

# Incels views on crime

A study about how users on an incel forum justify their views on sexual and violent crime

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## Abstract

Through a netnographic qualitative research, an incel forum is analyzed in this study using a thematic analysis to investigate users on the incel forum and their views on sexual and violent crime. By using Sykes and Matza's (1957) techniques of neutralization, this study shows how the users on the forum may justify their positive views on violent and sexual crime. Two main themes were identified and deemed interesting and relevant to this study's research questions. The first main theme *Society* consists of two sub themes, *Anti-modern society* and *Against feminism and women's rights*. The second main theme *Violence* consists of the three sub themes *Revenge*, *Praises, glorifies and normalizes violence* and *Rape and violence is their only option*. This study, as well as previous research, shows that users on incel forums tend to be very misogynistic and that they often praise, glorify, normalize and advocate violence towards people or social groups they dislike, for example women or men who are more successful in having relationships with women. The findings in this study also shows that users on the incel forum regularly seem to be seeking societal change because they don't agree with feminism and women's rights in modern society. Therefore, they seek change or revenge through violence, since this is the only way they believe they can achieve this. The users on the forum also seem to think that sexual harassment or rape is the only way they can get physically close to women, and that this combined with their misogynistic view justifies the sexual crime they discuss.

## Keywords

Incels, Attitudes, Crime, Violence, Techniques of Neutralization.

## Sammanfattning

Genom en netnografisk kvalitativ forskning analyseras ett incel-forum i studien med hjälp av en tematisk analys för att undersöka användare på ett incel-forum och deras syn på sexual- och våldsbrott. Genom Sykes och Matzas (1957) neutralisationstekniker visar studien hur användarna på forumet motiverar sina positiva åsikter om vålds- och sexualbrott. Två huvudteman identifierades som relevanta för studiens forskningsfrågor. Det första huvudtemat *Samhället* består av två underteman, *Anti-moderna samhället* och *Emot feminism och kvinnors rättigheter*. Det andra huvudtemat *Våld* består av tre underteman *Hämnd*, *Hyllar, glorifierar och normaliserar våld* och *Våldtäkt och våld är deras enda alternativ*. Denna studie, liksom tidigare forskning, visar att användare på incel-forum tenderar att vara kvinnofientliga och att de hyllar, glorifierar, normaliserar och förespråkar våld mot sociala grupper speciellt kvinnor och attraktiva män som är mer framgångsrika i sina relationer med kvinnor. Resultatet i den här studien visar att användarna på incel-forumet söker samhällelig förändring eftersom de inte gillar feminismen och kvinnors rättigheter i det moderna samhället. Därför söker de förändring eller hämnd genom våld eftersom det är det enda sättet de tror att de kan uppnå detta. Användarna på forumet verkar tycka att sexuella trakasserier eller våldtäkter är det enda sättet de kan komma fysiskt nära kvinnor, och att detta i kombination med deras kvinnofientliga syn motiverar sexualbrotten de diskuterar.

## Nyckelord

Incels, Attityder, Brott, Våld, Neutralisationstekniker.

## Chapter 1. Introduction

On 23 May 2014 a man named Elliot Rodger killed six and injured 14 people before killing himself in Isla Vista, California (Woolf, 2015). Rodger had planned the attack for months to get revenge on the world, which he believed had deeply wronged him. According to Pengelly (2014), Rodger had also uploaded a series of videos on YouTube in which he complains about women rejecting him and him being a virgin because of this. Woolf (2015) explained that the police found a manifesto and diary where Elliot Rodger left a handwritten note saying “This is it. In one hour I will have my revenge on this cruel world. I Hate YOU ALLLL! DIE.” (Woolf, 2015).

Four years later, according to an article on BBC (2021), Alek Minassian killed 10 people when he drove a van through the streets of Toronto, hitting as many pedestrians as possible. Minassian, who was arrested after the attack, told investigators that he wanted to kill as many people as possible and that he drew inspiration from the incel movement.

Other people who identified themselves as incels or were inspired by the attacks above are, Philip Manshaus who killed his adopted sister and tried to kill Muslims in a mosque in Bærum, Norway in 2019 (Eggesvik et al., 2019). Another one is a 17-year-old male who killed one and injured two at a massage parlor in Toronto in 2020 (Nasser, 2022). Yet another one is the 18 year-old who killed two teachers in a school in Malmö, Sweden in 2022 (Eeg-Olofsson, 2022).

One person who is often praised on the forums is the man mentioned above, Elliot Rodger. The term ”going ER ” based on Rodger's initials, is used by incels who write about fantasies following in Elliot Rodger's footsteps (Fernquist et al., 2020). In an article on ”Sveriges radio” written by Carina Holmgren (2020), the head of Swedish security service (SÄPO) says that SÄPO are paying closer attention to the incel movement and the threat that they might pose to society and women.

According to Fernquist et al. (2020) an *incel* is someone who lives in an involuntary celibacy. They are not an organization and don't have a leader or official group ideology. Instead, they are connected through different forums which have their own ”culture” with their own

language and models of explanation that unites them. In the forums the topics and opinions discussed are often misogynistic and contain hate towards women, who often are referred to as resources and objects, but also other groups. Fernquist et al. (2020) study also shows that suicidal thoughts, thoughts about raping or committing mass murder are openly discussed, and the users embrace or pay tribute to previous attacks committed by incels. The incel forums mediate a superficial worldview mixed with pseudoscientific sociobiological theories (Fernquist et al., 2020).

Fernquist et al. (2020) statistics for research has been collected from the forum incels.co, lookism.net and looksmax.me in 2019. Most of the users on the forums are Americans, but if you look at users compared to different countries' population size, there are more Swedish users than American on the forums. According to Fernquist et al. (2020), the US has 43 visits to the forums per million residents, and Sweden has 240 visits per million residents.

In this study the forum incels.is used as a source for the material, this website is a newer version of the forum incels.co that Fernquist et al. (2020) used in their study.

## 1.1. Incel forum rules and facts

On the incel forum, there are various rules and requirements described in order to be a member of the forum. In the forum's "about us" they describe:

Incels.is is a community for men that struggle with or are unable to get into romantic relationships with women despite trying. We welcome men from all walks of life, and from all cultural and racial backgrounds, as long as you are an incel (Incels.is, 2022).

The rules and FAQ explain that the forum is a place for single men who are involuntary celibates (Incels.is, 2022). To get access to a membership on the Incels.is (2022) forum, the requirement is that one must be a man who desires a romantic partnership but is not able to get it. Here it is also explained that women, the LGBT community and those who do not identify as an incel are not allowed to become members (Incels.is, 2022).



The forum Incels.is (2022) has set certain rules that members must follow, or they may be banned from the forum. Some examples of those rules are that you may not discuss sexual experiences even if it happened a long time ago, prostitution experiences though are okay. Members may not attack others on the forum and not spread LGBT content positively (Incels.is, 2022).

Right now the page Incels.is (2022) has around 18,000 members where discussions and new posts are generated every day. The members of the forum have posted around 387 thousand posts with around 9 million comments, the numbers are increasing every day (Incels.is, 2022).

## 1.2. Glossary

When incels express their opinions and discuss on the forums, they use different terms. These different glossaries are present in almost all discussions on the forums and also appear in this study. Therefore, definitions and terms are described to explain the most common glossary that appears on the forums and this study.

*Based:* According to Urban dictionary (2020) this phrase is used when you agree with something or when someone says exactly how they feel without caring what others might think.

*Brutal:* Can be used the ordinary way or be used in a positive way when someone is acting like "a badass" (Urban dictionary, 2008).

*Chad:* Is another word for an attractive male. Chads are often described as a white male (Incel Wiki, 2022).

*Cucks:* A man with an unfaithful partner, also used as an insult (Incel Wiki, 2022).

