

MASTERARBEIT | MASTER'S THESIS

Titel | Title

Excel-ing the Incel: A qualitative study on deradicalization
practices on the forum R/IncelExit

verfasst von | submitted by

Édua Mária Varga BA

angestrebter akademischer Grad | in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science (MSc)

Wien | Vienna, 2024

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme code as it appears on the
student record sheet:

UA 066 550

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme as it appears on the student
record sheet:

Masterstudium Communication Science

Betreut von | Supervisor:

Univ.-Prof. Hajo Boomgaarden PhD

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Introduction

Over the last few decades, we have seen the emergence of several far-right, white male-led sub-groups online in the Western world fighting for men's rights (Hoffman et al., 2020). All these movements, such as Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW), Pick Up Artists (PUA), and incels make up the Manosphere, where each group is tied together by anti-feminist ideologies and their strong faith in genetic determinism called the 'Red Pill Theory' borrowed from the movie *The Matrix* (Ging, 2019; Kutner, 2020). Previous research on the topic concludes that when discussing organizations like MGTOW and PUAs, a relationship between community members is based on sexual gratification earned by sleeping with women (Ging, 2019). In the case of involuntary celibates, famously known by their acronym incels, resentment felt towards the opposite sex is built on rejection and the belief that men are owed intimate relationships with women. They exhibit behaviors of helplessness due to their lack of success in the field of dating with many seeing themselves as bystanders in their own lives (O'Malley et al., 2020). The community gained prominence through increasingly violent outbursts exhibited on online forums like Reddit, 4chan, and 8chan in the early 2000s', then later through acts of terrorism committed by Elliot Rodger (also known as the "king of incels") in 2014, and Alek Minassian in 2018, under the guise of retribution (Baele et al., 2021).

In a society where women and men are drifting further away from each other concerning political and ideological views, where loneliness is considered an epidemic (Shafiq et al., 2024); young boys often fall victim to online content seemingly free of political messaging (Stahl et al., 2023). TikTok is one of the platforms offering a gateway to incelism with videos repackaging misogynistic tropes and normalizing sexist behavior in the comment section (Solea and Sugiura, 2023). The algorithm fed by a positive feedback loop that makes the platform so addictive further enables and fastens the radicalization process of users reaching out to other platforms in search of like-minded people and communities (Solea and Sugiura, 2023). Forums like Incel.is fuel ideological indoctrination that is achieved by the promotion of relatable content, sub-group-specific language, and belief systems created and seemingly backed up by scientific evidence, that often turns out to be pseudo-science or information taken out of context upon further investigation.

Incels enable like-minded peers by supporting ideas of social alienation, determinism, grandiosity, and self-hatred (O'Malley et al., 2020). Many choose to take the 'black pill' a worldview in which internal and external qualities of the self are unchangeable, and the only way out of misery is either committing suicide or violent attacks towards women (Cottee,

2020). While scholarly discourse on the topic of the last few years seems to take the threat of incel violence more seriously, there is a lack of literature on possible solutions that can deradicalize men who identify as incels. Forums offer no help to individuals who reject participation in encouraging extremist propaganda, seeking an understanding environment of like-minded people sharing stories of love and misadventure. Currently, only one Reddit forum named r/IncelExit offers support for males recovering from inceldom, delivering a space where they can share their stories and observations after leaving toxic-masculine ideals behind. Users are encouraged to follow a set of rules such as being tolerant, and not engaging in misogyny, political/ideological debates, or trolling.

The current study examines the subreddit and employs inductive qualitative analysis of more than 200 posts with the most engagement found on the forum to identify useful advice and actions incels can take during the process of recovery. The study offers an understanding of the core beliefs, fears, insecurities, and issues these males experience in today's society and offers a framework for future research in the field of CVE and deradicalization with a consideration towards gendered violence de-escalation.

Research Questions and Objectives

The main goal of this piece is the exploration of one subreddit called r/IncelExit. The forum was created in 2019 and has been growing consistently ever since, currently accommodating around 18.000 members, with an even posting and commenting tendency amongst users (Subreddit Stats, n.d.). The forums offer valuable insight as it unifies incels, recovering incels, recovered incels, and community outsiders while synchronously fostering productive discourse on the issue of inceldom. Although the threat of incel violence is higher than ever, the platform has been underutilized by scholars to analyze the types of guidance offered by peers so far. The focus lies in the in-depth reading and inspection of the most interacted posts to find the root of the problem and suggest solutions to the pressing issue of loneliness and disenfranchisement these individuals perceive. With the scope of the research in mind, the paper proposes the following research question:

“What are the most commonly brought-up issues, questions, and narratives shared between past incels inside the subreddit R/IncelExit?”

“What are some pieces of advice and methods other members share and recommend to facilitate recovery?”

To get a deeper understanding of community members, the study also proposes a subquestion:

“What are the underlying reasons different members of the community decide to seek out the subreddit R/IncelExit?”

By considering these questions, the study addresses two main objectives:

Objective 1: To investigate the main reasons behind joining incel forums in the first place. Figuring out motives helps the advancement of prevention practices that can potentially halt or stop the development of an extremist worldview. In-depth reading and understanding of main and subtext will be applied and then categorization will take place. Emerging and reoccurring topics will be discussed.

Objective 2: To identify the most popular and interacted with expressions in the group to understand and later on develop deradicalization practices to accommodate the needs of recovering incels. By mapping out the concerns and interests of users we come to a clearer understanding of methods professionals should use to develop programs targeting incels who wish to leave the community. The subreddit has five categories members can use to indicate the content of the post: Asking for help/Advice, Question, Discussion, Resource/Help, Looking for comfort, and Celebration/Achievement.

Social relevance

The research aims to explore the topic of rehabilitation of politically far-right radicalized minds within online spaces. Publicly available incel pages are slowly disappearing as places like Reddit, TikTok, and other public domains no longer allow hate speech. Incels slowly move on to private chatrooms on platforms such as Discord to ensure complete anonymity, privacy, and maintenance. The issue lies behind the fact that mass data retrieval from the source will slowly become impossible unless scholars indoctrinate the forums themselves, thus behavioral or linguistic changes will be harder to track. On the other hand, the addictive nature of these groups will be further heightened as algorithms become more receptive to users' interests, propelling them deeper into the radicalization pipeline (Kelly et al., 2021). There has been a rise of gateway content produced on social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and YouTube which seamlessly fits into the narrative incels wish to popularise (Romano, 2018; Kersley, 2021). Tropes such as misogyny, racism, and lookism are often repackaged within a funny or ironic context that lures the viewer into a false sense of safety as they do not encounter explicit hatred. Quick identification of disillusionment and preventative measures must be recognized by scientific and political bodies to avoid further

and more frequent terrorist attacks. Government-led prevention strategies and programs are often just fronts, promising a high success rate but failing to deliver on their claims (Kersley, 2021). Counterterrorism initiatives tend to target Muslims disproportionately, focus on disengagement instead of prevention or deradicalization, and fall short concerning research implementation into their agenda (Kersley, 2021). White male anger is embedded deeply in the fabric of the current societal structure and often goes unnoticed and unpunished until brought to an extreme. The conceptualization of a framework that gives a guideline to professionals in the field of gender-based violence while finding long-term and sustainable methods of exit strategies to incels would allow policymakers to tackle the issue on a systematic level.

