UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

https://helda.helsinki.fi

Ressentiment in the Manosphere: Conceptions of Morality and Avenues for Resistance in the Incel Hatred Pipeline

Capelos, Tereza; Salmela, Mikko; Talalakina, Anastaseia; Cotena, Oliver

2024-03-13
Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute
http://hdl.handle.net/10138/573968
Capelos, T.; Salmela, M.; Talalakina, A.; Cotena, O. Ressentiment in the Manosphere: Conceptions of Morality and Avenues for Resistance in the Incel Hatred Pipeline. Philosophies 2024, 9, 36.

Downloaded from Helda, University of Helsinki institutional repository. https://helda.helsinki.fi
This is an electronic reprint of the original article.
This reprint may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.
Please cite the original version.

philosophies

MDPI

Article

Ressentiment in the Manosphere: Conceptions of Morality and Avenues for Resistance in the Incel Hatred Pipeline

Tereza Capelos [1,*], Mikko Salmela [2,3], Anastaseia Talalakina [4] and Oliver Cotena [4]

[1] Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Southampton, Southampton SO17 1BJ, UK
[2] Practical Philosophy, University of Helsinki, 00014 Helsinki, Finland; mikko.salmela@helsinki.fi
[3] Center for Subjectivity Research, Department of Communication, University of Copenhagen, 2300 Copenhagen, Denmark
[4] Department of Political Science and International Studies, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B152TT, UK
* Correspondence: t.capelos@soton.ac.uk

Abstract: This article investigates conceptions of morality within the framework of *ressentimentful* victimhood in the manosphere, while also exploring avenues for resistance among young individuals encountering the "hatred pipeline". In Study 1, we use the emotional mechanism of *ressentiment* to examine how incels construct narratives of victimhood rooted in the notion of sexual entitlement that remains owed and unfulfilled, alongside its "black pill" variant emphasising moral and epistemic superiority. Through a linguistic corpus analysis and content examination of 4chan and Incel.is blog posts, we find evidence of *ressentiment* morality permeating the language and communication within the incel community, characterised by blame directed at women, and the pervasive themes of victimhood, powerlessness, and injustice. In Study 2, we delve into young individuals' reflections on incel morality and victimhood narratives as they engage with online networks of toxic masculinity in the manosphere. Drawing from semi-structured interviews with young participants who have accessed the manosphere, we explore their perceptions of risks, attribution of blame, and experiences of empathy towards individuals navigating the "hatred pipeline". Our analysis underscores the significance of *ressentiment* in elucidating alternative conceptions of morality and victimhood, while shedding light on the potential for acceptance or resistance within online environments characterised by hatred.

Keywords: hatred pipeline; *ressentiment* morality; victimhood; incels; young individuals; manosphere

check for updates

Citation: Capelos, T.; Salmela, M.; Talalakina, A.; Cotena, O. Ressentiment in the Manosphere: Conceptions of Morality and Avenues for Resistance in the Incel Hatred Pipeline. *Philosophies* **2024**, *9*, 36. https://doi.org/10.3390/philosophies9020036

Academic Editors: Laura Candiotto and Rick Anthony Furtak

Received: 19 October 2023
Revised: 22 February 2024
Accepted: 3 March 2024
Published: 13 March 2024

Copyright: © 2024 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

1. Introduction

This article investigates the prevalence of moral devaluation and the dehumanising phenomenon of "othering" in online communications within incel (involuntary celibate) communities. Furthermore, it delves into the narratives of engagement, acceptance, and resistance to incel communications among young individuals who have been exposed to hateful, misogynistic, and far-right (HMFR) content on social media. This exploration extends beyond individuals' current affiliations or positions within the manosphere or the pathway to inceldom, offering an examination of the broader societal impact of such content exposure. In our analytical approach, we place a central focus on the emotional mechanism known as *ressentiment*, offering a structured framework to understand how self-directed emotions such as envy, shame, and inefficacious anger transition into outward-directed moral emotions like contempt, hatred, and resentment through this intricate emotional process. Drawing from recent scholarship, we expand upon the conceptualisation of *ressentiment*, recognising it as a chronic compensatory mechanism rooted in enduring feelings of inadequacy and repeated failures to attain valued objectives [1].

It is essential to distinguish *ressentiment* from resentment, with the former characterised by an ongoing sense of grievance stemming from perceived limitations and deficien-

cies, while the latter typically involves moral outrage in response to perceived injustices, often coupled with a sense of agency [2,3]. Furthermore, this study's alignment with existing research underscores the pivotal role of *ressentiment* as a driving force behind grievance politics, facilitating the emergence of reactionary attitudes and fostering collective narcissism [1,4,5]. In Study 1, we use *ressentiment* to understand the conceptions of victimhood-laced morality among incel communities in the manosphere[1]. In Study 2, we delve into the perceptions and reflections of young individuals regarding expressions of *ressentiment*-fuelledl misogynistic incivility found in HMFR content online. While our focus does not centre on the radicalisation process within the manosphere, our aim is to grasp the wider consequences and implications of exposure to HMFR content.

Morality conceptions refer to the principles that distinguish right from wrong, or good from bad, associated with a particular system of values and rules of conduct, and moral emotions are emotions that relate to our capacity for morality, which, in turn, directs our moral judgements and choices [10]. The study of morality and moral emotions spans across electoral and identity politics, social movements, and activism politics, as well as politics of online extremism and violence. For example, studies of moral conflicts focus on polarisation of emotions and preferences resulting from (or giving rise to) ideological and partisan divisions [11–14]). Studies also highlight the significance of individual and group-based moral emotions in regulating social behaviour, as well as fuelling polarisation and cementing rifts between individuals and groups [15–17]. Recent studies on incels have shed light on the widespread prevalence of moral devaluation and the propagation of moral emotions like hatred, anger, and resentment within the insular online spheres of the incel community. These online spaces often serve as "gateway portals to hatred" [18–22] as documented in the literature.

In the existing literature, however, moral emotionality is often viewed through the lens of discrete emotional experiences or as interconnected emotions within families, triggered by perceived injustices or transgressions [15,23]. Our approach expands upon these studies by delving into the intricate role of *emotional mechanisms*, which function as psychological processes that transform initial emotions into different emotion outputs as well as shape individuals' perceptions of themselves and the world around them [24–26]. We focus specifically on the emotional mechanism of *ressentiment*, which has recently been linked to incel moral emotionality [20,22,27]. *Ressentiment* transforms self-targeting emotions of envy, shame, and inefficacious anger into other-targeting moral emotions of hatred, contempt, and resentment, while reinforcing a morally superior sense of victimhood [1][2]. By adopting the framework of *ressentiment* as an emotional mechanism, we are able to identify how specific emotions such as envy, inefficacious anger, and shame manifest in communication within the incel community, and also elucidate how these specific emotions transform into hatred, resentment, and contempt through a step-by step process involving psychic defences and the transvaluation of the self (see Figure 1). Our intention is not to normatively problematise *ressentiment*. Instead, we apply it as an analytic concept that allows us to explain normatively problematic phenomena such as the resentful victimhood culture of incels in contemporary neoliberal societies, which contributes to a moral argument against those societies.

We also examine how young people who engage with incel content online respond to the morality of the hatred pipeline, and we focus particularly on their acceptance or resistance articulations. At the individual level, exposure to HMFR content may cause users to adopt or strengthen harmful attitudes like misogyny and racism, particularly when they are frequently exposed to it [28], and even fuel extreme violence like mass shootings and terror attacks [29–31]. At the societal level, HMFR content can contribute to polarisation [32], promote harassment and exploitation of vulnerabilities [33,34], and push forward policies that can cause significant physical and psychological harm. For example, well-beloved social media personalities in the manosphere, such as Jordan Peterson and Andrew Tate, posing as role models are vocal proponents of redistributing sex and social

enforcement of monogamy [21]. We know little about the pull of these personalities for young people, and the reasons why they are popular.