*ER:* The initials of Elliot Roger, who committed an incel attack in Isla Vista in 2014. The initials ER is typically used as "go ER" which means to commit a massacre and die doing that, just like Elliot Roger did (Incel Wiki, 2022).

*Fap*: Means masturbating, the word fap is used because it describes the sound when someone is masturbating (Incel Wiki, 2022).

*Foid*: Is a diminishing word for female. Foid is expressed to diminish females and suggest that females are not fully humans (Incel Wiki, 2022).

*Fuel*: Something that enhances a feeling (Incel Wiki, 2022).

*Incel*: as mentioned before, an incel is someone who lives in an involuntary celibacy (Fernquist et al., 2020). Often, members of an online forum where misogyny is expressed and discussed.

*Normies*: Average people or an everyday boring person who is not considered as attractive as a "Chad" but average and better looking than an incel (Incel Wiki, 2022).

*Soys*: Some incels use this term to suggest someone has low testosterone levels and therefore is less of a man (Incel Wiki, 2022).

*Stacy*: Is used to describe an attractive white female. Stacys are the same as Chads, but of different genders (Incel Wiki, 2022).

*Sub-5*: This is typically used by incels to describe themselves. A man who is considered less than 5/10 in looks and is "condemned to a life of fapping, escorts, and incel rage" (Incel Wiki, 2022).

*Subchad*: An individual subordinate to a "Chad" (Incel Wiki, 2022).

### 1.3. Problem formulation

In 2021, the Swedish government gave the Total Defense Research Institute, FOI, the task of investigating digital environments where hate and threats against women are discussed (Regeringsbeslut A2021/00902). The government described the incel movement as a group, contributing to spreading misogyny on digital meeting places. According to the Swedish government (A2021/00902) incels discussions online were a big problem and contributed to men's violence against women.

According to Fernquist et al. (2020) several deadly attacks have been committed in the world by someone who has been "raised" by the incelculture, but there are no statistics on suicides, sexual violence and harassment against women perpetrated specifically by incels. Fernquist et al. (2020) means that meeting other individuals who are in the same situation as you and validating one's feelings gives the individual a sense of belonging. The incel forums seem to be destructive since the users feed each other's depressions, rage and superficial tendencies. More research is necessary to be able to assess to what extent the incelculture in itself is a threat, what attracts individuals to the culture and forums and what makes some of these individuals act on their violent fantasies (Fernquist et al. 2020).

With this background, there needs to be more research on this "subculture". When searching for articles on the subject on different databases, there are not a lot of results. For example, just with the search term "incel", there are only 21 matches that are peer-reviewed on the database criminology collection. Most of these articles focus on mass murder and the incelcommunity's thoughts on this. However, even though there has been an increase in incel related mass-violence, there are only a few of all users of incel forums who have committed mass murder. Since almost no research have been conducted on how incels view more common types of crime, more research investigating incels attitudes towards crimes such as sexual harassment, rape and violent crime in general, is highly necessary.

## 1.4. Purpose

This study aims to investigate users on an incels forum attitudes towards crime. The research questions will therefore be:

- What attitudes towards crime are represented on the incel forum?
- How do incels justify their views on crime?

This study focuses on incels attitudes towards sex crimes and violent crime, since incels are a very misogynistic group and almost all crime they discuss seem to be directed towards women.

## Chapter 2. Empirical and theoretical framework

### 2.1. Previous research on self-identified incels perpetrators

A previous study on the incel phenomenon is by Williams et al. (2021) who examined homicides perpetrated by self-identified incels as well as the demographic characteristics and their cognitive characteristics. The study explained the similarities and differences of crimes committed by incels and if these violent incels had associative cognitive traits. The study analyzed seven cases where self-identified incels had committed various types of murder for incel ideological reasons. Williams et al. (2021) analyzed and compared documents from the seven cases of homicides perpetrated by incels.

What Williams et al. (2021) found in the study was that these attacks by incels often happen in public places. The perpetrators did not want to be discreet with their actions; they did it in open places. In these seven cases, women constituted the majority of the victims, showing that women were the primary targets. Incels in this study had either no or very little sexual experience with women (Williams et al., 2021). The perpetrators expressed themselves as misogynists and believed that it was the women's fault that they had not had sexual experiences.

Further findings in the study showed that in more than half of the cases examined, the perpetrators had characteristic features of autism (Williams et al., 2021). Williams et al. (2021) believed that someone with autism being on the internet incels forum strongly affects them. Williams et al. (2021) believed that someone who is on the spectrum and who is frequently participating on the forum may be at a higher risk of committing an attack.

The perpetrators did not express any empathy for the female victims, as they believe that the woman deserves these violent acts that were carried out. They also showed no remorse for the attacks. Williams et al. (2021) explains that incels strongly express a sense of hopelessness related to the lack of sex and romantic relationships.

The motives in all of these seven cases that the study examined were directed at women, where the incel perpetrators did these actions out of revenge against women (Williams et al., 2021). The revenge motive for the incels were because no woman wanted to be with them

and that everything was the woman's fault. According to Williams et al. (2021) the incel offenders in this study are narcissistic, racist and principally misogynistic.

Another study that provides a framework for thinking about incels and incel-inspired terrorism is conducted by Cottee (2021). This study shows that incels are part of an online subculture that is based on misogyny, victimhood, and fatalism but that only a few incels have committed acts of incel-inspired terrorism according to Cottee (2021).

According to Cottee (2021) incels don't have a clear or coherent political agenda, though some express a nostalgic longing back in time when society was different, when women were subordinate to men and when men were guaranteed a marital partner. Cottee (2021) concludes that even though the incel subculture is full of hateful rhetoric against women, feminism, and their male supporters, the study shows that it would be a mistake to categorize the incel-subculture as a form of violent extremism. On the other hand, Cottee (2021) believes that more research needs to be conducted to answer whether the incel-subculture is dangerous.

## 2.2. Previous research on incel forums

O'Donnell and Shor (2021) studied the attack in Toronto by Alek Minassian. Alek Minassian identified himself as an incel and therefore the researchers wanted to study how incels talked about his attack on incel forums. They wanted to see how incels talked about the violence that Minassian used in his attack, and how their attitudes towards violence are expressed. O'Donnell and Shore (2021) use four theoretical starting points that can explain the incel community's support for violence. The theoretical explanations are seeking attention, exacting revenge, affirming masculinity and striving for political change.

O'Donnell and Shore (2021) have looked at posts and comments about the attack in Toronto and then coded the comments into different groups. The result showed that incels on online forums were positive about the violence of Minassian (O'Donnell & Shore, 2021). Those who expressed themselves negatively about the attack were notified in the comments. Minassian was hailed in the forum as a martyr. O'Donnell and Shore (2021) could see that the attack was discussed as very positive on the forums, where one explanation is that the attack drew attention to the phenomenon of incels on a macro level and made them more famous. That is why Alek Minassian is celebrated.

On the forum after the attack, the violence was justified, as incels said this was revenge against women. O'Donnell and Shore (2021) could see that misogyny dominates the discussion on the forum. Incels discussed the attack positively as they believe the violence could lead to women fearing incels. O'Donnell and Shore (2021) showed that the discussions online was something that strengthened the masculinity of incels. The fact that women are now afraid of men, the researchers could see, confirmed the masculinity of incels. Users on the forum then believed that fear affects women, which could lead to women subordinating themselves to men (O'Donnell & Shore, 2021). This was something incels think is good, as they believed women have been given too much space and freedom in society. The incels believed that women should not have this freedom, and that it should be like in the old days when men had more power over women (O'Donnell & Shore, 2021).

In the forum about the attack, O'Donnell and Shore (2021) could see that incels were discussing politics. Here, incels wrote that the attack could lead to political change. They expressed that multiple attacks would be good to bring about political change in society. They discussed the legalization of prostitution and believed that it would be a solution to the incel problem from their perspective (O'Donnell & Shore, 2021). O'Donnell and Shore (2021) study shows that incels' online forums are positive for violence specific to women. They want to see political change where women will have less power than they have today (O'Donnell & Shore, 2021).