Literature review

The origins of the Incel

'Alana's Involuntary Celibacy Project' is the title of the first ever online space dedicated to incels, created by a female individual based in Toronto, Canada, to tackle her insecurities over singlehood, find a likeminded community and bond over shared experiences in the dating scene (Hoffman et al., 2020). The page, where the abbreviation 'incel' came to be, was created in 1997 and targeted people of all genders, races, and ages. The group bonded over their lack of success in dating, having sex, and establishing relationships. The basis was understanding each individual's situation and offering advice, the forum serving a sort of rehabilitation and positive therapeutic experience to its members. The project was abandoned about three years later as the creator eventually moved on and outgrown the page and community, new voices started to emerge and dominate these spaces, the word now belonged to heterosexual predominantly white male users (Hoffman et al., 2020). The term was soon overtaken by communities on sites such as 4chan and Reddit in the early 2000s, and quickly became a part of the manosphere. The cluster consists of Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW), men's rights activists (MRA), incels, and pick-up artists (PUA), each equipped with their set of rules and agenda (Glance et al., 2021). Generally, research concludes that PUAs were predecessors of incels as both groups are concerned with issues around dating women, and exhibit misogynist behavior, however, their frustrations manifest in different forms. PUAs became popular after Neil Strauss' book *The Game* was published in 2005, offering advice on how to become a dating guru. PUAs promote that through learning seduction techniques, upgrading yourself inwardly and outwardly, and overcoming rejection by continuously forcing yourself onto the targeted women dating becomes a game of numbers (Carlo, 2023). The book, other than including seduction tactics men can use on

women to woo them, lays out the core foundations of PUAs, conquering females comes with admiration, and being deemed an expert, one is seen as an 'alpha,' a superior male that successfully reaps the benefits that come with female attention (Carlo, 2023).

Men who were unsuccessful at becoming a PUA felt alienated in a subgroup that preaches how everyone can become successful at dating, unlucky members felt resentment towards their comrades as they could not replicate their positive outcomes. Incels began isolating themselves from PUAs and created their respective forums and webpages, proclaiming a far more toxic mentality surrounding dating. The community started operating on a set of ideologies, that is based on advertising misogynistic and racist rhetorics (Cottee, 2020). Making outrageous and extreme claims (otherwise known as trolling) to gather attention in the form of likes and comments is beneficial to members, as outsiders can never know the true intention behind the message (Hoffman et al., 2020). Anonymity and trolling empower and fuel incels to continue making malicious content, they can always backtrack and claim it as nothing serious, just a joke. Getting into a relationship was no longer the defying characteristic of an incel, the focal point is having sexual access to women at all times, and everything else is secondary. Glorification of a high number of sexual escapades is common and seen as admirable, it separates superior males over incels, second-class males (Cottee, 2020). Forming connections with the opposite sex is frowned upon, conquering them through means of deception and betrayal is simply payback for having power over withholding sex. Thus, inceldom becomes a permanent state of being, a defying characteristic rather than a temporary mindset one can get rid of through personal empowerment. Rather than offering support, incel communities create attachments over their shared sense of hatred and resentment towards women (Glance et al. 2021). Declarations of violence are encouraged by members, and the subgroup came to relevance through posts that aim to shock and threaten.

Incel culture: motives and worldview

Foundational Theory

The Matrix is a 1999 science fiction movie that has influenced popular culture and inspired a heap of subcultures in the last 20 years, including incels. The protagonist in the movie is presented with a choice requiring to either take a red or a blue pill: *"You take the blue pill – the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill – you stay in Wonderland and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes."* (Wachowski and Wachowski, 1999). The red pill reveals the 'real' world that has been taken

over by machines and artificial intelligence, where humans are bystanders with no free will. On the other hand, taking the blue pill means one stays ignorant of the true nature of the world, and blindly follows a pre-destined route as before. It is important to note that the red pill theory introduced in the movie is popular inside several sub-groups of the manosphere, each subgroup tweaking the theory to serve the agenda they wish to underpin (Hoffman et al., 2020). Conspiracy theorists and alt-right activists base their entire movement on the movie and the specific quote mentioned above ever since and confidently use the red pill theory to spread their often violent message. These shared narratives between red-pilled members cultivate and reinforce a comfortable environment for radicalization (Hoffman et al., 2020).

Red pill theory in the incel community highlights the issues of liberal feminist practices, such as sex positivity, emancipation, and rejection of traditional values, and aims to reaffirm hegemonic masculinity and traditional power structures in society (Botto and Gottzén, 2023). As a subculture, the need to reject current, social norms promoting an inclusivity and tolerance-based culture is apparent, as incels stand for conservative values, keeping traditional gender roles intact, and going against imminent trends, such as embracing singlehood or taking up traits traditionally seen as feminine (Ging, 2019). To be considered an incel, taking the red pill is essential, it represents an enlightened state that highlights one's disadvantages in the dating scene. Perceived shortcomings include issues regarding one's racial profile, economic background, and physical attributes (Blake et al, 2023). Red-pilled members function on the assumption that women and the most influential men control the world (Ging, 2019). Nevertheless, when taking the red pill, members still believe that through cheat codes like self-improvement (working out, getting rich, manipulation), they can 'hack' the system and gain some sort of worth in the dating field. Red-pilled ideology is closely tied to eugenics and backed up by pseudo-science to justify the suffering and sexual shortcomings of the collective (Ging, 2019).

Taking the Matrix worldview one step further, being black-pilled is only present in the incel community. Embracing a nihilistic, predetermined point of view, the black pill theory not only accentuates the realities of the world - women controlling access to sex, relationships, and family making - but also accepts that hierarchies and current social structures cannot be changed (Hoffman et al., 2020). To descend into permanent incelhood, members are encouraged to take the black pill and to succumb to hatred not only for oneself but also, for humanity. Individual efforts are seen as useless and infertile, only grandiose, systematical changes, such as women losing all of their rights or abolishing sex could lead to a utopian society. Incels conclude that the world is simply a cruel place taken over by liberal ideologies

such as feminism, it is not built for men who are not genetically gifted: white, conventionally good-looking, rich, or tall (Cottee, 2020). Black pill theory is in support of women being shallow, materialistic creatures, unable to appreciate the “nice guy”. While black-pilled members believe that their faith was decided on the day they were born and are facing a systematic issue, efforts to elevate one’s looks through cosmetical procedures, exercising, and upgrading one’s style is still quite common among red-pilled users, called “looksmaxxing” or “gymmaxxing.” Paradoxically, even with a myriad of disadvantages, black-pilled incels uphold male victimhood by blaming female liberation for their misfortune. Women are not logical, unable to make decisions over their life without the lead of a male (Glance et al. 2021), and mean-creatures who do not give a chance to ultimate gentlemen that incels claim themselves to be.