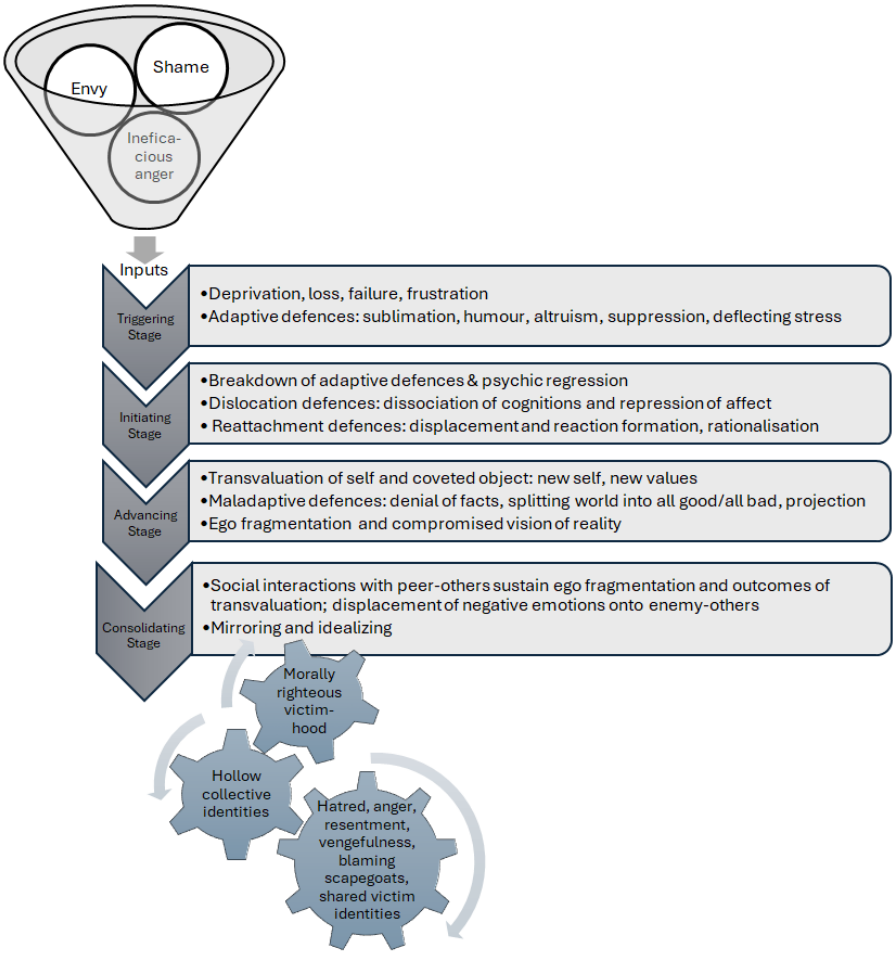


Figure 1. *Ressentiment*: a mechanism of emotional transformations.

In our two-part investigation, we delve into the emotional dynamics underlying the morality of hatred within the incel social networking community and among young individuals who are exposed to it. Study 1 scrutinises the emotional landscape of incel morality by conducting linguistic corpus analysis and content analysis of 4chan and Incel.is blog posts. This study sheds light on how individuals within this community articulate their experiences of perceived sexual entitlement, unmet expectations, and feelings of powerlessness and injustice. By uncovering the prevalence of *ressentiment*-driven narratives of victimhood, Study 1 establishes a foundational understanding of the moral and emotional landscape within the incel community. Building upon the insights from Study 1, Study 2 delves into the perceptions and responses of young individuals who encounter these narratives within the broader context of the manosphere. Through in-depth semi-structured interviews, Study 2 explores how these individuals interpret and navigate the narratives of victimhood propagated within online networks characterised by toxic masculinity. By examining the experiences, perspectives, and emotional responses of young people exposed to the "hatred pipeline", Study 2 adds depth to our understanding of the impact of *ressentimentful* victimhood narratives and the potential for acceptance or resistance among those who engage with them. Together, Study 1 and Study 2 offer a comprehensive analysis of the complex emotional dynamics surrounding *ressentimentful* victimhood within the manosphere. From its genesis within online communities to its reception and interpretation among young in-

dividuals, our research illuminates the intricate interplay between *ressentiment*, victimhood, and moral conceptions within environments marked by toxic masculinity.

Furthermore, by uncovering evidence of *ressentiment* in the moral blaming of women and the contempt, anger, disgust, and endorsement of violence in the manosphere, we add to extant studies by highlighting the analytical value of *ressentiment* for understanding moral emotions of contempt, hatred, and resentment as outputs of a systematic process of emotion transformation which transmutes the original emotions of envy, shame, and inefficacious anger [20,22,27,35]. By studying how young people recognise and react to the proliferation of hate speech on social media, and their reflections on potential consequences of censorship, we add to studies focusing on counter-narratives of acceptance and resistance [36] a psychological examination of the misogynistic incel moral framework.

2. Moral Devaluation in the Manosphere

2.1. Incels and Victimhood Morality

The incel worldview is profoundly moralistic and Manichean as Cottee [18] (p. 5) has described it at length:

> "There are good people and there are bad people. The good people are incels, of which there are two main kinds: those who recognize that the world is hostile to them, but who are not yet reconciled to their sorry fate (the "redpilled"), and those who not merely recognize that the world is hostile to them, but who accept this and the inevitability of their sorry fate (the "blackpilled"). The latter form an elite-status group among incels: a sort of vanguard that proclaims to see the world as it is, without illusions or the distortions of wishful thinking. The bad people are women and sexually successful men: the "Stacys" and the "Chads". The former are resented because they are desired yet unobtainable, while the latter are envied because they possess what the incels are sorely lacking (i.e., male sexual charisma and sexual partners). This combination of resentment and envy fuels an intense hatred of both "Stacys", who are castigated as shallow and fundamentally untrustworthy, and "Chads", who are derided as stupid and obnoxious."

While the blackpilled incels claim to have accepted their fate of loneliness [22,35], their emotions of envy, resentment, contempt, and hatred reveal their adherence to patriarchal, heteronormative ideals of femininity and masculinity [27] (pp. 209–214). According to this ideal, women owe men goods such as emotional labour, care, attention, love, and sex, and (white) men, due to their maleness (and whiteness), are entitled to goods such as social status, recognition, and jobs. Incels envy men who possess the latter goods and resent women for depriving them of the former goods. Their moral re-evaluations of desirable women as shallow, untrustworthy—even subhuman and beastlike—maximisers of self-interest that are valued only as sexual commodities, and of successful men as stupid and obnoxious, are attempts to overcome their painful emotions with these re-evaluations. By sharing experiences of misery, incels seek to reinforce their acceptance of their inevitable fate at the bottom of the ladder, with no hope of ever becoming sexually desirable to a willing partner, while at the same time reinforcing their solidarity and brotherhood in their common defeat. Yet the fact that incels portray themselves as accursed victims wronged by genetics, women, and society betrays their lack of acquiescence in their fate [18] (p. 14). Instead, the intense contempt and hatred of these presumed victimisers comes out as the most pronounced, albeit still weak, affective bond among the incels.

A key element of the incel ideology is resignation and powerlessness. The reality for an incel who has accepted the "black pill"[3] is nihilistic misery, based on the premise that regardless of one's actions, one will never become sexually desirable to a willing partner. Palma [37] points out that any attempt to try to change their circumstances opens them up to mockery and disdain from other incels. In their own eyes, incels make up the bottom of the population pyramid. Perceiving themselves as devoid of physical beauty or financial success, incels claim they are aware of their position in society at the bottom

of the ladder. Furthermore, in the black pill ideology, this pecking order is inflexible and unalterable. Incels create a distinction between them and "others" and feel they have no choice but to express their frustration through bitter anger. Women are objectified with labels like "foids" or "roasties", and are blamed, believed to be able to have sex whenever and with whomever they desire, "*programmed to get pregnant with the best possible DNA they can find*" [38] (p. 1675). Erroneous scientific arguments are used to prove the inescapability of the incel predicament, arguing that "*when you look at the genetic history of humankind, you'll see that roughly 50% of men didn't reproduce, whereas 100% of women did reproduce. What does this mean? It means that the top 10% of men get 90% of the women*" [38] (p. 1675). The incel underdog status is declared with verbs such as "mogging" (dominating over someone), adapted into new phrases like "heightmogging", and nouns attached to "-cel", such as "Ethnicels", allow incels to further separate themselves from those perceived to be higher in the pecking order.

2.2. Ressentiment as the Emotional Mechanism of Moral Devaluation in Incel Black Pill Ideology

Emotional mechanisms are available to all individuals and explain without pathologising or stigmatising how we make sense of our world and ourselves (perceptions, values), our impetus for action (motivations), and how we make sense of these actions to others. *Ressentiment* is an emotional mechanism which transmutes envy, shame, humiliation, or inefficacious anger into other-targeting moral emotions like hatred, contempt, vindictiveness, and resentment [1], while transforming the values and identity of the subject. The input emotions of *ressentiment* emerge from the subject's perceived inability to live up to his or her desires or values, typically in relation to social comparison to more successful peer others. In *ressentiment*, individual seek to liberate themselves from painful emotions by transforming the relevant desires or values to some other desires or values which are attainable. This desire/value transformation is parallel with an identity transformation from an inferior loser into someone noble and superior. Since *ressentiment* does not motivate individuals to change their actual situation, an emotional change is achieved by a change of meaning: by changing the identity of a powerless victim, experienced in the input emotions of *ressentiment*, to a morally superior victim identity that motivates and justifies the output other-directed moral emotions of *ressentiment.* These emotions such as contempt, resentment, and hatred have an indeterminate and "blurred" focus on generic "enemies" of the self [39], allowing their targeting to various scapegoats, like women, re-evaluated from desirable partners into dehumanised and despised commodities, in the case of incels[4]. Yet, *ressentiment*-mediated contempt, resentment, and hatred remain inefficacious [42,43], being closer to revenge "taken on the object in thought rather than in action" as noted by Nietzsche [2] (p. 394).

