way of thinking, ways of seeing the world are obvious and unquestioned because that is just the way they are, everyone accepts the status quo as a given and do not see pushing for other forms of masculinity to be accepted as an option (Bourdieu, 1989; Topper, 2001). It is the inherent and underlying way of thinking for everyone in society, and those who fall victim to symbolic violence do not have the ability to shift this rhetoric because they cannot recognize their complacency. Altering the doxic reality would require a great amount of progress in society, and a lot of personal awareness in order to recognize and question such a powerful force of existence (Topper, 2001).

3.4 Paranoid Defensiveness: Inceldom Ridiculed by the Outside World

As a result of how often Incels fall victim to mockery from many people in society, they unknowingly perpetuate this same ridicule towards those on the forum who do not measure up to their ideal standards of Inceldom. This is the largest way in which they reproduce their own societal subordination, by inadvertently accepting and perpetuating hegemony and methods of exclusion (Connolly & Healy, 2004).

Apart from being misrepresented in the media, one of the active forum users was given the opportunity to be interviewed on a YouTube channel in order to provide a firsthand perspective into Incels' fundamental beliefs. Some of the Incels were initially excited to see what their fellow forum user was going to say, but the majority were already apprehensive, assuming that they would be facing backlash and that he would not represent what the majority of them believe in, as can be demonstrated in the quotations below:

[BlkPillPres]: "Same, kinda think he'll make us look soft and he won't make any points 'that stick'. Seems like the type that would rant about his personal life experiences instead of black pill theory. I would feel better if it was @FAKEandLMS who would speak more about undeniable theory and he has a lot of videos on it too, quality videos. This guy may just end up making us look more pathetic." (April 26th, 2018)

[Letting Go]: “This guy does not represent us, and I don’t even think he speaks for the majority of users on the board when he says that:

- 1. He has had relationships and sex in the past*
- 2. He condemns ‘misogyny’ and says it has no place in the incel community*
- 3. He doesn’t blame women for his Inceldom and encourages them to become part of our community*

He certainly doesn’t speak for me and other blackpillers on the forum” (n.d.)

As the users *BlkPillPres* and *Letting Go* discuss, the Incel who participated in this interview ended up not being a good representative of the values and beliefs that they adhere to as a group. They felt as though he made their perspectives appear softer and more open-minded than they are, especially when it comes to how they feel about women, and the fact that he was not even a truecel because he had had sexual relations in the past. They felt that this was quite a missed opportunity, as Incels do not often get the chance to speak on their issues to media outlets directly. Often, others create a narrative for them without their consent or influence, and this user continued this misrepresentation by doing an appalling job, according to users on the forum. Incels have an awareness that they are being surveilled by others who are not a part of the forum, and very rarely get an opportunity to control their own narrative, as they can easily be taken out of context and are often ridiculed in media and on other websites, most commonly the *IncelTears* subreddit, which is often mentioned on the forum.

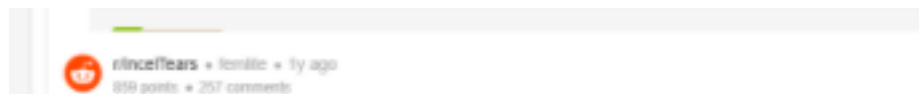


Image 5: IncelTears screenshotting Incel posts on their subreddit.

Image 5 shows a screenshot that one of the users found on *IncelTears* of a post from their forum. Although at times it may seem that the Incels are overly suspicious about the general public ridiculing them, the fact that a subreddit dedicated solely to making fun of and monitoring the Incel forum is proof that even on their own forum, they are not strangers to the uneasiness that everything they say could be taken out of context. They often mention this risk when alluding to the amount of people monitoring a thread while their discussions unfold, as can be seen in the quotations below:

*[whogivesafucc]: “also jfl that this has 1.2k views
cucktears lurking hard” (June 13th, 2018)*

*[whogivesafucc]: “He’s white
also jfl 141 guests” (n.d.)*

*[PrinceOfCope]: “You must be trolling me please stop.
King regards, white Chad.’*