Hierarchy

Completely separate from the foundational red pill theory, incels understand their position in the world through the lens of a strict hierarchy system based on looks, finances, and sexual desirability, assigning males into categories that determine their worth in society and justify an individual’s incelhood. The most well-known and accepted form of hierarchy is based on the Greek alphabet (Alpha, Beta, Omega, Sigma) (Baele et al., 2021, p.1674), and heavily references power structures found in the animal kingdom, namely between wolves. Similar to the foundational theory, this structure of organization is also based on false and outdated rhetorics. Alpha males serve as leaders and are objects of envy in the eyes of incels due to their popularity (Vallerga and Zurbriggen, 2022, p.613). Alphas gain power either through their looks, financial status, “game techniques” (flirting, romance, manipulation), or inflicted violence. Politicians, millionaires, models, athletes, and celebrities are all considered Alphas, enjoying all the benefits and privileges of the dominance hierarchy such as female admiration and polyamory (p.613). Betas, on the other hand, make up the largest part of society. They represent the “average” man with a 9 to 5 job, their best chance of acquiring attention from women is through means of financial subservience, romance, and promises of loyalty through the establishment of a monogamous relationship (p.614). Omegas represent incels, males with no prospects in the field of dating (p.615). Their most defying characteristic is being a virgin, they can either accept their rank or graduate into becoming a Beta through self-improvement. Sigmas are what we consider outcasts, creators of their faith, applying outside-the-box thinking to excel in their day-to-day lives and achieve success (*Scientific Blackpill*, n.d.). Socially they are on the same level as Omegas but enjoy similar pleasures in life like Alphas. This top-down organizational model, however, is based entirely on outdated information and fails to keep up with the ever-changing landscape of scientific

research in the field of animal behaviorism. Modern wildlife biologists now agree that wolf packs are families, where each member has an equally important role, and fights for dominance are rare (Mech, 1999). Furthermore, incels liberally use anthropomorphist tactics to further their agenda. Wolves are often attributed with human characteristics such as strength, leadership, devotion, and primal, or instinctual nature. This disposition combined with the hive-minded behavior incels exhibit leads to the spread of unsubstantiated claims such as men being unable to control their cardinal urges.

Incels also make use of shared language practices with an abundance of group-specific terminologies and slang to be discerned (Bogetić, 2023). Both female and male outsiders are equipped with stereotypical names and archetypes they represent inside the community, based on shared understanding. In this alternate grouping, there are two types of men and women: Chads, described as tall, handsome, traditionally masculine men who get all the top women otherwise known as Stacys. They are airheaded, and superficial but equipped with a chiseled face and body. While incels look down on Chads due to their intellectual inferiority, they still envy Chad's looks and their infinite access to women (Menzie, 2022). Stacys are often portrayed as conventionally attractive blondes with curves. Cunning and material, they make the perfect couple with Chads, something incels can only dream of. Oppositely there are the Normies, the general population of men who still have access to ugly or average-looking women known as Beckys. Beckys are objects of hatred as they represent liberal women and are illustrated in a rather sloppy manner (Menzie, 2022). They support feminism, do not take care of their looks, and are seen as pick-mes still craving male validation. The objectification of female bodies and sexualities is ever present, as the core value system of an incel makes them believe that they are owed sex simply for existing (Menzie, 2022). Both archetypes (Stacy and Becky) represent rejection, the only difference is their perceived standing in the hierarchy (Menzie, 2022). Incels are inferior to Stacy, but superior to Becky.

Language

At first glance, individuals outside of the community who encounter incel content (whether spoken or written) might find it incomprehensible. Establishing ties and connections between members is largely based on their shared understanding of cryptolects and cants (Bogetić, 2023). These terminologies are sometimes borrowed from other subgroups of the manosphere (such as the black or red pill), however, incels thrive on the often unpredictable and dynamic nature of their language development. Neologism is inspired by ideals shared inside the far-right political sphere, pornographic, racist, and misogynistic tropes and

stereotypes, and their inexplicable need to exhibit a performative, white supremacist, heteronormative sexuality (Bogetić, 2023, Gothard, 2021). Identification of main topics of discourse happens through their most commonly used expressions. Their main areas of interest revolve around the following topics: questions of gender (foid, femoid, Chad, incel, Stacy, normie) and the crisis of racial identity (currycel, shitskin, rice) (Bogetić, 2023). The creation of new terminology can be categorized into three forms: name giving (Becky, Tyrone), skin color description (pooskin, cumskin), genetic makeup (hybrids), and food (ricecel, currycel) (Bogetić, 2023, p.97). These expressions were created through mutual understanding of ethnic slurs and gendered connotations to negatively represent non-white, non-male bodies, with the goal of reinforcement in mind (Gothard, 2021). Both gender expression and race play a role in one's placement inside the hierarchy mentioned before. The farther away one is from being white, conventionally attractive, healthy, and masculine, the less value they represent in an incel's eyes. Usage of incel cants is justified through pseudo-scientific means by misinterpreting data and statistics, backing up claims through biological reasoning to differentiate between genders and races, and exhibiting the superiority of traditional white male entities (Gothard, 2021).

Incel language use has also trickled down into the vocabulary of the everyday social media user (Bernstein, 2023) and is subtly influencing impressionable minds, leading to the normalization of extremely demanding, toxic masculine beauty standards. As of March 2024, Looksmaxxing is making rounds on the video-sharing app TikTok to enhance one's appearance in mind (Bernstein, 2023). Unlike other trends, looksmaxxing targets males, promoting dire body modification procedures under the guise of self-improvement. The beauty standard established through the trend resembles the imagery given to Chads with features such as big lips, prominent jawline, sharp cheeks, and eyebrows to enhance sexual market value, another idea stemming from the community (Bernstein, 2023). Sexuality and representations of it are commodified, sold, and repackaged while simultaneously offering meaning and merit to desperate males in search of authentic human connections (Speckhard et al., 2021). While looksmaxxing is revamped on TikTok by users as they give a lighthearted, funny twist to the "challenge" by creating memes (Bernstein, 2023), it serves as gateway content and offers a sneak peek into the incel community, leading to far more violent, dangerous, and misogynistic materials. Outside of looksmaxxing, incel-related content is constantly gathering attention on TikTok, even with the term "incel" remaining banned on the social media app due to the phrase being associated with promoting hateful behavior and going against community guidelines. The issue lies with content creators' creativity to bypass forbidden search words, as studies show that new users can spiral into an extremely violent and radical rabbit hole within ten minutes after registering on the

platform (Gilbert, 2023). Terms like “black pill” and “Elliot Rodger” are also banned, but spelling them slightly differently (“Elliot Ridger”), and users are met with a plethora of videos about the blueprint and face of incel terrorism.