A key sign of *ressentiment* is inefficacious, morally righteous victimhood. Psychic defences deliver a dual transvaluation of the self from a worthless self-reproaching victim into a morally superior victim, and a transvaluation of the coveted object from desired to worthless [1,4,40,44–47]. In *ressentiment*, grievances remain unaddressed, being ignored or invalidated in favour or an altered worldview substantiating the superiority of the *ressentimentful* as morally righteous victims and "survivors" of injustices [1,46]. This inescapable and destined predicament is shared amongst like-minded others, reinforcing and validating *ressentiment* and its outcomes [1,3].

We see strong parallels between *ressentiment* and the inescapability of powerless victimhood in the black pill ideology [48]. We employ the analytical framework of *ressentiment* to capture the psychological complexity of the incel heart, looking for evidence of inefficacious anger, victimhood, powerlessness, inferiority, and destiny. Extant studies of incel ideology offer valuable insights: to be "blackpilled" is to be truly enlightened, aware of the futility of the "red pill", recognising that no chances to financial or physical qualities can resolve the hopeless reality—being a victim of a society where one does not receive what one is owed and is doomed to involuntary celibacy. The dual attitude towards women as both superior and inferior reflects a transvaluation that retains the high value of women, albeit

in a debased form, reduced to sexual commodities. The sharing of righteous victimhood within the incel community further validates powerlessness as a universal experience.

2.3. On the Outside, Looking in: Counter-Morality as Resistance to the "Hatred Pipeline"

The "hatred pipeline" is rife with online "rabbit-holes" like incel chatrooms [49], far-right social media content, and "Intellectual Dark Web" (IDW) platforms, promoting misogyny, toxic masculinity, and violence [28,29,33,50,51]. Young people are aware of HMFR content as they click, view, and register their "likes" on social media [52]. Here, we are interested in how young people respond to incel morality and how they make sense of their own reactions as they engage with the "hatred pipeline".

Young people are more exposed to HMFR content as they are more active online than older people [53]. Furthermore, incel members are typically younger men, making younger users more susceptible to peer-to-peer messaging [54] (p. 197). Far-right and misogynistic content can appeal to younger men as it addresses issues they experience [55,56]. Young people may feel pressure to conform to ideals related to masculinity, life goals, and relationships [57,58], and may face economic and mental precarity, induced by modern living and exacerbated if they belong to marginalised groups [58]. Within the context of fourth-wave feminism and online movements like #MeToo, some men have perceived feminism as attempting to dismantle masculinity and threaten male identities [59]. This is often tapped into HMFR content, which targets feminism as the root of men's personal and societal problems. We expect young people who come in contact with the manosphere to be able to identify who are the "blamed villains". We also expect that young people who lack *ressentimentful* emotional capital will reject incel moral devaluation.

3. Materials and Methods

To study the complex emotional landscape of the "hatred pipeline", we employed a mixed-method approach, integrating linguistic corpus, content analysis, and interviews [60]. Our study examined incel communications within the manosphere and explored the responses of young individuals encountering HMFR content online. In Study 1, we performed corpus linguistic analysis on recent material collected from two separate incel forums (4chan and Incel.is), analysed through a concordance software to identify dominant language patterns and co-occurrence word networks, focusing on commonly used terminology within the incel community about its members and those outside it[5]. The incel lexicon was studied via corpus linguistic analysis [38,61] and thematic analysis, focusing on how its language normalises misogyny and violence against women [62]. In Study 2, we conducted semi-structured interviews with seven young individuals who disclosed exposure to HMFR content on social media, despite not affiliating with the manosphere. This mixed-method approach enabled us to scrutinise both the incel forum content and the interview transcripts, coding for indicators of *ressentiment* and conceptions of morality.

Study 1: The Study 1 data were collected from two domains, 4chan and the Incel.is, which cater to self-identified incels or people who consider themselves to be on the outskirts of mainstream society (see Appendix B for details on these domains). The timeline for the data collection was 1 January to 1 April 2023. Posts across 4chan boards were filtered under the category "incel". Of a total of 39,528 threads (including replies), we retained 1632 original posts and filtered out replies. Of these, we randomly selected 100 cases. Posts from the Incel.is website were collected by accessing the "Inceldom Discussion" board, which aggregates all of the posts on the Incel.is website (over 10 million). Each page on the forum accommodates 100 posts. During the data collection period, there were 134 pages with a total of 13,400 entries (excluding replies). From this dataset, we randomly selected a sample of 20 pages, comprising 2000 posts. Within this selection, we randomly drew 5 posts from each page, resulting in 100 cases. Overall, our final sample across both domains consisted of 200 cases. This random selection method minimises the risk of selection bias, where certain types of posts are systematically included or excluded from the sample.

Random selection also helps to mitigate ethical concerns by treating all posts equally and avoiding potential issues of favouritism or discrimination in the sampling process.

The 4chan boards host multiple discussions not directly related to the incel experience, and thereby we expected fewer incel references. Incel.is is a forum for social bonding amongst incels, and the hub for incel terminology. The sample text was logged onto KH Coder (https://khcoder.net/en/, accessed on 1 February 2023), a quantitative content analysis software which identifies similar themes amongst language. API was used to eliminate coders' subconscious bias [63]. Filler words, such as *the* and *and*, were omitted, and the KH Coder created co-occurrence visual maps with recurring word associations. These visual representations parallel narrative dimensions existing within the community [64]. We present data analysed in three ways: the 4chan corpus, the Incel.is corpus, and the combined corpus.

For the content analysis coding, the unit of analysis was a single post, with some posts being singular statements, whilst others were entire paragraphs. Within each post, we coded *ressentiment* using markers of anger, envy, victimisation, shame, powerlessness, and injustice, following theoretical and empirical studies in the field [1,20]. We recognise that this coding scale does not address the temporal aspect of *ressentiment* as an emotional mechanism. However, it includes aspects from both the driver and outcome emotions of *ressentiment*, an item of transvaluation, and an item of victimhood tapping on identity, which render the scale into as close approximation of *ressentiment* as a process as possible. One of the authors coded the data, reviewing each post/case for the presence or absence of each marker (see the coding example in Appendix C). We coded explicit and implicit markers in the text, interpreting metaphors and threats disguised as humour. Some posts expressing threats of violence were followed by bracketed statements that negated the threat, denoting the complex psychology and potential ambivalence of incel communications[6].

Study 2: The data for Study 2 were derived from thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews carried out concurrently with Study 1. The participants were seven young individuals who were pre-screened for their exposure to HMFR content online[7]. Beginning with two initial contacts of 18–25-year-olds who self-identified as active social media users, we employed snowball sampling to enlist individuals who had come across HMFR content online. This content encompassed various forms including sexism, hyper-masculine podcasts, "edgy" humour about rape and sexual assault, slut-shaming, racism and antisemitism, or encouragement of violence against women and their objectification. We ceased recruitment at seven participants as our sample reached saturation in interview content, defined as consistent themes observed across interviews [53,54,63]. The sample age range was 19–23 years, with five men and two women. All participants were enrolled in higher education, six were UK natives, and one was Romanian, studying in the UK. Five interviews were conducted in person in public places (such as a private study room within a library) and two were conducted via Zoom. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed using Otter.ai, with an average time of 42 min. One of the authors conducted the interviews and coded the interview transcripts for thematic dimensions on user experiences and influence (focusing on engagement with the hatred pipeline), charismatic figures (focusing on influence and power), and responsibility (focusing on morality attributions).

In both studies, we considered the ethical implications of our research involving human subjects and researchers. In Study 1, mindful of the ethics of coding user-generated content from the public domain, we preserved the anonymity of all incel blog posters by removing during data collection any names, location tags, usernames, and other identifying variables. Ethical concern for the researchers was also central to our project. The incel texts contained disturbing language, advocating, or implying violence, sexual assault, and various morally reprehensible acts. Regular themes in the content supported paedophilia, antisemitism, racism, rape and sexual assault, objectification and dehumanisation, eugenics, and murder. Analysing this material was at times mentally and psychologically stressing and required frequent breaks and internal reflection to avoid desensitisation [66]. In Study 2, the participants felt at ease with their involvement, informed consent for their voluntary

participation was obtained prior to the interview, and they were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point [67]. To guarantee confidentiality and anonymity of the interview participants, pseudonyms were used during the data collection and analysis.