Another similar study on the subject has been done by O'Malley et al. (2022), in which they analyze two incel forums where they investigate the norms, values, and beliefs of the users on the forum. In the result, O'Malley et al. (2022) reflects on the participants' discussions about the sexual market, women as evil, legitimized masculinity and male oppression. The users on the forums in O'Malley's et al. (2022) study believed that women have a wide choice of sex partners and will exclude men who are considered less attractive. Therefore, the users believed that they will be rejected by women because they do not meet the standard that women seek. O'Malley et al. (2022) also found that users on the incel forums blamed their appearance in their involuntary celibacy. In the forums, users describe themselves as ugly and that this is why they cannot have sexual relations with women. The incel users on the forums expressed themselves as an oppressed group in society.

Users on the forums in O'Malley et al. (2022) study, also expressed that they believe women are naturally evil and that they feel humiliated by women, which is seen as a source of trauma for the individuals on the forums. O'Malley et al. (2022) noticed that users on the incel forums viewed women as being less evolved than men and that they believe that women behave in a certain way for their evolutionary survival. The researchers believe that the user's view of women as being inherently evil is based in the incel ideology, with sexism as the cornerstone of the community. O'Malley et al. (2022) argued that members of the incel forum's hatred and anger towards women is motivated by the growing feminism and women's power in today's society. The users of the forums in the study show a will to present themselves as the oppressed and women as the oppressor and their enemy. According to O'Malley et al. (2022) incels in their study legitimize normative masculinity where gender inequality is advocated. Users on the forums argued that today's society has created unnatural roles for both men and women that are wrong. Instead, the users advocated patriarchal structures that have existed in the past.

According to O'Malley et al. (2022), the misogyny and society's oppression of incels expressed in the forums, justifies the violence used by some incels. O'Malley's et al. (2022) study also shows that the members on the forums openly discussed violence as a means of creating revenge against the hostile women and society. The violence discussed on the forum is according to O'Malley et al. (2022) based in an acceptance and belief among incels that women are undeserving of power and equality in today's society. These beliefs create anger and negative attitudes towards women. O'Malley et al. (2022) argues that the hostile attitudes towards women on the incel forum creates violent radicalization.

### 2.3. Theoretical groundings

To analyze the results, the theory about techniques of neutralization by Gresham M. Sykes and David Matza (1957) is used. The theory describes various methods that criminals use to justify their actions. The theory is based on explanations of juvenile delinquency and Sykes and Matza (1957) account that previous theories and research believe that juvenile delinquency is explained by social learning, social interactions and subculture. Sykes and Matza (1957) believes that criminal acts are explained by learning neutralization techniques. Criminals learn techniques of neutralization to neutralize rules and laws to justify delinquency. The techniques justify the criminal act, which explains why one commits an act

against norms and rules (Sykes & Matza, 1957). There are established norms and values that we learn, and these rules have social control over us. Sykes and Matza's (1957) theory can explain why criminals still justify breaking these rules. By applying these techniques, the establishing societal norms are neutralized and decrease society's social control over the individual.

The theory presents five techniques for the neutralization of criminal acts (Sykes & Matza, 1957):

- The denial of responsibility
- The denial of injury
- The denial of the victim
- The condemnation of the condemners
- The appeal to higher loyalties

***The denial of responsibility*** is a technique where the individual puts the responsibility of the criminal action outside themselves (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Sykes and Matza (1957) explains that the criminal may feel irresponsible for his actions, and society is careful to show where the line between unintentional and intentional actions lies. Through this technique, the criminal blames deviant actions on forces beyond the individual's control. It can, for example, be blamed on bad parents or socializing (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Deviant behavior is considered by Sykes and Matza (1957) to be driven by factors outside the individual that led the individual into the situation of the criminal act. By diverting the responsibility onto something other than oneself, the deviant behavior is justified based on the prevailing system of norms. The denial of responsibility is reflected by the individual blaming other factors that influenced the individual to commit a criminal act, which means that the individual himself does not take any responsibility for the act (Sykes & Matza, 1957).

***The denial of injury*** is connected to neutralize the harm or injury that involved the criminal act (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Here the delinquent analyzes whether someone has got hurt by his wrongful act despite that rules and law were broken. By this technique, Sykes and Matza (1957) means that the individual denies and minimizes the harm of the crime. An example of this technique is when a delinquent vandalizes someone's property and believes that the



person can afford to compensate for the damages. This means to the delinquent that the crime didn't do any harm even though the law was broken.

***The denial of the victim*** is used to justify injuries done to the victim. By thinking that the victim is entitled to revenge or punishment, criminal acts and harm are inflicted. The criminal shifts responsibility for the act to a person who deserves the harm, by doing this, no victim of the criminal act exists (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Sykes and Matza (1957) explains that here the norms and reactions of others must be activated to guide this technique, and the victim plays a big part in determining whether the process is initiated.

***The condemnation of the condemners*** is when the individual shifts focus from their actions to the people going against the act. Focus shifts to the condemners behavior and not the delinquent. By attacking others who are on the law-abiding side, such as the police or teachers, and believing them to be corrupt, the unfairness of the criminal's behavior becomes easier to ignore and repress. Here, the criminal deflects negative sanctions, such as violations of norms, against people that the criminal believes contributes to injustice.

***The appeal to higher loyalties*** is the last technique that Sykes and Matza (1957) presents. By appealing to higher loyalties, one goes against society's norms and laws for loyalty of the smaller group. The smaller group Sykes and Matza (1957) suggest can be friends, cliques, gangs, or a sibling pair. Here, those who deviate from society's norms do not need to reject those norms, but are faced with a dilemma between higher loyalties that lead to breaking the law (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Norms other than societal norms are considered more appropriate or involve higher loyalties that take precedence. The criminal thus commits a crime because other people, loyalties and norms are considered to take precedence. The delinquent acts for the smaller social groups to which he belongs as a justification for breaking society's norms (Sykes & Matza, 1957). The individual sees it as his duty to act for the group or the person to whom he feels loyalty, even if it breaks the law.

According to Sykes and Matza (1957) neutralization techniques can be used as justification for deviant actions before they are committed, and as motivation to commit crime. This study will use the theory of neutralization techniques to see if any of the techniques can be applied on a sample of users on an incel forum. As Sykes and Matza (1957) describes, neutralization

techniques can be used before the crime is committed and since users on the forum only write about crime, and it is not known if they actually ever committed any crime, this theory can be used as a tool to see how they might justify their views on crime.

## Chapter 3. Empirical study

### 3.1. Method

This is a netnographic qualitative study. Researching netnographically is a mixture of studying the internet, together with ethnography (Berg, 2015). Ethnography means to study people's social context and cultural life (Berg, 2015). Netnography has the same starting points as ethnography, but as Berg (2015) describes it, netnography is conducting an ethnographic study in an internet context. As the internet has developed, new forums have been created. In the same way, incels forums have created a community on the internet, which this study investigates. By using netnographic research, this study aims to understand social contexts, cultures, and relationships on the internet, specifically the incel forums. Berg (2015) describes that a social process takes place on the internet and believes that through netnography researchers can see that the forms of socializing on the internet are strongly related to everyday life. When researching netnography text from the internet is analyzed (Berg, 2015). This study is netnographic and qualitative with an inductive approach. The inductive approach means that the analysis in this study is not bound to any specific theory. Instead, the collected data guides the researchers to a relevant theory and conclusions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

#### 3.1.1. Participants

The study's sample consists of 57 users and members on the forum *incels.is*. Since the members on the forum use usernames and not their real names, there is not much information available considering the participant's real identity. What is known, is that the participants are members of the incel forum, where it is required that the users are male and in involuntary celibacy (Incels.is, 2017). We cannot guarantee that all participants in this study are real incels and not just internet trolls trying to provoke. However, since these opinions seem to be shared by many users on the forum, we believe that what is written still gives some insight in how members on the forum view the world surrounding them.