Incel Icons and representation in the media

To understand the contributing factors that propel individuals to commit gendered violent attacks, we must look at behavioral patterns incel terrorists exhibited before committing their crimes, and how that affected both the community and the perceptions of the community popularised by mainstream media. On the 23rd of May, 2014 22-year-old Rodger killed six people and injured 14 more around the University of California, in Isla Vista, ending his own life later on the same day (Witt, 2020). Before the attacks, Rodger published several videos on YouTube, one also on the same day as his attack titled “Day of Retribution” giving viewers a glimpse into his frame of mind. He also wrote a 141-page autobiography titled *My Twisted World: The Story of Elliot Rodger*. A police investigation concluded that Rodger was a frequent visitor and contributor to incel and PUA-hate sites (Witt, 2020).

The legacy he left behind made a prominent impact on the community as it was the first instance that escalated into a terrorist attack and was done by a member of the subgroup. Rodger quickly became a recognized icon, giving him the name ‘Saint Elliot,’ ‘The Supreme Gentleman,’ creating ‘Saint Elliot Day’ to celebrate the day of the Isla Vista killings (Baele et al, 2021). His character has been raised similarly to a religious figure, his act of martyrdom is seen as admirable, as incels combined hatred towards themselves, outsiders, and society as a whole could only be sated through the act of self-sacrifice. The event also influenced incel vocabulary, “go ER” or “going ER” is used when a member is thinking or talking about committing mass murder, targeting a specific group of people, usually women. Members often use his pictures and quotes in forum discussions and praise him for the bravery he showed, framing him as a victim, his actions justified (Witt, 2020).

The first notable event after Rodger’s killings was done by Alek Minassian, a 25-year-old aspiring software developer in Toronto, Canada on the 23rd of April, 2018. Minassian rented a car and then subsequently drove the vehicle through a busy road, killing 11, injuring 15 during the process, trying, then eventually failing to end his life through suicide by cop (Baele et al., 2021). Minassian mainly targeted women during his rampage, his motive was discovered through a Facebook post he published (quoted above) inside a private incel group (Baele et al., 2021). The influence of incel culture and Elliot Rodger is clear, the one-sentence post includes 6 inceldom-related terminologies. “Incel rebellion,” otherwise known as “beta rebellion” refers to the black pill theory, it is an extremist fantasy in which

group members wish to overthrow the current societal order to reclaim their masculinity (Incels Wiki, n.d.). Compared to Elliot Rodgers and his status as a saint, his character divides the community. It has also led to tension between members as some admire him for his valor, while others look down on him as he did not commit suicide (Burton, 2022).

A few months after the Toronto attacks, another self-proclaimed incel went into a Yoga studio intending to kill as many women as possible, hitting four, and killing two (Baele et al, 2021). Scott Beirle has frequented online incel communities and posted misogynist content online in the form of YouTube video rants and music uploaded continuously on his SoundCloud (Beirle, 2014). He also exhibited white supremacist ideologies, and racist behavior towards African Americans, as he was against the diversity inside the nation (Baele et al, 2021).

Media-fueled discussions and narratives on incels suggest that misogynistic violence and the term 'incel' are interlinked, often exchangeable (Bengtsson Mueller, 2024). As the movement gets more mainstream attention, gender-based violence targeting women becomes synonymous with the incel community. They are also represented as unlovable and lonely, highlighting and targeting their identities connected to failing at exhibiting traditional masculine ideals (Bengtsson Mueller, 2024). Incels in return feel more misunderstood and shift the blame towards society led by perceived misandrist principles. Violence becoming the default feature of an incel encourages members of the community to commit more crimes and justify it by weaponized subordination (Halpin, 2022). This weaponization happens through implemented ideologies on lookism, race, self-hatred, and societal hierarchies (Halpin, 2022). The media attention that confirms and reassures popular black pill narratives halts the process of deradicalization and provides incels with more content they can misinterpret and use to fuel their agenda and messages.

Deradicalization practices

The above-mentioned infamous attacks showcase the threat incels could potentially pose to our society, pointedly towards women and people of color (Stijelja and Mishara, 2023). All three attackers spent months preparing leading up to the day of the event, all explicitly mentioning their hatred towards women, actively targeting them during their attacks. Emulating Rodger was certainly a factor, as both following attacks contained elements of the Isla Vista killings (car used as a tool of escape, targeting female-oriented spaces), each learning new, more efficient ways to commit the planned crimes from their predecessors. While terrorist attacks are committed far and few in between, their implications should not be misconstrued. There is an increasing tendency for online persona and political identity to be

interconnected, as incels identify with far-right ideologies and are subconsciously integrating them into shared narratives (Stijelja and Mishara, 2023). Radicalization is described as a process that deters individuals from supporting social norms that - in general - are for the betterment of society, such as ensuring the safety of civilians (Kruglanski et al., 2014). There are levels of radicalization (lower degrees such as support shown towards extremist views and online harassment, higher degrees such as engaging in violent acts against the self and others) (Kruglanski et al., 2014), and policymakers should pay attention to them to accurately build strategies and systems that foster deradicalization the best. Detailed descriptions and studies around radicalization steps are endless, however building a deradicalization framework is somewhat more complicated. While many believe that deradicalization theory can be built by examining widely accepted radicalization pathways, then backtracking the steps to counteract extremist views, stating that would be untrue.

Following De Coensel's eight-phase pre-radicalization and radicalization practice model (2018) that also considers implementation and post-implementation processes, the accurate encapsulation of the most important steps starting from indoctrination to recovery is showcased. The eight phases (Pre-radicalization, Awareness and Grievances, Solution Seeking, Interest, Targeting, Indoctrination, Implementation, and Post-Implementation) will serve as a guiding framework for understanding the radicalization process of incels during the discussion part of this study. For deradicalization to be successful, the process of de-pluralization must take place first; members of the community must start rejecting extremist political, cultural, and societal ideals, and after, the re-pluralization phase is introduced. (De Coensel, 2018) For that to work, two factors must be taken into account: the recognition of the individual needs of the participant and their pathways into radicalization to develop programs that function well, and the second one; the introduction of new concepts that serve as healthier alternatives, helping individuals to once again become active members of society (De Coensel, 2018, Cooley and Cooley, 2020). Understanding narratives that participants tell themselves is a key part of developing deradicalization routes in the field of countering violent extremism (CVE).