4. Results

The corpus analysis of Study 1 data showed language patterns in the Incel.is and 4chan posts which reflect consistent thematic structures, despite differences in the lexicon frequencies across the two corpora. The frequency of the predominant categories of "incel" and "woman/foid" across Figure 2 (data combined), Figure 3 (4chan), and Figure 4 (Incel.is) remained comparable.

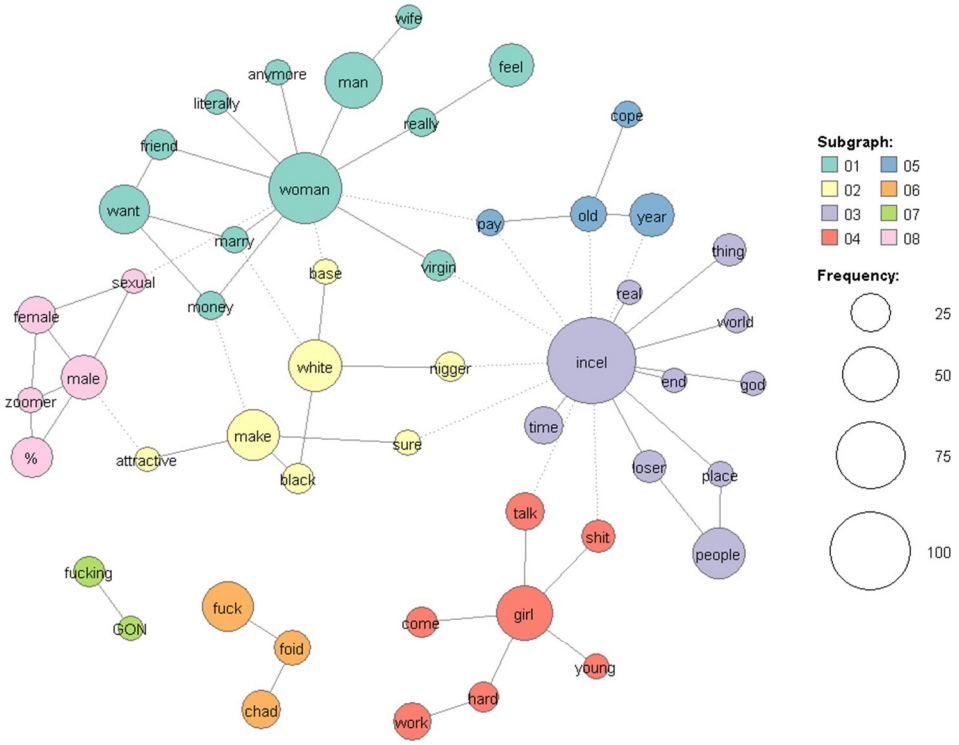


Figure 2. Combined corpus co-occurrence network.

Each co-occurrence network displays roughly eight different thematic categories. The words with the largest frequencies are "incels" and "women" or "foid", and there is little intersection between these groups, indicating the rigid "us vs. them" boundary between incels and their perceived enemies. In Figure 3 (4chan corpus), we note a link between "incels" and "women" through the word "virgin", and in Figure 3,Figure 4 (Incel.is corpus), we see consistent thematic distinctions in the two corpora between "women" and "foid" and "girl", despite referring to the same object. Women are perceived as lacking moral values and are dehumanised, or classified as villains, seen as unable to understand the struggles of incels. The most frequent words surrounding the female derogatory "foids" are "Chad", "rich", and "race", denoting women being linked to objects towards which incels feel inferior. Interesting patterns also appear in relation to race patterns in Figure 2 (data combined), where "white" is the predominant racial marker, with "n***er" and "black" as associated words. The word "loser" is frequently mentioned and so are themes of victimisation through the association of the enemy "foids" with the words "rich", "Chad", and "race".

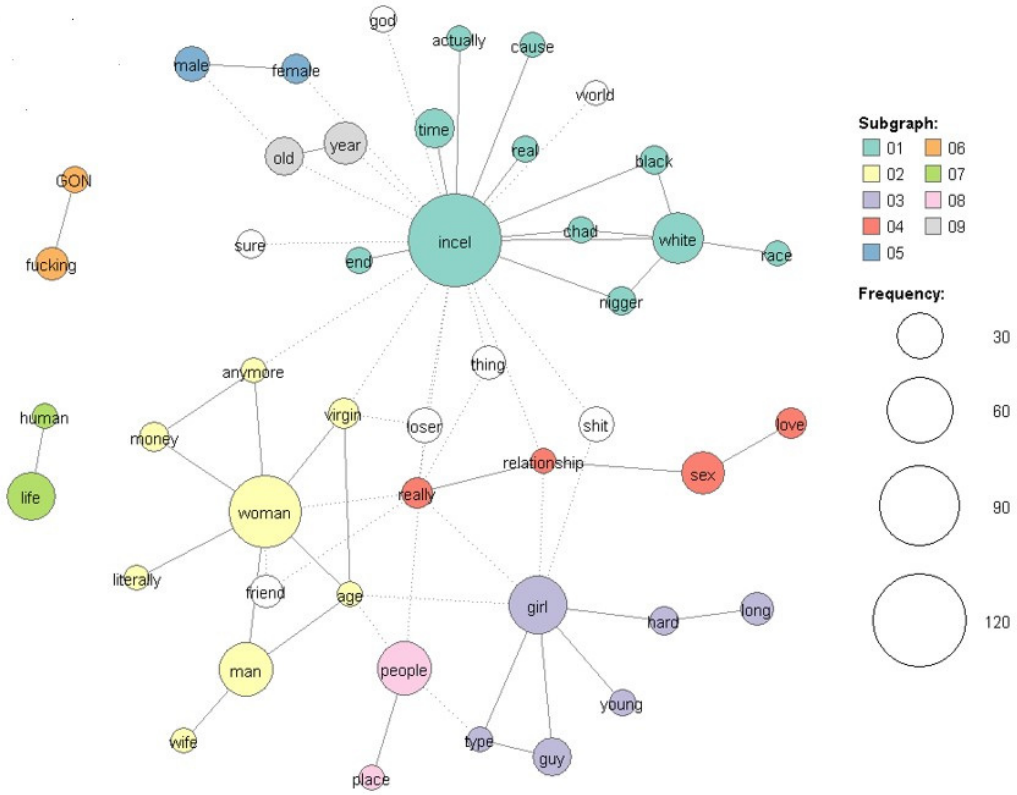


Figure 3. 4chan corpus co-occurrence network.

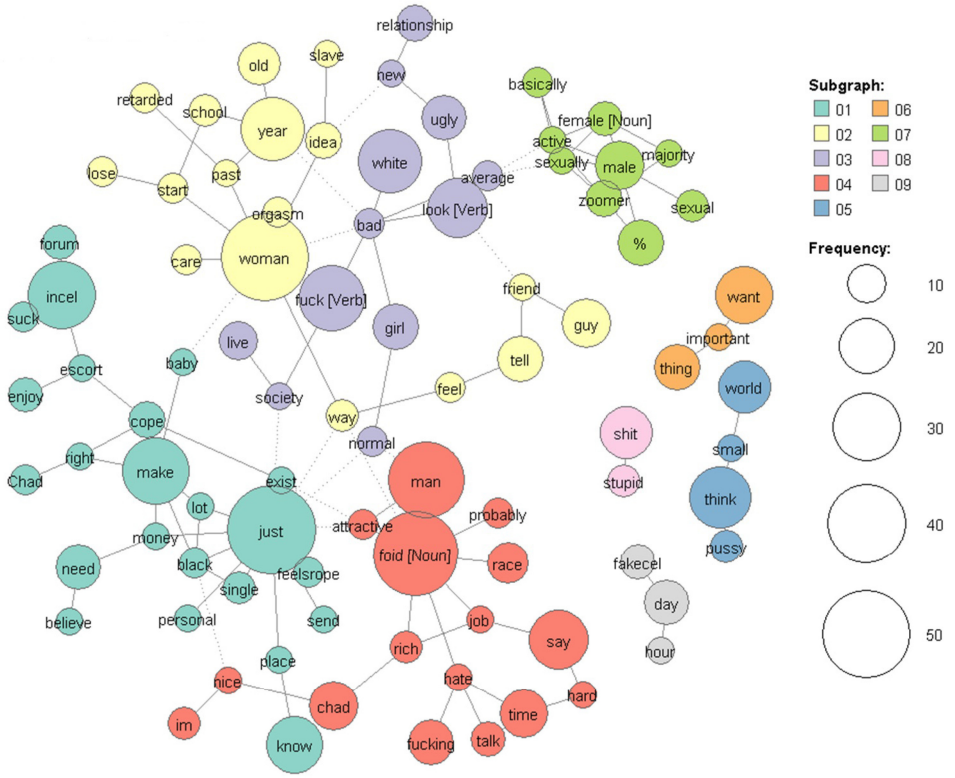


Figure 4. Incel.is co-occurrence network.