Since there is no real descriptive information about the participants, this study cannot provide more information about the participants. When presented in the results, the usernames of the participants have been replaced with pseudonyms. The participants in this study have not

given their consent to participate, because the users on the forum are anonymous, therefore, it is difficult to obtain consent for participation. Furthermore, the researchers of this study are female, which would likely not be appreciated by the users since women are not welcome on the forum. Therefore, contacting the users on the forum would be difficult and could lead to unpleasant consequences for the researchers.

Regarding why the forum *incels.is* been chosen for this study, it is the biggest and most known incel related forum (Fernquist et al. 2020). Furthermore, this forum is one of few that are completely open for non-members to read. According to Fernquist et al. (2020) there are two other big forums, but these focus more on discussions about looks and appearances. One of these forums actually forbids discussions of illegal actions. Therefore, these forums could not provide the data necessary to answer this study's research questions.

### 3.1.2. Data

Berg (2015), explains the difficulties in collecting material on the internet because of the infinite amount of empirical material and information, which is both an advantage and a disadvantage. The incel forum in this study contains numerous threads and discussions, something that is both positive and negative. Berg (2015) believes that by sticking to one's research question and objective, one can more easily draw boundaries for those we study to avoid an abundance of empirical material.

Taking Berg's (2015) considerations of material collection into accountability, the material for this study consists of a total of 14 threads and associated comments on these threads on an incel forum. The material collection had several limitations, these were that the threads and comments had to discuss violence and sex crimes. This is because the study's focus on incels views on violence and sexual crimes. The study also focuses on the more recent threads, therefore most threads are from 2022, but the study also contains some threads created in 2019-2021 since some are still active and have new comments posted in them in 2022. To limit the data used in this study, the filter function on the incel forum was used. The filters used were that the latest posted or updated threads, or the most commented or discussed threads, were shown first. On top of these filters two other filter categories, "*Based*" and "*Brutal*" were selected. This is where the most controversial threads can be found.

### 3.1.3. Procedure

Since this study focuses on how incels interact and how the network's community expresses itself, the starting point in the material is network-based (Berg, 2015). Berg (2015) describes being a participant observer in the network-based forum may be preferred to get a feel for the interaction, but this is not possible in this study. The researchers in this study act as non-participants, i.e., as anonymous observers on the incels forum. This is because the researchers are not members of the incels forum. The forum sets certain requirements that need to be met in order to participate in the forum, which the researchers do not meet. However, the forum is visible to everyone and therefore material can be collected via this forum. Therefore, this study has not interfered with the members of the forum nor influenced their way of expressing themselves.

The material was collected by reading various threads on the incels forum for six weeks during September and October 2022. Quotes and threads that were of interest for the study were selected. These were saved in two documents, one document for the quotes and one document which contains the ID connected to the quotes.

After collecting threads and comments relevant for this study, the materials were rephrased for ethical aspects explained later, and sorted into two different tables, one table concerning violent crime and one concerning sexual crime. Within the table, both positive and negative views are represented if the threads contained both, and therefore the rephrased quotes were sorted into "positive views" or "negative views" if applicable.

### 3.1.4. Analysis strategy

The material is analyzed through a thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2013) describe that thematic analysis is a method used to find meaningful patterns in the material. Through a thematic analysis approach, qualitative data is coded, which is then developed into themes that describe the participant's thoughts and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Braun and Clarke (2013) guide for a thematic analysis starts by transcription of the data. Then material should be read several times to become familiar with the data and during this note data that are interesting. When noting and commenting on the data different codes are created, Braun and Clarke (2013) describe that when the codes are formulated it's time to search for themes

through the codes. Thereafter, themes are reviewed and subthemes can be created which relates to the theme. When themes are defined and named, Braun and Clarke (2013) means that the analysis can be written.

Following Braun and Clarke (2013) guide, the selected threads were transcribed and rephrased and then read through numerous times to become thoroughly familiar with the data. During this phase, notes of interesting findings for this study were written down. Then, threads that discussed sexual violence and violent crime were separated and the data from those threads were put into two different charts. Then, sections of data, such as certain use of words, opinions, or thoughts of the respondents related to this study's research questions were highlighted and served as a basis for the coding of the material. To further structure the data, selected citations that are of interest to this study were put into charts and sorted by the respondent's views and type of crime discussed. Which also led to some codes and, later on, themes. The codes that emerged were then organized into groups and the themes of this study began to take form. Through this whole process the material was reread, reorganized, and new connections and relationships between the data, codes, and themes were reviewed. When the main themes in this study were selected, subthemes were formed based on the data and coding that helped form the main themes.

### 3.1.5. Trustworthiness

The netnography method is the appropriate method to use for this study, because on the incel forum users write freely and openly about their opinions, which makes the material reliable. Also, interviews, observations, or other qualitative methods could not be carried out for this study. Interviews or other methods might have made the material less reliable, as the incels might have been affected by the situation. Instead, the netnography method has allowed this study to take material from an incel forum where users write about their opinions without being directly influenced by others. In order to increase the credibility of the material and the study, an incel forum is chosen as the subject of this study. Any other platform that is not exclusively for incels would reduce this study's credibility.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), validity means that the research actually aims to study what it set out to investigate. This is why it is important to stick to one's research question at all times to not be overwhelmed by the data or stray too far away from the aim of

the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The validity of the study has been treated in such a way that the material contains data that can answer the purpose. By limiting the material based on the purpose, other information and data have not been given space in the study. This to achieve the purpose of the study and what is intended to be measured.

Furthermore, Braun and Clarke (2006) explains reliability as the transferability of the result of the study, this means that another group of researchers investigating another group of users on an incel forum should be able to generate the same result as this study. Berg (2015) explains that netnography consists of flexibility, instability, and change. Information online can constantly change, this may be due to societal changes or political changes that cause opinions and people to move around on platforms at different stages of life. Which can affect the reliability of the material. Since changes are constantly taking place, opinions and phenomena can also be influenced in another direction. Right now when the research is taking place the data is reliable, but that can change over time. The reliability of the material in this study can therefore be questioned. To increase the reliability of this study, it is good to keep in mind when this study is being conducted. If a similar study were to be done and not generate the same results, this could be due to changes in society, on the internet or on the forum.

### 3.1.6. Ethical considerations

Berg (2015) mentions that there are certain ethical principles that may be challenging in netnographic research. There are many ethical aspects that must be taken into account when doing research with people, which the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet) has addressed. Berg (2015) explains that the Swedish Research Council's (Vetenskapsrådet) ethical principles, on the other hand, deal with participating individuals where personal integrity is affected, which is challenging in netnographic research.

According to the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet) themselves, they believe that research on the internet is problematic as ethical guidelines have not yet been fully set (Berg, 2015). According to Berg (2015) the most important thing to think about is protecting individuals' integrity and personal data. We must think about protecting and respecting the individuals who are directly or indirectly impacted by the research. However, people on the Internet who post opinions online that are open to the public may believe that they are only

shared with those who are a part of the imagined community on that forum (Berg, 2015). Therefore, one should be careful when quoting texts on the Internet because it can easily be traced back to the person through various search engines.

Berg (2015) explains that consent is an aspiration in order to follow research ethical principles, but we cannot achieve this in our study. Berg (2015) believes that it takes imagination and effort to create good conditions to protect the integrity of the participants. The suggestions Berg (2015) gives to protect the integrity and privacy of the participants are to reformulate quotes so they are less recognized by search engines. This is to protect individuals to the extent that the materials the research uses later cannot be traced back to the individuals.