Other materials about countering extremist violence suggest that the issues should be tackled at an early stage of recruitment when radical thinking is not yet developed (Yayla and Koehler, 2020). The involvement of family, friends, and colleagues is used in several programs as a practice of CVE and deradicalization (Yayla and Koehler, 2020). The goal is to prevent the individual's involvement in an organization, before the indoctrination phase (Yayla and Koehler, 2020). Incel communities are especially addictive as they can only thrive in online spaces, offering endless amounts of gateway content on popular social media sites

that can raise the interest of potential members. They often become interested in their teenage years or early 20s' - also a phase where a strong sense of self is yet to be developed, thus, involving a community of familiar people, the promotion of social ties and inclusion, and the introduction of opposing narratives could be a useful tool in CVE research (Yayla and Koehler, 2020). Other radicalization and deradicalization models incorporate the idea of meaning-making as the driving force behind adopting extremist views (Kruglanski et al., 2014). Motivational, Ideological, and Social/Group Settings make up the three components leading to casual radicalization (with the exclusion of violent practices) (Kruglanski et al., 2014). As one of the main goals of this study, the exploration of initial motives to join incelism and advise offering promoting deradicalization pathways will be reflecting on the previously mentioned theories and frameworks.

Methodology

The study makes use of qualitative research design based on purposive sampling, as it aims to identify and categorize the nature of advice given to incels who wish to leave incelism in the forum R/IncelExit best. 249 posts were analyzed and dissected to find 1) the type of users present on the platform 2) the sort of topics users were most interested in or concerned with and 3) the advice offered by recovering incels and non-members of the community. Inductive analysis practices were used where the in-depth, line-by-line reading of the available text material took place to find main themes between paragraphs, then, through comparison of all text material develop codes and end up with well-defined categories, all with the theoretical concept and research question in mind (Azungah, 2018). There are two types of sorting available on Reddit based on popularity (Hot, New, Popular, Rising) and time (Now, Today, This Week, This Month, This Year, All Time). For this study, we have applied the filters 'Top' and 'All Time,' representing the most interacted posts ever since the existence of the subreddit. The amount of data collected was the total amount of posts available under the forum with the given parameters. Data collection took place in March 2024, carefully following the changes of the most upvoted posts of all time. During the collection window, only three posts moved into the folder, those were also taken note of and analyzed. Data was collected with the help of Google Sheets, anonymity of users was established as the document did not make use of the forum members' real or usernames, they will be also redacted when quoting throughout the study. Instead, an identification number was used based on the original order of the posts found on Reddit, starting from the most popular one. The study does not require taking users' informed consent, nor an ethics review as all posts are publicly available on the public forum Reddit.com. As incels themselves shelter their privacy, none of the posts included real names, places, dates, or

any type of personal information that needed to be redacted. Nevertheless, reflexivity was taken into account during the inspection of forum materials.

The study applies qualitative rigor inside the framework developed based on Thomas and Magilvy's (2011) description of a study design. While quantitative designs allow scholars to come to definitive, generalized conclusions qualitative methods support the full exploration of the human condition and offer a deeper understanding of the subject matter as the study aims to identify the underlying 'why' of the incel phenomenon inside a specific subgroup, a detailed interpretation will take place, with the following factors taken into account to provide consistent and valid results: Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability (Thomas and Magilvy, 2011). The study aims to achieve credibility by practicing reflexivity as a strategy to represent the chosen subgroup objectively, as a whole. Further discourse on the credibility of data and the potential for future use of it is discussed in detail under the 'limitations' part of this paper. When discussing transferability, we conclude that members of the community are heterosexual, white-presenting males with no age or geographical coordinates assigned to them. Findings are platform-specific, however, the study design can be passed on when examining other online incel communities. Establishing dependability happens through explicit communication of the data collection trail and the decision-making process when debating categorization. Explaining the goal of the study, the selection process of the study sample, data collection practices, and discussion of evaluation methods grant the study with grounded results based on dependability strategies. Last but not least, after having met the previous criteria, credibility is built by applying a self-reflective and critical attitude through the re-reading of the text to reconsider categorization, consulting existing literature, and discussing limitations.

Results

Categorization of Original Posters

Three types of incels were identified during the data collection process: Recovering Incels, Recovered Incels, and Current Incels. The nature of the user was derived from the content of the post.

Recovering Incels: Categorization was based on users' admittance of their black-pilled habits and thinking, and declaration of their need to change and leave incelhood behind (green highlight). The tone of their posts could be described as desperate, exhausted, and pleading (purple highlight), but also hopeful, optimistic, and promising (blue highlight), depending on the context of their message.

I have believed in some of the incel rhetoric for a while mainly because I started to agree with the black pill. I am ugly and have poor social skills and it seems like the chances of me getting a gf are pretty impossible however, I wanted to push myself to see if it was really over for me. So, I left Reddit and social media in general for a few months to push myself mentally and socially, and I thought it was all pointless until a few days ago.

I have always thought I was a terrible person and no one would accept an act of kindness from someone like me. But, knowing that I have brought some kind of joy in that girl's life makes me think that I not as bad as I think I am. (User Nr. 47)

Recovered Incels: Categorization was based on users' admittance of black-pilled thinking in the past, past tense language use, and current rejection of incel ideologies, their posts in nature are mainly concerned with advice-giving or providing learning resources (red highlight). Emotion words were used less frequently, trying to maintain a neutral position.

It's like a self help community inverted. Self helplessness is at the core of incel philosophy and ideology. It's actively promotes self helplessness as a lifestyle choice. (User Nr. 134)

Current Incels: Users' posts include cryptolects and cants (blue highlight), and posts made by Current Incels are accusatory and negative in tone (yellow highlight), intending to rant in mind or challenge the forum's purpose and message (red highlight). Due to the moderated environment and the zero-tolerance policy established on the forum, posts of this nature often get removed or locked to avoid opinion wars and maintain a well-balanced community without any form of misogyny and racism.

I could cope and blow off some steam while gymmaxing. But this was the final straw that made today a painfully shitty day for me. Being the low-iqcel that I am I didn't even realize I had to book a slot for the pool. I travelled an hour a way just to have my low self esteem lowered and to travel for another hour back home. I didn't get to cope today. I was shown how ugly I am, it's something I'm already aware of and I gymmax to try and fix that, but I didn't get to today.

I've actually been making an effort to stop being such a negative, jealous, irrational, paranoid, hateful incel but shit like this pushes me back down and reinforces my believes.

(User Nr. 52)

Outside of the incel category, the forum was also visited by Outsiders, people who wish to help incels, although they cannot relate to their ideology. Outsiders are either regular or visiting Reddit users who were never and are not part of the community, their identity is completely separate from the black pill or incel-like thinking. Their posts are mainly concerned with advice-giving, similar to Recovered Incels users. Their messages are based on personal experiences, thus lacking the emotional support and specialized advice incels need to recover. We have coded 'Researchers', for those who wanted to recruit incels for their study. They were not welcomed on the platform due to their prying nature and goal of analyzing and using incels as mere objects of interest. This grouping mostly got ignored, as users did not upvote research-related posts. Lastly, We coded Moderators who were concerned with the content of posts appearing on the forum and were responsible for maintaining regulations and offering suggestions to better the community. 'Not Applicable' was given to posts that were either too short in length or not descriptive enough to come to a definitive conclusion on the nature of the user.