Our content analysis of the texts highlighted references to an outgroup in 62% of the cases, and references to black pill and red pill ideology in 42%. Of the outgroup, the

majority were women (predominantly referenced as "foids"), with other outgroups being a conglomeration of "Chads"—i.e., normal people in society ("normies" or "bluepilled")—or redpilled incels. Women are portrayed as less desirable, mentioned as objects of contempt, hatred, and scorn, suggesting transvaluation of an object from being desired to being worthless. One post commented "*what would possibly be more disgusting than a ROAST BEEF HOLE that is full of the debris of dozens of Chads and their smegma and semen?*" Most posts maintained similar scorn towards women.

In 29% of the cases, we identified three or more markers of *ressentiment*, mainly victimisation (38%), powerlessness (28%), and injustice (26%). Examples ranged from "*every time I go into that room, I get mogged to oblivion*", to "*I'm the only subhuman there*". Self-deprecation was evident through exclamations of struggles presented as personal failings. Multiple posts highlighted mental illness as a factor: comments of "*I'm so fucking socially maladjusted I have the personality of a blank paper*", and "*I am a schizophrenic (diagnosed), autistic (diagnosed) hikkikomori incel*". Exclamations of self-loathing and deprecation were used as justification of incels' low sexual market value. Anger (11%) and envy (12%) were mentioned less frequently. These self-loathing references, which align with the black pill ideology, can be interpreted as a *ressentimentful* strategy of coping with envy: blackpilled incels are aware of the futility of attempting to improve their status, and instead perceive themselves as superior for acknowledging their worthlessness within society. This *epistemic* superiority is significantly different from *moral* superiority, emphasised by Nietzsche and Scheler in their accounts of *ressentiment*, which shows that incels can teach us something new about this phenomenon.

In Study 2, interview participants reported typical levels of social media engagement, expressed preferences for mainstream platforms (TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, X/Twitter), and described having accessed HMFR content in several instances. Many participants expressed aversion with this type of content, but noted they found themselves "hate-watching", accessing it through algorithmic recommendations. Faith described that "*If you consume one type of edgy content media, then the algorithm assumes that you're like conservative, and then it starts like, basically snowballing and giving you more conservative outlooks, and then eventually you just get to straight racism, straight misogyny*". Faith then added "*sometimes those videos I watch all the way through because they outrage me so much that I want to see what they're gonna say*". Craig shared a similar experience: "*I'm not agreeing with the opinions, but it's something that you can't look away from*".

Participants noted the significant impact of social media and HMFR content in shaping young people's views. Nicolae remarked that social media is the "*most influential way opinions get around, especially for the younger generation*". While most expressed concern about others, almost all dismissed themselves being influenced by HMFR content. Shane remarked, "*if I see something misogynistic it doesn't mean I'm going to be misogynistic tomorrow*". Worried about others, Shane stated "*of course it's going to have an impact and affect your outlooks*". This consistent pattern of participants describing others as more susceptible to influence than themselves points to the "third-person effect" (a cognitive bias overestimating one's own resistance to media messages [68]. In particular, male participants distinguished themselves from other males they identified as "impressionable" and "targeted", emphasising their ability to approach content critically.

When HMFR content was recognised as having an impact on one's identity, participants mentioned negative effects. Kate noted "*I think a lot of the content kind of made me feel less empowered as a woman and kind of undervalued my own experiences, and made it seem that women maybe shouldn't be as respected by men or are weaker or less intelligent*". Craig described how viewers are drawn in by "flashy" creators, and how he finds such content being "*very easy to consume*"…"*it's kind of like junk food*". Participants also highlighted how individuals may not actively seek out political messages but are drawn in by the ostentatious lifestyle depicted by these creators or content which is "sensationalistic" and "controversial". Faith noted that Andrew Tate's sexualisation of women, coupled with discriminatory attitudes, instils in young men the belief that "*I can hate women and also get women, so why would I*

be nice to women if I can fuck them?". Craig also remarked how these figures capture an audience of primarily young men by suggesting they are superior to women and others: "*they're [young men] trying to get to grips with their place in the world, then it probably seems quite appealing because they [online figures] basically tell them that their place in the world is the top*". Alex and Fred also noted that high-profile HMFR figures leverage the insecurities of young men by promoting traditional masculinity, mentioning Tate's subscription-based platform "Hustler's University", now called "The Real World" [69]. Participants also noted "inspirational business", male self-help, and entrepreneurial-mentality videos often posing a deceptive veneer for HMFR content.

The three most frequent emotional responses to high-profile HMFR figures were fear, concern, and shock. Fred described Tate's content in a concerned way: "*the way he talks about women is essentially encouraging sexual assault or rape or violence*". These concerns are in line with the reported rapid rise in incidents of students harassing female teachers or pupils [70]. Female participants discussed the impact of being exposed to HMFR content on women. Faith expressed being exposed to Tate's videos makes her "*feel very uncomfortable. It makes me feel scared*". Alex noted "*I'm watching it and I'm entertained*", but clarified "*I'm entertained not because it's good or factual, but because it's outrageous*". This highlights shock and disbelief as another emotional response to HMFR content. Faith stated, "*there's so many likes, there's so much engagement, so many comments agreeing with it. That makes me feel upset*". This demonstrates how the endorsements from others play a role in evoking negative emotions.

Participants ascribed responsibility for the spread of HMFR content to the proliferation of algorithms, the platform, individual users, content creators, and societal structures such as schools. Craig remarked, "*The platforms are responsible because they're the ones that distribute content. And they're the ones that created an algorithm that prioritises views and profit over the safety and risk presented by these types of people [harmful content creators]*". Talking about controversial figures, Alex argued, "*it needs to be the platform that steps in and censors some of the stuff they're saying*". Craig said radicalised users cannot be blamed as the content "*arrives to them, they haven't sought it out*". Our participants were sympathetic to those "vulnerable" to HMFR content. Faith believed "*you can't blame young men for having the emotions that young people have, being upset about things, being angry*". She elaborated as follows: "*There isn't a healthy space for young men on the internet yet*" . . . "*although I am a feminist, I think that a lot of feminist spaces aren't very inclusive to young men, and that does leave them more vulnerable to connect with sexist perspectives because that's the only space that accepts them*". Fred noted that HMFR content is "*targeting men, particularly young men*" by engaging with difficulties they experience such as low self-esteem, social isolation, and mental health difficulties, and identified the targeted exploitation by content creators and the absence of alternative healthy online spaces for men. However, other participants pointed to user responsibility for consuming hateful content. Shane noted "*If people are influenced by what I do that is a personal issue that they have. And if I'm here getting influenced by someone else then that's an issue for me to have*".

Participants also diverged in their views about the morality of censorship and free speech. Some emphasised the importance of freedom of speech, but advocated for platforms censoring HMFR content when it compromises someone's safety. Others, like Craig, felt that "*censorship can go too far*" and "*rather than pretend it [HMFR content] doesn't exist*", we should "*directly disagree with it and show why it's not true*" by challenging the content creators' views, suggesting there is a moral obligation to speak out against harmful content. Other participants noted the negative effects of censorship, bringing attention to Tate, who was censored on platforms like Instagram and TikTok. Shane noted that he only became aware of Tate after his removal from platforms, as fans reposted his content in response to the censorship, giving him even more visibility. Fred also highlighted why banning HMFR personalities online may benefit them, allowing them to say that "*the world is run by this woke establishment*", imposing their progressive agenda onto ordinary people. It was

argued that censoring "*sort of makes that point*" and "*makes them look even more valid*" to their sympathisers.

Many participants recognised the value of creating a non-toxic environment for young men through open dialogue. In Faith's words, "*What we need now is for young white men to be involved in these dialogues, not excluded from them in a way that they feel kind of ostracised*" . . . "*it can be hard to be constantly told you are the problem from women*". Fred remarked, "*what we should be doing is talking to young white men and talking to them about their insecurities, their concerns, their problems*", and others suggested that young men should have open conversations with peers who are women or people of colour, who could share their perspectives from an emotional standpoint.