Because of the ethical aspects of us not being able to ask for consent from the users of the incel forum, we will not mention the user's name and not directly quote posts in a way that our data can be traced back to the user. Instead, we will rephrase and use caution when we present our data. Having to redo citations can make it difficult and cause analytical problems, Berg (2015) explains, but it must be done predominantly based on ethical aspects. We will do this to protect the privacy of the users on the forum, but also for our own safety.

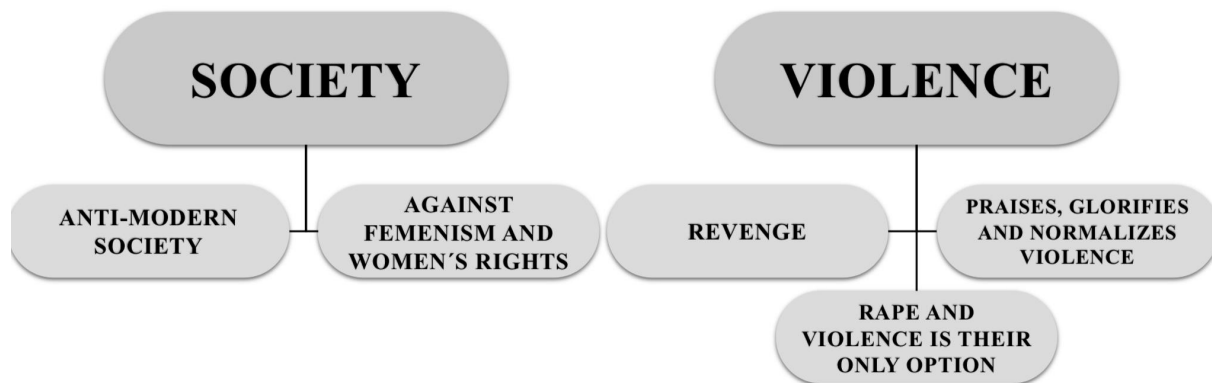
By taking Berg (2015) ethical aspects into accountability the material, such as threads, posts or comments, containing rephrased quotes and opinions that are of interest in this study are stored in one document. To protect the personal data and privacy of the participants in this study, their identity, or username, connected to the material is coded with an anonymized ID. The original threads are stored in a separate document, only accessible to authorized persons and separated from the data containing their views, opinions, and thoughts on crime. Furthermore, the material selected for this study is, as mentioned before, rephrased so that it cannot be traced back to the participants.



## Chapter 4. Results

The result shows a thematic analysis that divides into two main themes and five subthemes.

Figure 1.



The figure above demonstrates the two main themes with their respective subthemes. The first main theme is *Society*, with the subthemes *Anti-modern society* and *Against feminism and women's rights*. The other main theme is *Violence* with its three subthemes *Revenge*, *Rape, and violence is their only option* and *Praises, glorifies and normalizes violence*.

### 4.1. Society

The members on the incel forum often write negatively about modern society, with its feminism and women's rights. The participants typically blame society, feminism, and women's rights for the problems incels might face in life. Therefore, they talk about how they in many ways dislike modern society and glorify previous societies with misogynistic norms and values.

#### 4.1.1. Anti-modern society

The users on the incel forum seem to be very anti-modern society, and many wish that old social norms should apply in society. The users on the forum expresses how they would have been better off in the past when every man "got a wife" and rape wasn't always considered illegal. Therefore, by these users' logic, if the old social norms and social structure still applied today, incels would not struggle as much with women, having sex and being

”outcasts”. Incels blame modern society’s for their troubles and for being involuntary celibacy.

Many users on the incel forum discuss their desire for a change, to go back to the old world where misogyny was not looked down upon and women had no right to reject a man and his advances. One example, of this, is a thread that discuss that ”women belong in the kitchen”

”Foids shouldn't have the right to say no to sex. Marital rape should be legal and foids should also be disciplined when they misbehave” (Oskar)

”Foids getting rights is the biggest mistake in human History” (Oskar)

”Based, put these cunts back where they belong. They should've never been given equal rights” (Axel)

Today's society seems to not be appreciated by the users on the incel forum. Today's society and its continued development is considered very negative since it continues to destroy the desires of incels and what society they would like to live in. They express a strong opposition to modern society, and users on the incel forum are against the development of society and prefer to go back to old norms and values. They are anti modern society.

#### 4.1.2. Against feminism and women’s rights

Many users on the incel forum are negative towards growing feminism and women's rights in today's society. They believe that women should conform to their position, which is referred to as being subordinate to men. Some users express their belief that women should never have been given equal rights in society because it gave them the right to speak for themselves, which these users consider as wrong.

Again, the thread about women ”belonging in the kitchen” is a good example. Others discuss how women have become too comfortable in today's society and how they believe that men need to harass women to reinstall a ”fear-based” society.

”Women are too comfortable walking around at night doing whatever they want (being drunk, walking dogs, clubbing etc.) in short dresses, shorts and tight leggings. The other day I sat on my steps at night and was shocked at how many foids were outside this late wearing and doing these activities. In the past, only prostitutes were out that late or women who had a good reason and were accompanied by a man. Today, even with rising crime rates, normie foids act this way and wall around by themselves all night. This proves that ”rape culture” is a giant myth. My neighborhood is not well lit and women are just walking about, without a care in the world. Women need to fear going out at night again, women need to fear the consequences of their husband if they misbehave. Women need to fear random men and their superiors when they are insubordinate and act like bitches. We need to bring back the fear-based society to keep these stupid bitches and whores in check. ” (Hans)

Other users refer to women dressing ”like whores” as a reason for them to be allowed to commit sexual harassment. Here, the woman's choice to wear certain clothes justifies the individual's sexual harassment, in this case masturbating ”to her” in public.

”If foids are allowed to dress like whores in public, then I should be allowed to flap to them in public too. ” (Omar)

One user expresses his fear of modern feminism and the threat he believes that feminism poses towards men who women and society deemed as undesirable. He believes that hate towards men is being normalized in society and that no one seems to think this is a serious matter. He also describes that when bringing this to light, people view him as fragile and unmanly.

”Modern feminism is not going to stop. It's going to keep progressing. Women already see the average man as evil and hardly even human beings, what they will think About men in 25 years from now is nightmare fuel... It seems like society is incredibly anti-male right now... I see social media posts saying things like “KILL ALL MEN” with hundreds-of-thousands of likes, and while there's always the possibility that I'm delusional, hatred of men seems totally normalized. No one even seems to think it's a serious thing. In fact, call it out, and you're told you're being

fragile, and ironically enough, “not a real man”. Please tell me I’m just spending too much time online and their end game isn’t violence against men who society or women deemed undesirable.” (Andy)

Another user confirms his fears and encourages people to take action. Note how this individual capitalizes the letter E and R in their sentence as a subtitle hint to what this “action” might be.

”you’re not crazy, but wrong. The endgame is the formation of a matriarchy and a reversal of roles, in which women control the world. I doubt it will happen in our lifetime, but they will come dangerously close unless someone tries to stand thEiR ground against this menace” (Hank)

By using violence and rape against women, some users on the incel forum, mean that women will conform to the position they want them to be in. By seeing women as objects and not people, violence, and rape against women becomes normalized.

”Foids should be used as sex slaves” (Marcus)

”Women are sex objects. I wanna rape a foid so bad” (Jocke)

One individual claim that rape feels better than consent and describe different scenarios and how one could proceed when raping someone.

“Rape feels better than consent. You go at night, put on a black hoodie... See some slut with long nails, big ass and tits, walking her dog snap that bitch jump on the dog and then rape the shit out of her. Make sure to tape the mouth shut because they moan, scream, or beg for help.