*Also, ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY SIX GUESTS ARE WITNESSING THE
INCEL RACE WAR UNFOLD. I hope you guys make some good incel tears
threads” (n.d.)*

Underneath each thread, it shows how many Incels (actual accepted members of the forum) are on the thread, as well as how many guests (those with accounts without full forum access) are viewing the same thread, which is what the users *whogivesafucc* and *PrinceOfCope* are referring to. Whenever there is a high number of guests on a given thread, it is assumed that it is members from IncelTears (IT) observing the discussions to see if there is anything they can screenshot and post on their subreddit to draw attention to. Apart from needing the reaffirmation from other forum users that their status as Incels is legitimate, it often appears as though users seek out the possibility that they are also being surveilled and ridiculed by other online groups as a means of reaffirming their status as an oppressed group. IncelTears is a very popular subreddit, which seeks out posts from Incel forums with the sole purpose of finding discussions that paint Incels in a negative and problematic light: posts that would trigger or infuriate the general public without giving any context. IncelTears could at times be described as a means to an end. This subreddit has already decided that Incels are problematic in a number of ways, therefore, they pick and choose specific posts or comments from the Incel forum in order to prove their established opinions; they are fully biased in their presentation of “evidence,” which ends up reinforcing and reaffirming assumptions that Incels on the forum have already made: that everyone is judging them, and that even in their own community, they are oftentimes unsafe to speak freely.

*[josh]: “Oh look, a fake post by IT so they can screenshot an incel trying to
groom children.*

Nice try” (June 14th, 2019)

*[Richard spencer]: “Show this to those [f*****] at IT” (June 4th, 2018)*

Sometimes there are posts on the forum that are quite problematic and usually the Incels will comment, just as user *josh* did, by saying that these posts are made by IncelTears users who want Incels to admit to problematic things so that they are able to relay this back to their subreddit to mock them. The user *Richard spencer* is alluding to a discussion surrounding how Incels have suffered in society, and the mistreatment they so often face as a result of falling so far from hegemonic norms. This comment sheds light on the irony of IncelTears users choosing to ignore when Incels discuss their experiences of being victimized, and instead only focus on when Incels discuss socially unacceptable things. This reaffirmation of their status gives Incels emotional security on the forum and gives them greater symbolic capital and power whenever they are ridiculed by outsiders.

Symbolic violence is an invisible type of violence that individuals unknowingly participate in and enact towards others, while hurting themselves in the process. It is silent as the individuals enacting symbolic violence allow dominant groups to work through them; their habitus is directly aligned with the habitus of the dominant group in society. As Bourdieu (2013) states, “[a]ny capital, whatever the form it assumes, exerts a symbolic violence as soon as it is recognized, that is, misrecognized in its truth as capital and imposes itself as an authority calling for recognition” (p. 298). Men in society who accept hegemony as the norm, and allow this to dictate their performances of masculinity, through hegemonic, hypermasculine, or hypomasculine ways, are therefore perpetuating their own subordination. All three of these masculine performances contribute to toxic masculinity, which does not benefit any gender group. They are therefore misrecognizing the symbolic violence they are enacting through toxic masculinity as power and status.

Conclusion

My interest in studying Incels as a population peaked when I realized that all the media representations of them were based in fear and violence, despite this being a select few in an overall very large group. I was initially interested in the reasons for Incels emerging in contemporary society, and this interest quickly expanded when I began reading into their manifestos and forums, leading me to want to provide a more thoughtful analysis of their experiences and worldviews. Analyzing this specific forum was of interest to me because it was the largest platform that Incels had (at the time of data collection) to discuss anything that they wanted to, devoid of outside influence or bias. While exploring this forum, I discovered a wide range of information and opinions, which had to be greatly condensed in order to fit into one topic of research. It was discovered that Incels felt very misrepresented in the media and believed that they are constantly villainized in their day-to-day lives, which was of interest to me because although objectively, men are considered to have greater power under the current social order, they perceived themselves as being more oppressed than women, which led me to want to further investigate the reasons that they may feel emasculated and subordinate.