5. Discussion

Ressentiment is an emotional mechanism that contains conceptions of what is right and good, and generates output other-directed moral emotions of hatred, contempt, and resentment. Here, we used *ressentiment* as our analytical framework to approach incel conceptions of a certain "morality" that does not function as a safeguard of democratic principles and values. We also examined young people's responses to this morality—which diverts from *ressentiment* and points to a more reflective encounter with incel morality that results in a more universalist, empathetic, and less absolutist account of what is right and wrong. In Study 1, we examined conceptions of victimhood-laced morality evidenced in incel forums inhabiting the "hatred pipeline". In Study 2, we explored how young individuals responded to their exposure to HMFR content on social media platforms. A key finding of these linguistic and content analyses of incel blogs was the presence of victimhood, powerlessness, and injustice narratives, consistent with the profile of *ressentiment*, which in the classic Nietzschean sense is a strategy of transforming the *meaning* of suffering and self-loathing [42]. These texts present women as the primary devalued and blamed targets, and their analysis highlights the inherent nihilism and pervasive sense of hopelessness of the black pill ideology, and the feelings of self-loathing and hatred reported by blackpilled incels. The HMFR content we examined preyed upon insecurities, blaming women and feminism as the sources of men's problems. Moral emotions, delivered through *ressentiment*, were central in our data. The black pill ideology justifies the *endorsement* of self-loathing, the sharing of which with others, together with a collective blame of women for the victimhood of incels, *morally elevates* the meaning of their suffering and self-loathing. Some authors have argued that the failings of a utopian neoliberal society, exacerbated by envy towards those considered to be successful, has created a globalised sentiment of *ressentiment* [21,71], and our study provides support to this claim, adding to the burgeoning literature on the role of *ressentiment* in the emergence and reinforcement of a culture of victimhood that erodes liberal democracies both externally and from within [72–74]. *Ressentiment* offers an analytical framework to understand why incels engage in resentful victimhood morality in response to economic insecurities and status anxiety experienced in contemporary neoliberal societies that place responsibility for success and failure on the individual, whatever the conditions [75]. It explains how incels, unable to dissolve self-targeting negative emotions, transmute them into anti-social orientations and violent actions towards others and themselves.

In Study 2, we observed a stark contrast between the moral emotionality expressed in incel communications and the comparatively less polarising and more empathetic responses of young individuals who casually encounter the manosphere. Our interview participants thought HMFR content was more influential on other young people than themselves, a phenomenon known as the "third-person effect" [68], but acknowledged that HMFR content might have influenced them negatively when they were younger because they were more susceptible to it. These findings are consistent with scholars emphasising the potential for HMFR content to spread harmful and dehumanising discourse particularly to young men disaffected with society [32,55,56]. The expressed moral positions in our data were diverse and balanced: male participants voiced concern about how yong men can

emulate the hatred of HMFR creators, while female participants expressed fears that HMFR content may affect how young men behave towards them, consistent with the findings of studies of online misogyny and its psychological harms [33]. Contemplating the moral challenges of the "hatred pipeline", participants noted that social media platforms have a moral obligation to combat hate speech, raising issues of social responsibility, and showed moral sensibilities and empathy towards young men whose vulnerabilities are exploited by HMFR content [76,77], while some recognised the personal responsibility of the users when consuming HMFR content online.

The innovation of this research lies in its interdisciplinary approach, bridging philosophy and social sciences to offer a nuanced understanding of the complex phenomenon of *ressentiment* within the incel community and its broader implications for contemporary societies. Firstly, our philosophical engagement is multifaceted. We apply a moral psychological analysis to the misogynistic devaluation and hatred of women observed among incels, drawing on insights from classic theories of *ressentiment* by philosophers like Nietzsche and Scheler. However, we extend these theories by introducing the concept of epistemic superiority, which manifests in the nihilistic black pill ideology embraced by incels. This innovation allows us to explore cases where the transvaluation process does not lead to a sense of moral superiority but instead fosters a perception of epistemic superiority. By incorporating this nuanced perspective, we deepen our understanding of how *ressentiment* operates in contemporary contexts, particularly within marginalised communities like incels. Secondly, we utilise the case of incels as a lens to examine the rise of victimhood cultures in neoliberal societies characterised by meritocratic individualism. This analysis serves as a moral argument against the societal structures that perpetuate conditions conducive to the proliferation of *ressentiment*. By situating our investigation within the broader socio-political landscape, we highlight the detrimental effects of meritocratic individualism on social cohesion and well-being, ultimately advocating for a critical re-evaluation of prevailing societal norms and values. In essence, our interdisciplinary approach advances the scholarly understanding of *ressentiment* as well as contributing to broader discussions surrounding morality, social justice, and the ethical dimensions of contemporary societies. By integrating philosophical insights with empirical research, we offer novel perspectives on the complexities of *ressentiment* and its implications for individual and societal well-being.

To further elucidate the pragmatic implications of our analysis of *ressentiment*, we have underscored the need for a nuanced understanding that transcends simplistic categorisations and moral judgments of emotions as inherently good or bad. By emphasising empathy and comprehension, our analysis aims to foster a deeper appreciation of the complexities inherent in individual and collective experiences of *ressentiment*. Moreover, our examination extends beyond the immediate context of the manosphere to shed light on broader societal dynamics, particularly within the framework of neoliberal meritocratic individualism. This socio-economic ideology places disproportionate emphasis on individual success and failure across all aspects of life, thereby contributing to the perpetuation of misogynistic attitudes and patriarchal ideals. The misogyny prevalent among incels, rooted in internalised aspects of neoliberal ideology, serves as a poignant reflection of larger societal issues. By highlighting these connections, we seek to provoke critical reflection on the systemic underpinnings of gender inequality and to prompt discussions on avenues for societal transformation. Additionally, our analysis brings attention to the harmful effects of patriarchal norms that dictate unrealistic standards of attractiveness and subservience for women. This critique aligns with existing scholarship and advocacy efforts aimed at challenging and dismantling patriarchal structures [22]. In essence, this article endeavours to contribute to meaningful discourse and action towards fostering a more equitable and just society, where individuals are empowered to challenge oppressive ideologies and enact positive change.

Alongside these contributions, it is also important to acknowledge certain limitations inherent in our study design. Firstly, while changes in an individual's identity and values

are central in *ressentiment*, our data do not provide direct insight into the process of this transformation. It does, however, offer a glimpse into its outcomes. Specifically, we observe a shift in perceptions from a portrayal of women transitioning from a state perceived as "good" to one deemed "bad", representing a significant change in values. Additionally, our data reflect a transformation in self-perception, where individuals transition from feeling inferior and devoid of worth to adopting a sense of omniscience, thereby positioning themselves as superior despite retaining a sense of personal worthlessness. Secondly, the generalisability of our findings is constrained by small sample sizes across both studies. In Study 1, our analysis was based on a random sample of incel blogs, while Study 2 relied on interviews with seven young people. Although we achieved saturation in our data collection, we recognise that our samples do not allow for claims of representativeness to the larger population. Furthermore, the use of snowball sampling in Study 2 can introduce bias when recruiting individuals with specific characteristics [63]. Our sample primarily consisted of highly educated university students, which could have influenced their ability to adopt a reflective stance towards HMFR content. Additionally, as our interviews relied on self-reports, they are susceptible to the "third-person effect" [68], whereby participants may overestimate their resistance to hateful content. Moving forward, studies in this area can address these limitations by employing larger and more diverse samples, allowing for the exploration of additional factors such as gender and race in incel discourse and young people's reflections. By expanding the scope of this research, future studies can further validate our findings and enhance our understanding of the complex dynamics at play within online communities characterised by toxic masculinity.

Taken together, our two studies offer valuable insights into how *ressentiment* operates within online communities, illuminating factors that contribute to either the acceptance of or resistance to the pervasive narratives of hatred and victimhood. Looking ahead, there are opportunities for future research to extend this inquiry to other marginalised groups, such as "femcels". Despite contemporary headlines that suggest incels are predominantly white men driven to violence due to sexual frustration [21,33], incel groups exist across genders, multiple cultures, and geopolitical boundaries. A large segment of incels are heterosexual, male, and from North America and Western Europe [21,78], but do women experience the same triggers as incels and what is the object of their transvaluation? Extant research has suggested an ideological incompatibility between incels and femcels [66,79]. Whilst femcels also experience sexual inaccessibility, their lack of success does not receive the same amount of attention and politicisation [21].

One area that we did not explore here but that is worth engaging with is race perception as a reason for romantic failure in incel communities, its relationship to *ressentiment*, and its link with moral emotionality. The incel sexual market value [80] is dependent on Eurocentric conventions of aestheticism and beauty [81]. There is a racial hierarchy within the incel community, founded on "racepill" ideology, and race plays a significant factor in the dating world—white men are considered to have the most advantages, and everyone else is inferior [82]. Consuming the racepill means an incel is aware of the role of race in romantic endeavours [81]. JBW (Just Be White) and whitemaxxing are expressions used to encourage incels to look more Eurocentric. This could range from bleaching their skin to wearing contacts or getting double-eyelid surgery. The incel lexicon has also grown to accommodate the social gap between white and non-white members of the community. Portmanteaus of "ricecel" and "currycel" (sometimes abbreviated to rice and curry) are often used in forums to emphasise the importance of race as a factor contributing to sexual success or failure. As these are interlinked with conceptions of good and bad, race becomes a significant vessel for morality attributions and ensuing emotions.