You can always pick some hoes up in a car, but you need a good car though. You can bring some to their home and when you’re alone you can easily rape her, it doesn't matter if she's drunk or not. Take away her phone, close the car doors and do your business, or knock her out and bring her home.

There are even many bitches who walk alone in forests at night, you can easily knock the shit out of the bitch, tape her mouth shut and fuck her. Its easy as fuck even if you get caught you will have a mask on and most guys are pussies they won't do shit if you point a knife or gun at them.

Always when I'm behind a woman all I can think about is raping and killing her.”  
(Elliot)

This individual, like others, mentions how women in today's society often walk alone at night. For him, this creates an opportunity to rape women, but one can still sense a displeasure with the fact that women can do this. This person describes rape as his, or other men's, business. He even believes that women that are being raped might ”moan”, but also mentions that she might scream for help. He advises others to make sure the woman who they might be raping cannot call for help, by tape their mouth shut or by taking away their phones. Furthermore, he also mentions closing the car door or to ”knock her out” so that the women they rape cannot escape. The individual even goes to claim that rape is easy, especially if you wear a mask or are armed with a gun or knife. Lastly, he claims that anytime he is behind a woman, killing and raping her is all he can think about. This individual's post shows major dehumanization of women and normalization of rape.

One user answered on the post mentioned above, that according to him, women actually enjoy being raped, even more than the rapist.

”Foids enjoy actual rape more than the rapists.” (Filip)

When another individual asked the person who started the thread if he was advocating for legalization of rape, he responded:

”That would ruin a lot of the fun, also it would make it more difficult since women would take more precautions as a result. ” (Elliot)

This individual actually believes that the fact that rape is criminalized makes the rape more "fun" for him, and that he believes that a legalization of rape would lead women to take more precautions to avoid being raped.

## 4.2. Violence

Violence is openly discussed, glorified and normalized on the incel forum in this study. For some, violence seems to be considered the only way to create justice and change for these incels. Previous violent attacks against women and chads are celebrated, and numerous users encourage and look forward to future attacks. Violence is present in almost every thread selected in this study and many others, even when the thread's original content is not about violence or hatred towards others. The violence against other social groups that users on the forum consider their enemies is seen as the only way to create change, therefore violence is normalized and seen as the right way or the only way for these users.

### 4.2.1. Revenge

Participants on the incel forum in this study often refer to a desire for revenge. They frequently write about revenge against other social groups who are different from themselves, for example foids, normies, Chads or Staceys. The most common recipient of these incels hatred and desire for revenge is women, since most of these men are very misogynistic. This study shows that there is a strong hatred that motivates violence and sexual crime as a way of revenge towards groups that the incels in this study feels are oppressing them. According to some incels in this study, revenge equals justice for them, and therefore revenge in the form of violence and sexual crime is justified.

Desiring revenge justifies violence, and sexual violence is about how incels discuss acts of revenge that are associated with violence. Incel members write about either accepting the situation they are in, or actively take revenge. By retaliating with violence, incels members on the forum believe that it should lead to a form of relief for incels:

“After the acceptance phase you either live like a good little cuck, not being any different than IT soys, or you take revenge which may have many shapes and forms.”  
(Nils)

“FUCKING WHORE WIFE DEGENERATE MEAT HOLES NEED TO BE RAPED AND TORTURED WITH ACID FOR INCELS TO GET STRESS RELIEF” (Patrik)

In a thread that discusses rape, one person responded with:

”Yes, that is what they get for starving us of sex.” (Nero)

Which indicates that this person thinks that women deserve to be raped because they are the reason he and other self-proclaimed incels can't have sexual relationships.

Another thread discusses how women deserve a ”real” reason to feel unsafe because women misinterpret ”subchads” actions as threatening and which one user believes can cause men to be kicked out of establishments or fired. Another individual also talks about taking his revenge on women in the form of harassment because he feels that they want people like him to die.

” Dumb cunts will interpret anything a subchad makes as threatening. In some cases, they get them kicked out of establishments or fired for it. They are entitled, spoiled bitches because today's society coddles their feelings above all else like they are retarded children They deserve a real reason to feel unsafe” (Fredrik)

”when I was young I used to treat women with courtesy, but I learned that they want subshads to die, so now, when I'm drunk and if they are alone, I harass them”  
(Abraham)

In other threads, users say very disturbing things about women, and use extremely offensive language against other social groups:

”I hope to God she gets attacked by some psycho chad she brings home, or gets her face horribly disfigured in an accident” (Adam)

”DEATH TO ALL  
CHADS/STACIES/CUCKS/SIMPS/F\*\*\*\*\*T/TRANNIES/NORMALN\*\*\*\*\*S/WH

ORES/SLUTS/WHITE KNIGHTS ALL SHOULD BE SKULLFUCKED WITH A MACHETE” (Link)

In threads about mass killings, users on the incel forum in this study praises the attackers for taking their revenge out on people, who they as a group don't like. They also talk about how they wish survivors of the attack had died and their hopes for future attacks.

”It feels good knowing that there will be more of them” (Mike)

”Yes. There's so much more to come!” (Jesse)

”There hasn't been a major mass shooting in several months... It's always funny when a mass shooting happens, normies always want to take away gun rights. Meanwhile, N\*\*\*\*\*S shoot each other to death every day and normies don't give a shit. This proves normies are sociopaths who only care about an issue when it affects them. This is why normies deserve to be killed in mass shootings. It's even better when little kids get killed in mass shootings, because those kids will grow up to be bratty teenagers... On top of that, the parents have to deal with losing a child, imagine the misery and despair they will feel. Why should we as incels care about children, when we are denied the opportunity to reproduce?... They think us saying mean stuff and “Go ER (in minecraft)” is illegal, when it's not... Fuck normies, I hope the next mass shooter reaches double digits in kills...” (Sebastian)

Some users seem to be excited about future attacks and to see the reactions from those impacted by the violence.

”I'm excited and happy every time I see normie scum in pain” (Paul)

”Agree. I enjoy seeing normies get killed, whether it's by ISIS jihadists or incel martyrs” (Steven)



"It definitely makes me smile, even more so watching news interviews and seeing people cry about it" (Peter)

"Can someone go into ERadication mode already? We all need some life fuel" (Lee)

"May the amount of ER's and their kill counts increase exponentially" (Aron)

"I enjoy it because I love seeing normies get crushed in the courts whenever they try out their silly little gun control laws in response to every shooting" (Daniel)

One thread in the form of a poll on the incel forum discusses the best location to commit mass murder. The alternatives are a nightclub, stadium, school/university, comic con, minecraft or "other". In this thread, several of the users who answer express how they would choose specific locations based on whom they would be able to kill in these places.

"When I do it, it will definitely be a nightclub. You get to kill good-looking, low morale sluts and their fuckers. Also, criminal security, a bunch of failed normies, drug dealers and junkies. The only possible downside is the possibility of getting shot if there is someone who is armed and a good shot there" (David)

"On a 100% sERious note: A nightclub is the best. There were the highest concentration of young turbo normies and foids are. Loud music, smoke, drinking, chaos and flashing lights make it difficult to react or escape gunshots which allows you to have a good high score. The only difficulty is getting past security. But you can shoot them on the way in (loud) or sneak through a backdoor (stealth). Next best is a school or university. There is no security to get past, lots of young normies (but mixed with a few brocels who you probably don't wanna ER) and the halls can be just as crowded as a nightclub. Schools are generally large and have lots of exits and hiding spots though. Comic con might be a good place if you want to take out f\*\*\*\*\*. Only boomers go to sporting events nowadays, not prime ER targets." (Dennis)

"The nightclub is best because it's full of sexhavers...but of course this is all hypothetical and I don't support real life violence" (Luke)

”It's the sorority house. ER once said, “On the day of retribution, I am going to enter the hottest sorority house on UCSB and I will slaughter every single spoiled, stuck-up blonde slut I see inside there” (Sam)

#### 4.2.2. Praises, glorifies and normalizes violence.

As shown before, there are threads that glorify violence. What differentiates the comments in this sub theme from the ones in other subthemes is the praising of the perpetrator, where in other threads the focus is more on the victims and the revenge that is being perpetrated on specific groups of people.