Categorization of Intended Audience

Most users were asking questions from/calling for the attention of Incels and the General Public. Here, coding happened after reading the entire body of text and coming to a conclusion about who the post was intended for. The nature of the original poster, in this case, did not matter, as there was no specific pattern observed, cross-referencing the two main groups of audience was common. Recovered, Recovering, and Current Incels were equally interested in sharing their opinions with members both outside and inside of the incel community. The third most commonly cited group was Reddit users. They were coded when concerns regarding the state of the platform were brought up, links from other subreddits were shared, or when discussing certain platform-specific issues were described. Additionally, three other smaller categories emerged: Women, Men, and Researchers. The requirement for coding a post under 'Women' and 'Men' was to mention them specifically somewhere concerning gender-specific issues like what women find attractive or what can men do to make themselves look more attractive.

Categorization of Subtopics

Reddit offers its forum a maximum of 25 tags that can be used as markers of subtopics within the given scope of the forum. The creation of the tags is entirely dependent on the moderators, users do not have access to them in case they would like to delete or introduce a new one. In the case of R/IncelExit, the following six were established: Asking for help/Advice, Question, Discussion, Resource/Help, Looking for comfort, and Celebration/Achievement. The study also recorded a seventh subtopic under the name “Not Available.” Posts that were given no topic marker were examined by the nature of the text and were put in one of the already predetermined categories manually. Here, the introduction of the six categories will take place in order from most to least popular.

Celebration/Achievement: This subtopic was mainly concerned with the personal life goals of the original poster. They were always positive in tone, and often described milestones regarding romantic life such as the first kiss, relationship, or sexual experience. Others included positive experiences with society, reconnecting with friends and family, and awakening humanitarian emotions. The subtopic was dominated by stories posted by Recovering Incels as a form of self-reassurance where acknowledgment of past black pill narratives is brought forward by the original poster and current re-pluralization is affirmed by other members of the forum.

Discussion: This subtopic brought together all forms of posters; incels, outsiders, and moderators to debate about current issues around incelism. The idea behind the subtopic is to bring all sides together to generate discourse on topics like the black pill and red pill, induction techniques employed by incels, and the source of negative narratives like misogynistic beliefs.

Resource/Help: This subtopic specifically targets incels, and was mostly promoted by Outsiders, bringing in theoretical frameworks and research papers as proof against black and red-pill thinking. Addressing the root of Incel problems, this subtopic aims to discuss systematic issues around manhood, self-reflection practices, sex work, race, class, and theoretic backgrounds on attachment styles. Instead of offering temporary fixes, the goal is to radically change embedded black pill narratives.

Asking for help/Advice: This subtopic was mainly visited by Current Incels who are still very much deep in the headspace of black-pill thinking. Some were challenging social norms while others were desperately looking for help to escape incelism even though their

surroundings only reaffirmed their beliefs. Discussions were made around self-hate, feelings of anger and envy, lack of control over one's life, and complaints about lack of community.

Question: This subtopic was once again dominated by Current Incels, and was offering discussions on the most controversial topics on the forum, targeting Outsiders. A defensive, sort of aggressive tone was present in all writings, and original posters were looking to reaffirm their ideas by presenting their misfortunes as ultimate truths they can apply to all members of society, and convince other members of the community that they harbored wrong ideas about the world. Topics of discussion included perceived drawbacks experienced around physical appearance (height, being bald), the inability to deal with rejection, jealousy towards women, and one's position in a heteronormative hierarchy as a male.

Looking for comfort: This subtopic was on the same level of popularity as Question, and original posters were also of Current Incel nature, seeking out other Current Incels. Here, a less aggressive, but more hopeless tone was established as incels have already considered their situations as predetermined, but were still looking for outside validation and tips to escape negative narratives. Most posts were rants, a form of journaling to make sense of their experiences and receive rational feedback on their thoughts around themes such as self-hate, loneliness, dating, and insecurity.

Recurring themes of concern

First, an in-depth reading of the 249 posts took place where the body of the text was reduced to search words. The search words reflected and tried to encompass the main idea behind each paragraph inside the text. The title of the posts was also recorded, however, ignored when not giving additional context to the body of the text. In the second round of content analysis, the study materialized the identification of reoccurring narratives. Topics of concern then were grouped when regular repetition arose. By the end, six main narrative stories, and issues of discussion were established. The following six categories are not mentioned in order of importance, as the discourse around them is equally relevant inside the forum. A post was not contained to only one box of categorization, as topics of social relationships, power dynamics, culture, identity politics, and race are all interconnected.

Romantic relationships: By far, the most popular issue brought up between community members was the topic of romantic love and the need for relationships with women. Posts were put under this category when 1) members were discussing their success stories in the

field of dating 2) expressing disappointment and sadness for being left out of the dating scene 3) portrayals of unrealistic standards in media concerning romance, and 4) negative views on romance due to rejection. This group was shared by all three types of incels identified previously, and Outsiders, bringing an even leveled tone of conversation into the topic.

Forms of self-hatred: Expressions of negative self-beliefs were taken into account when developing the category. Negative self-affirming thoughts came from a variety of sources; some were inflicted on original posters by others such as bullying, comparison of the self with others, romantic rejection, and racism. Self-inflicted beration was also a common denominator when coding this category. Lookism plays a huge role in the formation of black-pilled thinking, as the internalization of popular beauty standards takes place. Messages were constructed with an overall negative voice and detailed descriptions of the original poster's inner world.

Perception of Women: Here, gendered language use was considered, and clear mentions of the words 'female' 'femoid,' or 'women' were noted when categorization took place. Women were perceived as a whole group instead of individuals through the inclusion of generalized statements. Posts tend to be filled with emotional words, and neutral opinions are uncommon. They were either idealized and canonized as objects of desire or despised for their status in society, inciting misogynistic views in users. Posters also recounted feelings of resentment towards women as they were forced to reexamine their identity as men.

Deconstructing Black Pill: This category was dominated by Recovering Incels who were coming to terms with their own biases regarding questions of incelism and black pill and Outsiders. Users often expressed regret and shame, but also confusion. The need to leave incelism was the biggest and most common indicator among this grouping. Post types varied from people who wanted advice on how to deconstruct core beliefs, to people who pushed forward with ideological confrontations. Outsiders were an integral part of this grouping as they offered theoretical material to incels that would debunk false narratives commonly spread between incels.

Interpretations of manhood: Original posters gave detailed descriptions of their insecurities around constructing socially acceptable male identities, questioning their purpose and issues around how to perform their gender. Doubts were brought up over conservative patriarchal notions, most messages contained vulnerable confessions about struggling with the concept of establishing a strong masculine identity. While users wished to challenge and escape the constraints of a toxic manly mindset, the admittance of failing to live up to the standards of

society was also present. Advice surrounding this topic focused on coping mechanisms and the promotion of a more liberal approach towards cultivating gender expression and manhood.