Although I did not have specific demographic information surrounding the individuals on the forum, this made me want to investigate other types of masculinities in relation to the norm. After reading through the data collected and relating it to multiple masculinities, I had a clearer understanding of Inceldom and its dynamics but was still missing some explanations concerning certain patterns of behaviour and toxic language used amongst forum members. Symbolic violence, in combination with multiple masculinities, gave me the structure to further analyze the material collected and give a potential interpretation of their behaviour through a more theoretical lens. My findings in analyzing this data were unexpected but did contribute to a gap in the literature that I had set out to fulfill. In utilizing symbolic violence, finding that Incels unknowingly contribute to their own subordination was relevant to this research because it provided a greater explanation as to why some forum members strive to achieve hegemony still, while others completely reject it.

Overall, this research project does fill some of the gaps in the literature by providing unaltered accounts of Incels' experiences, problems, solutions, and worldviews, giving a potential explanation of their dynamics and why they may behave in the ways they do, as well as

how their behaviour may contribute to their own subordination under the patriarchal norm. This also provides a tangible example as to how patriarchal gender norms negatively influence all genders in contemporary society, and therefore should be fought against, rather than accepted as an unchangeable reality. By allowing themes to emerge on their own in the data, rather than entering data collection with previously determined themes, this project enabled Incels' common discussion points and opinions to dictate what would be examined in this research project.

Combining Bourdieu's theory of symbolic violence with concepts relating to multiple masculinities expanded the scope of this theory to include more conversations surrounding gender performances and dynamics, which was missing from the original theory. Feminist literature was useful in allowing me to identify the ways in which Bourdieu's theory was helpful for this research project, and to critique the ways in which it was lacking. Merging this theory with masculine concepts helped to shed light on how the current hegemonic order benefits nobody and provided explanations as to how women are able to dictate the behaviour and power of men in certain social realms, despite being objectively oppressed by the patriarchy. This was illustrated primarily when the theoretical framework was applied to arguments made in the quotations used for data analysis.

In taking a qualitative approach to this research, the analysis opened prospects for future scholars to conduct research on topics such as, Incels and their rejection of the alt-right rhetoric, while simultaneously being associated with anti-Semitic ideologies, the desire of some Incels to incorporate Islam into Western society as a mechanism of solving Inceldom and hypergamy, the mistreatment of subordinate men in online dating-app experiences, etc. There has been some research conducted on Incels' association with the alt-right, but this research has not considered the fact that Incels heavily reject this connection, as the alt-right and the Incels have fundamentally different values and goals. They do, however, often engage in anti-Semitic rhetoric, which may require greater analysis in order to separate and distinguish between these two seemingly conflicting associations. Once again, although some of the underlying values of Inceldom are traditionalist and often racist, it is interesting that certain men on this forum advocate introducing Islam into Western society in order to have greater control over the sexual activity of women. Additionally, often dating apps are used as evidence to prove an already-existing conclusion that has been made by forum members, so it would be interesting to conduct

an actual research project examining the dynamics of these apps and whether Incels are correct in the conclusions they draw. Although this project was able to provide a partial explanation as to what led to the emergence and growth of this group, as well as their main worldviews surrounding their position in society, there is still much to be done.

Unfortunately, with the type of data collected and analyzed, conversations were fixed and could not be expanded upon. For future research, it would be beneficial for researchers to be able to conduct actual open-ended interviews with Incels. However, this would have to occur over time in order for interviewees to feel trusting enough to not worry about having their words twisted or edited in a way that could taint their reputation and misrepresent Inceldom itself. Having open-ended interviews anonymously and not broadcasted over media would greatly benefit this population, as they would not risk being doxxed, and would likely lessen their fear of misrepresentation. Ultimately, this research project provides one explanation for how Incel dynamics work and how they oftentimes end up unknowingly contributing to their own subordination. It also identified a plethora of alternative topics and discussions that could be used as broad topics for future research projects.

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