One user starts a thread by saying ”rest in peace” and listing the names of several mass killers.

”R.I.P. Eric Harris (Columbine: Natural Selector)  
Dylan Klebold (Columbine: Wrath)  
Marc Lepine (Montreal: Foid Slayer)  
Elliot Rodger (Isla Vista Supreme Gentleman: Thot Slayer)  
Steven Paddock (Las Vegas: Cowboy Retribution)  
Scott Beierle (Yoga Basedcel Foid Slayer)  
Brenton Tarrant (Kebab Crusader)  
Eric Pekka Auvinen (Jokela: Natural Selector69)  
Cho Seung Hui (Virginia Tech: Korean Black-pilled Basedcel Killing Streak)  
Alek Minassian (Cucked Canada: Carmageddon IRLcel Van Splatter Bonus)” (Kevin)

Users respond by praising these murder's actions:

”Their heroic days should be official incel celebrations” (Max)

”Praise be our saints” (Jim)

” I'm tearing up seeing their names, their great heroic acts, rightfully honored and celebrated. They fought for justice and the incel cause, and in death they won against the cruel society which oppressed them” (Josef)

”A pity those sorority sluts didn't open the door for Elliot Rodger and that those bombs at Columbine didn't go off, killing all the chad douchebags” (Kevin)

Some object to this thread because it includes the names of who did not identify themselves as incels or girlfriends.

”Steven Paddock doesn't count because he had a girlfriend” (Nick)

”Most of these guys don't affiliate with incels” (Liam)

But the user who started the thread defends his choice of including them:

”Steven Paddock did a fine job killing those stacys and drunk chads. So he is redeemed in my book” (Kevin)

” Since they are outcasts as myself, they are worthy of being on the list” (Kevin)

Others answer by adding names of other killers:

”I would add Breivik to that list” (John)

Even though the users are praising these attackers because they feel that revenge had been taken out on people they dislike according to ”Kevin” and ”Josef”. It is not the main focus of the thread. Again, the focus is on the perpetrators, their position in society as ”outcasts” and their acts of violence, and not the victims as much as other threads.

#### 4.2.3. Rape and violence is their only option

As shown before, modern society has, according to these users, forced them to resort to violence in order to have sex or relationships with women. Incels users in the study express

that a sexual relationship with women is impossible and the only way for them to have sex is to rape.

One user describes these feelings in this way:

“Real men who went to war back in the day used to rape and kill women like they were nothing. You would get a death sentence if you raped a woman from your own country. But back then men were able to get a wife more easily so you wouldn't really need to rape anyway. So in a country without degeneracy you could marry and wouldn't need to rape unless you were mentally ill.

Nowadays, women are whores and deserve to get raped and killed. Men can't get laid anymore, even the average man struggles because of hypergamy.” (Tor)

The user is talking about hypergamy which is a term for women marrying men who are in a higher socio-economic class than themselves, which could lead to the woman obtaining a higher status in society. This user believes this is wrong because it creates barriers for other men, such as incels, to have a relationship with women.

One user respond and opposed to rape in the thread and express that he just want to be loved and liked. The user express that he doesn't see the point to rape women. This user's views are not appreciated by other incel users, who believe that he should rape because it is the only way for them to experience sex.

“You should learn about women hypergamy and stop being a fucking retard. Embrace being a man and shoot your brains out” (Roger)

Answers like this seem to be common when someone disagrees with the majority, which is possibly why these opinions are uncommon on the forum.

Another user shows signs of hopelessness in a thread when he writes about his situation. This person is not hateful to others besides himself, but the answers on his thread mostly advocates violence.

"... We're never gonna make it...our genetic codes and shitty environment fucked us up. The fact that you have found this website, is all the proof needed that you are too far gone... I know deep down that it's pointless to even try anymore... We were doomed from the start..." (Ralph)

Another user answered:

"nevER...nevER" (Johan)

Again, note the capitalization of the letters E and R. This is often used in different threads to encourage or advocate violence, even if the thread is not about violence to begin with.

# Chapter 5. Analysis

## 5.1. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate users on an incel forum attitude towards crime, focusing on violent and sexual crime, and how they might justify their views. The findings of this study shows two main themes and five sub themes which help describe individuals, on a specific incel forum, views on crime. Overall, the findings of this study shows that the participants of this study demonstrate positive attitudes towards violence and sexual crimes on the incel forum. These individuals advocate committing different crimes based on a desire for revenge and social change in favor of incels. Violent and sexual crimes are often normalized, praised and glorified.

### 5.1.1. Society

The first main theme is *society*, with the sub themes *anti-modern society* and *against feminism and women's rights*.

The individuals in this study seem to see violence and sexual crime as a way to create the society incels want. In the society the users want they can have sexual relations with women, and they want a society where women are subordinate to men. The incels in this study believe using violent and sexual crime against society and women, will create change. In this theme, the victims and the incels responsibility for violence and sexual crimes are denied. The individuals in this study show what Sykes and Matza (1957) calls *denial of responsibility*. They seem to deny any responsibility for their past or future action and views on violent and sexual crime because they believe it is out of their control. They blame modern society for creating a society where they are being overlooked, who mistreat them and view them as outcasts or being "weird". Therefore, violence and sexual crime is seen as the one way to bring attention to themselves or for example to have sexual relations with women. The deviant actions depend on forces beyond the individual's control, as Sykes and Matza (1957) puts it.

It seems that the individuals believe that women taking up space in society takes away incels space in society. Criminalization of forced marriage and marital rape are seen as reasons why

these men are incels. Before men would be "given" a woman who had no say in the matter, men could rape women without any consequences, if they even "needed" to rape since they already would have a wife as one user stated. The individuals in this study therefore believe that today's society is at fault, and they believed society would be better if women were never given rights or feminism was destroyed.

Furthermore, the individuals in this study also justify the injuries they discuss that they wish upon women by claiming that they are deserving of the actions. This fits well with Sykes and Matza's (1957) neutralization technique, *denial of the victim*. The users on the forum express beliefs that women need to be kept "in check" by men, and that women need to fear going out by themselves at night and misbehaving or disobeying their husbands. Here, the individual justifies harassment and violence by claiming this is how society should handle women misbehaving or women's promiscuous behaviors. Others deny the possible victims by using what the victim might be wearing, how they view men, specifically incels, or their beliefs in women's rights or feminism as a justification for harassment, sexual or violent crime. Individuals in this study also deny the victims in their stories by objectifying and dehumanizing them and women in general.

In the main theme *Society* there is also a connection to Sykes and Matza's (1957) neutralization technique, the *condemnation of the condemners*. The users on the incel forums show hate towards anyone who is pro modern society with feminism and women's rights. Some users believe that the world is "anti-male", that hatred of men is normalized and that modern feminism's goal is violence towards "undesirable" men like incels. By changing the focus from incels to the groups that condemn incels and by showing that the condemners' behavior is wrong, incels can more easily argue for violence against this not also other groups of people.

### 5.1.2. Violence

The second main theme is *violence* and the sub themes *revenge*, *praises*, *glorifies and normalizes violence* and *rape and violence is their only option*.

The users of the incel forum in this study expressed a strong sense of revenge against women and other groups. Besides the pleasure that revenge brings, some individuals express that revenge also brings justice and change for incels.