Social ties (excluding romantic relationships): Similar to the first category, users reported on any form of social interaction, both negative and positive. The objective of a post tends to be the need to rant and let out thoughts. Posts that contained some type of description of romantic encounters were excluded, here the focus fell on family, friends, and coworkers with whom the author only harbored platonic feelings. When users experienced a lack of community at their worst, they reported feeling a sense of loneliness, alienation, and challenges they were facing when trying to form social ties. On the other hand, users who have started to move away from the incel community aspired to create more connections and applied a positive outlook to their relationships.

Discussion

The above-mentioned results serve to investigate the following research question and subquestion mentioned at the beginning of the paper:

“What are the most commonly brought-up issues, questions, and narratives shared between past incels inside the subreddit R/IncelExit?”

“What are some pieces of advice and methods other members share and recommend to facilitate recovery?”

“What are the underlying reasons different members of the community decide to seek out the subreddit R/IncelExit?”

Following the devised questions, two objectives were established to investigate the main reasons behind joining incel forums in the first place and to identify the most popular expressions in the group to develop deradicalization practices to accommodate the needs of recovering incels.

To start with the subquestion, the results showcase that in the case of incels (Current, Recovering, and Recovered), they frequent R/IncelExit to 1) reunite with communities outside of inceldom, 2) certify the validity of their beliefs by either challenging Outsiders and Recovered Incels or question their own biases, and 3) find likeminded incels and bond over shared experiences while offering support. Referring back to the psychology behind

radicalization and deradicalization (Kruglanski et al., 2014), this study concludes that most incels remain at a lower degree of radicalization, exhibited by their agreeance with racist, misogynistic views, embodying a victim mindset, while only a small percentage of them engage in higher degree radicalization such as self-harm and harassment. With the exclusion of incels who visit the forum intending to troll or strengthen their convictions about the black pill, most recovering incels exhibit signs of disillusionment and the need to withdraw from the incel community, in search of viable alternative groupings, opening a fruitful ground towards de-pluralization. Recovered Incels also strengthen the idea that escaping the black pill is possible through personal success stories and advice-giving. History of shared narratives between active incels (Current Incels and Recovering Incels) and ex-incels fosters an authentic connection and builds trust between the two groups through self-recognition and resonance. Common topics are dating (failures, getting into a relationship, success stories), exploration of the self (self-hate/love/improvement/reflection), ideology deconstruction (black and red pill, misogyny, patriarchy, nihilism, victimhood, hypergamy), and community building (leaving incel forums, in-person participation, strengthening social ties).

Outsiders, on the other hand, are considered more of a threat, as they lack the key element of trust, and the advice they offer is generalized, but a lot more informative. Instead of focusing on rehabilitation and deradicalization techniques on an individual level, their interest lies in dismantling the incel movement as a whole. For Current and Recovering Incels, the first step after disillusionment is some type of positive change in their day-to-day life, no matter how small. Advice from Outsiders gained popularity mainly concerning the topic of romantic relationships, as they represent the average human experience that incels wish to live themselves. The study concludes that accepting guidance works if and only the advice giver has showcased their expertise in the field. Researchers and Moderators are at the bottom of the hierarchy as incels do not put any trust in them. Moderators serve as a bridge between the webpage and users, and offer no guidance themselves, while Researchers are completely disregarded as they discompose the established but unwritten rules of the subreddit by not asking or sharing advice, but expecting emotional labor and participation in studies with no perceived benefits to the incel. This type of rationale is also reflected in previous research, as studies suggest scholars infiltrate incel groups to have a better understanding of incel terminology, beliefs, and behavioral patterns and have a chance at one-on-one interaction (Hart and Huber, 2023).

After looking at the underlying reasons why all participants willingly contribute to the curation of the forum R/IncelExit, we move on to the main questions of the paper. Using inductive

qualitative analysis, the following six categories came up as the most popular topics of discussion inside the forum: 1) Romantic relationships, 2) Forms of self-hatred, 3) Perception of Women, 4) Deconstructing Black Pill, 5) Interpretations of manhood, 6) Social Ties (excluding romantic relationships). Using De Coensel's processual model of radicalization (2018), the study proposes a general pathway to the radicalization of an individual into an incel, with the above-mentioned six main concerns in mind:

- 1) Pre-radicalization: Individuals who are predominantly white and male presenting, social media users with a lack of social ties, not having had their first dating and sexual experiences, coming from Western words.
- 2) Awareness and Grievances: Feelings of self-doubt and disillusionment around women and dating arise, seeking out gateway content with misogynistic undertones while simultaneously looking for signs to reaffirm conservative manhood ideals
- 3) Solution Seeking: In this phase, individuals either seek out solutions that solve their problems such as taking care of their looks, finding communities, getting into a relationship or working on their personality and self-confidence, halting the radicalization process, or diving deeper into the black pill ideology due to disillusionment.
- 4) Interest: At this stage, individuals actively seek out incel spaces and adapt ideologies, language usage, simultaneously joining the community. They break patterns of their old lives, accept violence against women as the only solution to their suffering, and adopt self-harming behavior and a nihilistic mindset, such as 'lying down and rot.'
- 5) Targeting: Here, online and small acts of in-person violence, harassment, and intimidation of women take place. These are dehumanization practices that allow incels to blame their misery on women, better-looking men, and society as a whole and thus justify extreme actions to be committed against them.
- 6) Indoctrination: Members of the community engage in bigger acts of in-person violence against women, every other ideology is rejected, and self-betterment is impossible due to toxic masculine ideals that are unachievable. The individual's behavior reflects their erratic mental state such as buying guns to be ready for the day of retribution, a payback for all the suffering incels has to endure.
- 7) Implementation: This is a threshold only a few incels reach like Elliot Rodgers, Alek Minassian, and Scott Beierle where terrorist attacks take place.
- 8) Post-Implementation: As a last step, disengagement takes place due to positive experiences with society and women that go against the black pill ideology. Causing a ripple effect, incels start questioning their faith and the validity of the black pill,

seeking out online spaces with recovering and recovered incels, embarking on their rehabilitation journey.

While the establishment of a general pathway propels the understanding of incel background and mindset, tactics and advice facilitating rehabilitation differs from individual to individual, and the forum contributes to this process by allowing user interaction and exploration to the full extent. All categories correlate to the need to communicate thoughts and be listened to. Once those demands are fulfilled, incels become more interactive and receptive to taking advice and accepting counter-narratives, and implementing them later on during the process of recovery. De-pluralization can only take place if worries are addressed first, then offering incels tools that allow them to deconstruct after. For instance, incels who lack community must be reassured first, that there are people who want to form a bond with them, then they must go out of their way to interact with people and put themselves into challenging situations. The effectiveness of the rehabilitation process increases after taking a deeper look at the incel individual's topic of concern out of the six presented in this paper. Re-pluralization and integration back into society happen in collaboration with communities and women. Continuous interactions and conversations with women promote the solidification of positive beliefs and reject the potential resurgence of desensitization. To further understand the implications of these findings, the study suggests alternative ways to measure deradicalization practices, such as quantitative research and interviews (Hart and Huber, 2023).