The moral emotions of the incel *ressentimentful* discourses can also be studied across geographical borders. Almost half of incels identify as non-white [78,83]. Despite ranking at the bottom of the incel hierarchy, Ethnicels make up almost half of the community [78], and incel-related movements and sentiments are rising across Asia [20,84]. In South Korea and Singapore, the incel movement harbours feelings of injustice, victimisation, and inability

to cope with a "perceived feminisation" of society [20], along with sentiments of "losing girls to immigrants" [84] (p. 3). The incel phenomenon is not restricted to Western societies and future studies can explore its moral emotionality across different geopolitical and cultural contexts.

We conclude by drawing attention to the value of studying the effects of *ressentiment* for democratic and pro-social engagement. This study of the HMFR content of incel blogs highlights the emotional mechanism that generates moral devaluation, connecting morality and affectivity dynamics under *ressentiment*. This study also provides grounds for criticising contemporary neoliberal societies that breed *ressentiment*. Our study of young people who have come into contact with HMFR content online showed them to be advocates for open dialogue and empathetic considerations. Given the visible impact of far-right content on young audiences, more research is needed on how emotional mechanisms condition the impact of HMFR content on social media platforms. Social sharing of insecurities and concerns through open dialogue, especially among young men, might be able to neutralise the effects of the hatred pipeline.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, T.C., M.S., A.T. and O.C.; methodology, T.C., A.T. and O.C.; software, A.T. and O.C.; validation, T.C., A.T. and O.C.; formal analysis, T.C., A.T. and O.C.; investigation, T.C., M.S., A.T. and O.C.; resources, T.C., M.S., A.T. and O.C.; data curation, A.T. and O.C. ; writing—original draft preparation, T.C., M.S., A.T. and O.C. ; writing—review and editing, T.C., M.S., A.T. and O.C.; visualization, T.C., A.T. and O.C. ; supervision, T.C.; project administration, T.C., M.S., A.T. and O.C.; funding acquisition, T.C. and M.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: The work of Capelos and Salmela was partially co-funded by the European Union (Horizon Europe, PLEDGE: POLITICS OF GRIEVANCE AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE, project number 101132560), and the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) under the UK's government Horizon Europe Funding Guarantee (project number 10108342). Salmela's work was also supported by funding by the European Research Council under the European Union's Horizon 2020 programme (Grant Agreement no. 832940).

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the Institutional Review Board of the UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM following the protocol for undergraduate dissertation projects (2023) for studies involving humans.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: Data available on request due to restrictions eg privacy or ethical. The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to data protection and management clauses elaborated in the informed consent materials.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix A

Incels, Red Pill, Black Pill, and the Manosphere

Inhabitants of the manosphere often include Pick-Up Artists (PUAs), who specialize in coaching men how to navigate the dating world by employing strategies that "trick" women into dating them. Additionally, the incel subculture, another prominent presence, espouses beliefs rooted in genetic determinism, and asserts the perceived entitlement of men to dominate women, albeit with a unique perspective [6,38,85]. Incels subscribe to the notion of a gynocracy, wherein they perceive women's sexual autonomy and liberation as mechanisms to oppress men and keep them subjugated, while simultaneously blaming conventionally attractive "Alpha" men for societal injustices [38]. This belief system places women in a paradoxical position of both inferiority and superiority, valuing them primarily as sexual objects, yet dehumanising and demeaning them as mere commodities. Consequently, women are simultaneously revered as symols of desirability and success, yet stripped of their humanity and reduced to mere objects of male gratification.

The Red Pill ideology within the manosphere traces its roots back to the iconic film *The Matrix* (1999). In the film, protagonist Neo is faced with a choice between the blue pill which would return him to a state of blissful ignorance, and the red pill, promising a harsh yet truthful understanding of reality. Those within the manosphere identify themselves as having taken the red pill, signifying their awareness of society's pervasive indoctrination and endorsement of misandry [6,21,38]. This ideology posits that men encounter challenges in dating and relationships not due to personal shortcomings but rather as a result of systemic flaws within societal structures [86]. However, the concept diverges with the introduction of the "Black Pill" by incels. While the Red Pill offers hope for improvement through efforts to enhance one's attractiveness and success, the Black Pill resigns a person to a life of misery, despair and hopelessness within the manosphere [7].

Appendix B

Collecting data from public domains; understanding online discourse

Data collection from public domains is complicated as user-generated data can be amended by the OP (original poster) or deleted entirely by the OP and moderators of the website. The user interface of 4chan makes it difficult to collect data over a prolonged period, as posts are consistently "pruned". The site is designed to either erase posts after the discussion board reaches the 10-page limit, or after a maximum period of two weeks from original upload- depending on whichever condition is achieved first. Predominantly, posts are erased because they reach the maximum length, and as such accessing content directly from the site is limited to posts created roughly within a 48-h time frame. To circumvent this, posts were collected from 4chan's archive website, known as 4plebs.org. 4plebs is a community run archive- it retains all the pruned posts from the 4chan website, along with the replies in their original format. Whilst the 4chan website does offer an archive subsection for expired posts, these pages are also subject to the website's pruning limits, which makes 4plebs the more efficient alternative to collecting sample data over an extended period. Unit samples were collected from the 4plebs website through the search bar function.

The second dataset originates from the Incel.is website, a public forum recognized as a dedicated platform for self-identified incels. While previously operating under different domain names like Incel.me and Incel.co, it has maintained its current identity as Incel.is since March 2021. Users on this platform categorise their posts by attaching "prefixes", allowing for the organization and classiification of discussions in boards or forums. To provide the most accurate data, posts from the website were collected by accessing the "Inceldom Discussion" board, which aggregates all the posts regardless to which a "prefix" is attached.

Appendix C

Coding Example (See Figure A1)



Figure A1. Case number: 28.

Text: "I feel so ashamed and disgusted, I wasted 60 pounds on a phone sex for 40 min because I was lonely and I wanted a girl to speak to. I'm an 22 year old autistic incel and I believe I will be an incel for all eternity because its to hard for me to find number love with a real girl and I get desperate that I even paid 60 quid for phone sex, the worst part is I'm poor and I don't have alot and I waste money on shit like this, I've done this before and I don't know how to stop and all my degenerate actions cannot be undone nore can I get my money back.

None of this would happen if women were just nicer and friendlier to me, I don't want to live anymore, no one cares about me, I've got no one to give me guidance. Maybe I should kill myself".

Varriables: *Ingroup mentioned*: incel; *Outgroup*: women; *Topics, Markers*: SWV, Mental Health.

Red Pill/ Black Pill ideology: "None of this would happen if women were just nicer and friendlier to me"; *Moral inferiority*: "I feel so ashamed and disgusted, I believe I will be an incel for all eternity because it's too hard to me to find love with a real girl, I don't know how to stop and all my degenerate actions cannot be undone"; *Justification*: "None of this would happen if women were just nicer and friendlier to me"; *Envy*: N/A; *Transvaluation*: N/A; *Contempt/Hatred*: N/A; *Violence*: N/A; *Pride*: N/A; *Desire for change*: N/A; *Feelings of superiority*: N/A; *Hope*: N/A; *Hopelessness*: "I do not want to live anymore, no one care about me, I've got no one to give me guidance, maybe I should kill myself"; *Victimhood*: "I'm a 22 year old autistic incel, the worst part is I'm poor and I do not have a lot"; *Powerlessness*: "I believe I will be an incel for all eternity because it is hard for me. . ."; *Injustice*: "None of this would happen if women were just nicer and friendlier to me"; *Ressentiment markers*: 4 [hopelessness, victimization, powerlessness, injustice].

Notes

1 The manosphere is a reactionary community of (predominantly white) men who adopt antifeminism and toxic masculinity, promoting narratives of men as innocent scapegoats or victims of a hostile society and women [6–9]. For terminology of manosphere groups and their ideology, see Appendix A.

2 For a critical theoretical discussion on classic and recent philosophical and social scientific theories of *ressentiment*, see Salmela and Capelos [1].

3 Please see Appendix A for a discussion of "red pill" and "black pill" incel ideology.

4 While resentment as moral anger can emerge on its own or through *ressentiment*, it is important to observe differences in the intentional targets and action tendencies between these two types of resentment. The first type of resentment is moral anger at injustices and wrongs that motivates individual or collective action seeking to correct or retribute the relevant injustice or wrongdoing. This high-action readiness associates the first type of resentment with anger proper. The second type of resentment resulting from *ressentiment* is more complex as it is generated from repressed shame, envy, or humiliation, which are intolerable for the self. Therefore, resentment mediated by *ressentiment* has an indeterminate and "blurred" affective focus on generic "enemies" of the self [39] that allows its targeting to various scapegoats in political rhetoric [3]. For more detailed accounts on the differences between unmediated resentment and *ressentiment*-mediated resentment, see Capelos and colleagues [40], and Salmela and Szanto [41].