Some individuals express that women deserve to be victimized because they are the cause of the incels suffering. This could be linked to the theory of techniques of neutralization (Sykes & Matza, 1957), more specifically the technique of *denial of the victim*. According to Sykes and Matza (1957) this neutralization technique is used to justify any injuries done to the victim, therefore the perpetrator shifts the responsibility for the act from themselves to the victim, who they believe deserves whatever is being done to them. In this case the justification is revenge for how the incels are treated, since women "starve" them of sex, women deserve to be raped, assaulted or killed, and since good-looking men steal incels women or sabotage for them, they also deserve to be victimized.

In the threads about mass murders, many of the individuals think that the violence is justified because this is revenge for how incels and even other "outcasts" are or have been treated. Some express that they don't even care if the perpetrators are incels, as long as the person kills as many *Stacy's*, *Chads*, *Normies*, *sexhavers* and *foids* as possible. One user stated that it was even better when kids get killed because they otherwise would have grown up to be "bratty teenagers" and because of the misery the parents will feel. He feels that incels don't have to care about children since they are denied the opportunity to have children of their own since they can not have sex. Here we once again see strong connections to Sykes and Matza (1957) neutralization technique *denial of the victim*, since they do not agree that the people and children who have been killed are victims. On the other hand, they are part of the problem and the incels are in fact the victims who want revenge for their own suffering.

The users on the incel forum used in this study show *denial of injury* when discussing crime, for example some individuals believe that women want to be raped, and actually enjoy it. As Sykes and Matza (1957) explains it, the individual will believe that no harm or injury is really being done to the victim. Also, when the individuals in this study praises and glorifies previous violent attacks such as mass murders, they are denying the victims the injury these attacks have caused the victims and their grieving families.

Some users feel that violence is the only way to make the change that they want to see in the world, or for others to feel their pain. This could be connected to Sykes and Matza's (1957)



*denial of responsibility*. Users in the incel forum expressed that sexual harassment, rape, and the violence that it comes with is the only way for these men to get close to a woman, or to have "sex" with a woman. In all threads collected in this study, violence is always present. Even in threads that start out in a non-hateful way, at least not towards others, the answers on the threads almost always advocate violence towards whom they feel have wronged them.

Overall, users on the incel forum used for this study show a loyalty between each other, even though it is not a structured group and has no leader. They cheer each other on when they discuss violence and sexual crime, when they cheer their darkest desires and plans of violent attacks against women, other social groups or society as a whole. The loyalty is also shown when they praise former attackers and incel perpetrators and claim that they want to live up to their legacy or for future mass murderers to reach even higher numbers or "kill counts". Sykes and Matza (1957) presents a technique of neutralization called, *the appeal to higher loyalties*, which could explain why these individuals are so comfortable discussing their views and desire to commit crimes. By appealing to higher loyalties, individuals can, according to Sykes and Matza (1957) go against society's norms and laws for loyalty of the smaller group. The individuals might see it as their duty to act for the group that they feel loyal to. Therefore, the individuals in this study might see the violence and sexual crime as something that is good, or is viewed as something good by the group, even if it is against the law or norms of society.

### 5.1.3. Previous research connected to findings

In addition to the results of this study correlating with the Sykes and Matza's (1957) techniques of neutralization, the result can also be linked to previous research on the incels movement. Previous research showed, just like this study, that misogyny affects incels thoughts on crime but also their actions, as O'Donnell and Shore (2021) and O'Malley (2022) research of incel forums showed. Furthermore, this study shows that the users on the incel forum want a societal change and O'Donnell and Shores (2021) research on incel forums shows that the incel attacks are discussed as a way for political change. O'Donnell and Shore (2021) explained that in the forums, incels discuss revenge against women, which this study also highlights. Incels seem to want revenge against women and other social groups they dislike, this desire for revenge is based on misogyny and acts of violence are justified as a way to create change. O'Malley et al. (2022) could also see in their research on incel forums

that misogyny and hate towards society creates acceptances for thought about violence. Just as O'Donnell and Shores (2021) and O'Malley et al. (2022) study, this study shows that violence is often discussed, advocated and seen as something positive. O'Donnell and Shore (2021) believe it is due to seeking attention, exacting revenge, affirming masculinity and striving for political change, which are aspects this study also shows.

Williams et al. (2021) previous research on incels perpetrators shows that they lack empathy against victims, are misogynist, have no or very little sexual experience, they believe women deserve violence and blame them for their troubles. Some of these character traits are also present in the individuals on incel forum used in this study. They express misogyny, blame women, advocate violence and show no compassion for victims of past incel attacks or future attacks. They also view violence as justified, as they believe that women deserve the violence, which shows a lack of empathy. The incel users on the forum used in this study show similar characteristics traits as previous incels perpetrators that are presented in Williams et al. (2021) study. This could indicate that these kinds of thoughts and beliefs about the world can cause more violence and crime, especially against women and other groups incels typically despise. This has been proven through the multiple attacks perpetrated by previous incels or incel sympathizers mentioned in the background in this study.

Just as Cottee's (2021) study, no clear or coherent political agenda can be found in the results of this study. Instead, the results show how the incel-subculture is held together through their misogyny, normalization of violence and desire for revenge against those who incels believe are at fault for their involuntary celibacy. They express this, as Cottee (2021) also suggested, through hateful rhetoric on the forums towards these other groups. Cottee (2021) also shows, as well as this study, that many incels and users on the incel forum in this study express a desire for a society when women had fewer rights, where women were subordinate to men and where men according to incels were guaranteed a female partner. In addition, this study also showed a nostalgic longing to a different time when women dressed differently and perhaps more "modest".

## 5.2. Conclusions

Even if the incel users in this study, to our knowledge, have not committed any crimes, the study shows that violence and sexual crime are discussed as something positive. This study

also shows that these discussions are justified through Sykes and Matza's (1957) techniques of neutralization. These discussions on the incel forum could lead to violence and attacks on innocent people who incels believe are deserving of the crime. When thoughts and violence are neutralized through the techniques of neutralization, it can lead to crime, since it could make the leap from thoughts and words into action seem less difficult or more justified. This has happened before in connection with previous incel attacks, where hateful thoughts about women and other groups have been a motivation to commit massacres. Incels forum discussions about violence could be a risk factor for violence and sexual crime. Therefore, this study is of importance to show how these thoughts and beliefs, even if they are "just" words, could lead to violence, crime such as harassment and rape but also devastating events such as massacres.

To conclude, the users on the incel forum attitudes towards violence and sexual crime are positive and seen as a way to achieve revenge but also to create social change. They justify their positive attitudes towards these crimes by glorifying, normalizing and praising violence and sexual crime and using different techniques that help them view their actions as given or natural in their situation.

### 5.3. Limitations

Limitations in this research is that there is a lot of data to review because of the many posts on the forum, and the fact that new comments and threads are constantly being added every day. Researchers have to be very concise when selecting and sorting the material as there are comments and threads that are more or less useful for the study. The researchers have to review a lot of data to be sure if the discussions are relevant for the study or not. It is not possible to read every thread on the forum, and therefore there could be data that has been overlooked in this study. Other limitations of the study were that consent for participation could not be obtained. As explained in the method section, ethical aspects have been taken very seriously to protect the privacy of the participants because consent could not be obtained in the study.

Berg (2015) also explains other limitations when studying the internet through netnography, since researchers cannot observe bodily gestures, sounds, smells, tastes and so on, the text-based interaction can be considered limited. Since it is an internet forum that is the

material, the physical human interaction that could be obtained through interviews disappears. However, this was not possible for this study, but an interviewer could have given more in-depth answers to the study questions.

## 5.4. Directions for future research

As stated before, there is not a lot of research that has been conducted about incels in general, and even less research conducted on the "average incel". As shown, previous research often refers to mass killings in some way, but mass killings are very uncommon if you look at how many users there are on the incel forum. Instead, there is a need to conduct research on the average incel, and their views on crime but also their views and relationship with women, society, themselves and what can possibly be done to prevent them from harassing women, spreading hate or even committing murderous attacks.

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