Limitations of the R/IncelExit subreddit

With most studies using qualitative research designs, limitations must be considered and expanded on. The results of this study must not be generalized, as the sample used portrays a very specific subgroup on one selected website. Although the research examines a rather adequate sample size, self-selection biases arise, exhibiting incels who are open to sharing their thoughts and experiences online, anonymously. Consequently, perspectives depicted in the analysis can only represent a subjective truth. While the subreddit was created with the intent of rehabilitation in mind, it also comes with some constraints that could negatively affect how users curate their ideas. An all-encompassing positive mindset (or more so, tone of voice) is encouraged but also implicitly expected of users who wish to publish or comment. Moderators and members follow strict guidelines to avoid hate speech. While this allows everyone to participate in a safe space and keeps the forum from getting banned, it also forbids researchers to examine how deep the rabbit hole goes with black-pilled thinking and develop rehabilitation tactics for members who have been pushed to their limits.

Another drawback of analyzing online content is the possibility of users posting fabricated narratives; there is no way to verify the content of personal stories. Although the possibility of lying or exaggerating comes up with all sorts of research methods, moderators on R/IncelExit have also drawn attention to users using the platform as a “writing class,” as deeply indoctrinated members of the black pill theory feel more inclined to engage in trolling activities, cling onto false tales sustained by incels, justify their belief systems and self-destructive patterns by all means. These posts were mostly avoided, as only popular, most upvoted posts were considered. We must remember that Reddit is a dynamic site, where the ranking of posts could alternate on a day-to-day basis. Posts are easily removed or edited, the study can only offer a snapshot of its data collection period. An analysis with different filters or one that only looks at recent posts could yield entirely different results, showcasing new trends, issues, popular narratives, and pieces of advice as the movement evolves. Lastly, this research was conducted with reflexivity in mind, it is crucial to understand that biases, assumptions, and belief systems affect the interpretation of the data set. During the analysis process, no second researcher was included, influencing the subjectivity of the results. Nevertheless, the study offers a unique perspective into the minds of incels, and it can serve as a reference point for research in the field of gendered violence de-escalation and deradicalization practice developments.

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Appendix

Abstracts

English

Over the last few decades, we have seen the emergence of several far-right, white male-led sub-groups online in the Western world fighting for men's rights, including incels, a stand-out subgroup of disillusioned men who struggle to find romantic and sexual connections with women. Following the black pill theory, a more radical version of the red pill theory, incels engage in extreme misogynistic and racist behavior, which in some cases lead to real-life consequences such as terrorist attacks. The perception of the group propelled by media outlets further solidifies the shame and rejection these individuals harbor towards themselves and society. Group indoctrination is made easy through soft content found on social media and shared language use and narratives that promote the alienation of an individual. As indoctrination happens online, reaffirmation further encourages impressionable minds to engage with black pill content, leading to lower degrees of extreme radicalization. Using inductive qualitative methods, the following study examines the most interacted with posts of all time on the subreddit R/IncelExit to identify reasons why incels decide to engage with black pill content, explore their main topic of interest and shared beliefs on the subreddit, and offer deradicalization practices and advice inside the context of countering extreme violence (CVE), and gendered violence studies. The forum is visited by current and past incels, and outsiders who wish to help the recovery process through giving personalized advice. Six key narratives are established, namely 1) Romantic relationships, 2) Forms of self-hatred, 3) Perception of Women, 4) Deconstructing Black Pill, 5) Interpretations of manhood, and 6) Social Ties (excluding romantic relationships). The study also proposes a positive correlation between interactions on the subreddit between members and the likelihood of recovery due to a perceived sense of community, and the introduction of counter-narratives. The study suggests that successful deradicalization programs are conducted through the examination of the individual's needs and giving them tools, later on, to conduct de-pluralization and re-pluralization by themselves. Implications and limitations are discussed as further investigative research in the field of incel deradicalization is needed.

German

In den letzten Jahrzehnten haben sich in der westlichen Welt mehrere rechtsextreme Online-Untergruppen entwickelt, die von weißen Männern geführt werden und sich für die Rechte der Männer einsetzen. Eine dieser Gruppen sind die Incels, eine herausragende Untergruppe von desillusionierten Männern, die Schwierigkeiten haben, romantische und sexuelle Beziehungen zu Frauen aufzubauen. Nach der Black-Pill-Theorie, einer radikaleren Version der Red-Pill-Theorie, zeigen Incels extrem frauenfeindliches und rassistisches Verhalten, das in einigen Fällen zu realen Konsequenzen, wie Terroranschlägen führen könnte. Die von den Medien geförderte Wahrnehmung der Gruppe verstärkt die Scham und Ablehnung, die diese Menschen sich selbst und der Gesellschaft gegenüber empfinden. Die Indoktrination der Gruppe wird durch sogenannten „soft content“ in den sozialen Medien, den gemeinsamen Sprachgebrauch und Erzählungen, die die Entfremdung des Einzelnen fördern, erleichtert. Da die Indoktrination online stattfindet, ermutigt die Bestätigung die beeinflussbaren Personen, sich mit den Inhalten der „Black Pill“ zu beschäftigen, was zu einem geringeren Grad an extremer Radikalisierung führen kann. Diese Arbeit verwendet induktive qualitative Methoden, um die am meisten interagierten Beiträge auf dem Subreddit R/IncelExit zu untersuchen. Das Ziel dieser Arbeit ist, die Gründe für die Beschäftigung mit Black-Pill-Inhalten durch Incels zu ermitteln, ihre Hauptinteressen und gemeinsamen Überzeugungen auf dem Subreddit zu erforschen sowie Deradikalisierungspraktiken und -ratschläge im Kontext der Bekämpfung extremer (CVE) und geschlechtsspezifischer Gewaltstudien anzubieten. Das Forum wird sowohl von aktuellen und ehemaligen Incels als auch von Außenstehenden besucht, die den Genesungsprozess durch persönliche Ratschläge unterstützen wollen. Sechs Schlüsselerzählungen können identifiziert werden: 1) Romantische Beziehungen, 2) Formen des Selbsthasses, 3) Wahrnehmung von Frauen, 4) Dekonstruktion der „Black Pill“, 5) Interpretationen von Männlichkeit und 6) Soziale Bindungen (ohne romantische Beziehungen). Diese Arbeit zeigt auch eine positive Korrelation zwischen den Interaktionen zwischen den Mitgliedern im Subreddit und der Wahrscheinlichkeit einer Genesung aufgrund eines wahrgenommenen Gemeinschaftsgefühls und der Einführung von Gegennarrativen. Sie deutet ebenso darauf hin, dass erfolgreiche Deradikalisierungsprogramme durch die Untersuchung der individuellen Bedürfnisse und die Bereitstellung von Werkzeugen für die spätere De- und Repluralisierung selbst durchgeführt werden können. Implikationen und Grenzen werden diskutiert, da weitere Forschungsarbeiten im Bereich der Deradikalisierung von Incels notwendig sind.