5 Co-occurrence networks are a method used to analyse the relationships between words or linguistic units based on their patterns of co-occurrence within a corpus of text. In a co-occurrence network, words are represented as nodes, and the connections between them (edges) are determined by how often they occur together within a certain context. The first step in creating a co-occurrence network is selecting a corpus of text: for example, a collection of literary works or a database of social media posts. The researchers then define the context in which co-occurrences will be analyzed, for example a sentence, a paragraph, a document, or any other defined unit of text. Within this defined context, the researchers count how often each pair of words occurs together. Once co-occurrences are counted, a network is constructed where each unique word becomes a node. Edges between nodes represent co-occurrences between the corresponding words. The strength of the connection (weight) between nodes can be determined by the frequency of their co-occurrence. The analysis focuses on the structural properties of the network, such as central nodes that frequently co-occur with many other words, clusters or communities of closely related words, and overall patterns of word association.

6 Some posts only contained the title, with the content being a video or a link to an external website like Reddit. We refrained from coding video content, even when the linked site contained variables associated with *ressentiment* (such as a screenshot of an incel justifying blackpilling), as this would require a more detailed visual coding framework.

[7] For a discussion on the logic of small samples in interview research, see Crouch and McKenzie [65].

References

1. Salmela, M.; Capelos, T. *Ressentiment*: A complex emotion or an emotional mechanism of psychic defences? *Politics Gov.* **2021**, *9*, 191–203. [CrossRef]
2. Hoggett, P. Ressentiment and grievance. *Br. J. Psychother.* **2018**, *34*, 393–407. [CrossRef]
3. Salmela, M.; von Scheve, C. Emotional roots of right-wing political populism. *Soc. Sci. Inf.* **2017**, *56*, 567–595. [CrossRef]
4. Capelos, T.; Demertzis, N. Political action and resentful affectivity in critical times. *Humanit. Soc.* **2018**, *42*, 410–433. [CrossRef]
5. Capelos, T.; Salmela, M.; Sullivan, G.; Chrona, S. The Anti-Social Triad of Grievance Politics: An integrated model of reactionism, *ressentiment*, and collective narcissism. *American Behavioral Scientist.* Triple Special Issue "The Emotional Side of Populist Support: Key Affective Mechanisms at Test. Volume Two". *Forthcoming*.
6. Ging, D. Alphas, betas, and incels: Theorizing the masculinities of the manosphere. *Men Masculinities* **2019**, *22*, 638–657. [CrossRef]
7. Ling, R. Femcels: Are They Really the Female Equivalent of the Incel? Master's Thesis, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC, Canada, 2022.
8. Banet-Weiser, S. 'Ruined' lives: Mediated white male victimhood. *Eur. J. Cult. Stud.* **2021**, *24*, 60–80. [CrossRef]
9. Incel Wiki. Elliot Rodger—Incel Wiki; Incels.wiki: 2022. Available online: https://incels.wiki/w/Elliot_Rodger (accessed on 1 March 2024).
10. Walsh, E. Moral Emotions. In *Encyclopedia of Evolutionary Psychological Science*; Shackelford, T.K., Weekes-Shackelford, V.A., Eds.; Springer: Cham, Switzerland, 2021.
11. Haidt, J. *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*; Allen Lane: London, UK, 2012.
12. Halperin, E.; Schori-Eyal, N. Moral emotions in political decision making. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2019.
13. Liu, J. Emotions, Morality, and Political Participation Behaviors in Online Activism. In *The Power of Morality in Movements*; Sevelsted, A., Toubøl, J., Eds.; Nonprofit and Civil Society Studies; Springer: Cham, Switzerland, 2023.
14. Hatemi, P.K.; Crabtree, C.; Smith, K.B. Ideology Justifies Morality: Political Beliefs Predict Moral Foundations. *Am. J. Political Sci.* **2019**, *63*, 788–806. [CrossRef]
15. Haidt, J. The moral emotions. In *Handbook of Affective Sciences*; Davidon, R.J., Scherer, K.R., Goldsmith, H.H., Eds.; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2003; pp. 852–870.
16. Turner, J.H.; Stets, J.E. Sociological Theories of Human Emotions. *Annu. Rev. Sociol.* **2006**, *32*, 25–52. Available online: http://www.jstor.org/stable/29737730 (accessed on 1 March 2024). [CrossRef]
17. Tangney, J.P.; Stuewig, J.; Mashek, D.J. Moral emotions and moral behavior. *Annu. Rev. Psychol.* **2007**, *58*, 345–372. [CrossRef]
18. Cottee, S. Incel (E)motives: Resentment, Shame and Revenge. *Stud. Confl. Terror.* **2020**, *44*, 93–114. [CrossRef]
19. Jaki, S.; De Smedt, T.; Gwóźdź, M.; Panchal, R.; Rossa, A.; De Pauw, G. Online Hatred of Women in the Incels.me Forum: Linguistic Analysis and Automatic Detection. *J. Lang. Aggress. Confl.* **2019**, *7*, 20. [CrossRef]
20. Capelos, T.; Nield, E.; Salmela, M. Narratives of Success and Failure in *Ressentiment*: Assuming Victimhood and Transmuting Frustration among Young Korean Men. *Soc. Sci.* **2023**, *12*, 259. [CrossRef]
21. Kay, J.B. Abject desires in the age of anger: Incels, femcels and the gender politics of unfuckability. In *Imagining" We" in the Age of" I"*; Routledge: London, UK, 2021; pp. 29–46.
22. Tietjen, R.R.; Tirkkonen, S.K. The Rage of Lonely Men: Loneliness and Misogyny in the Online Movement of "Involuntary Celibates"(Incels). *Topoi* **2023**, *42*, 1229–1241. [CrossRef]
23. Shweder, R.A.; Haidt, J. The Cultural Psychology of the Emotions: Ancient and New. In *Handbook of Emotions*, 2nd ed.; Lewis, M., Haviland, J.M., Eds.; Guilford Press: New York, NY, USA, 2000; pp. 397–414.
24. Elster, J. *Strong Feelings: Emotion, Addiction, and Human Behavior*; The MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, USA, 1999.
25. Illari, P.M.; Williamson, J. What is a mechanism? Thinking about mechanisms across the sciences. *Eur. J. Philos. Sci.* **2012**, *2*, 119–235. [CrossRef]
26. Salice, A.; Salmela, M. What are emotional mechanisms? *Emot. Soc.* **2022**, *4*, 49–68. [CrossRef]
27. Brogaard, B. *Hatred: Understanding Our Most Dangerous Emotion*; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2020.
28. Ribeiro, M.H.; Ottoni, R.; West, R.; Almeida, V.A.; Meira, W., Jr. Auditing radicalization pathways on YouTube. In Proceedings of the 2020 Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency, Barcelona, Spain, 27–30 January 2020; pp. 131–141.
29. Daniels, J. The algorithmic rise of the "alt-right". *Contexts* **2018**, *17*, 60–65. [CrossRef]
30. Peterson, J.; Densley, J.; Spaulding, J.; Higgins, S. How Mass Public Shooters Use Social Media: Exploring Themes and Future Directions. *Soc. Media+ Soc.* **2023**, *9*, 20563051231155101. [CrossRef]
31. Weale, S. "We see misogyny every day": How Andrew Tate's twisted ideology infiltrated British schools. *The Guardian*. 2 February 2023. Available online: https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/feb/02/andrew-tate-twisted-ideology-infiltrated-british-schools (accessed on 1 March 2024).
32. Wahlström, M.; Törnberg, A.; Ekbrand, H. Dynamics of violent and dehumanizing rhetoric in far-right social media. *New Media Soc.* **2021**, *23*, 3290–3311. [CrossRef]
33. Ging, D.; Siapera, E. Special issue on online misogyny. *Fem. Media Stud.* **2018**, *18*, 515–524. [CrossRef]

34. Reviglio, U.; Agosti, C. Thinking outside the black-box: The case for "algorithmic sovereignty" in social media. *Soc. Media+ Soc.* **2020**, *6*, 2056305120915613. [CrossRef]
35. Manne, K. *Down Girl. The Logic of Misogyny*; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2018.
36. Phoenix, A. (Re)inspiring Narratives of Resistance: COVID-19, Racisms and Narratives of Hope. *Soc. Sci.* **2022**, *11*, 470. [CrossRef]
37. Palma, S. Entitled to a Happy Ending: Fairy-Tale Logic from" Beauty and the Beast" to the Incel Movement. *Marvels Tales* **2019**, *33*, 319–337. [CrossRef]
38. Baele, S.J.; Brace, L.; Coan, T.G. From "Incel" to "Saint": Analyzing the violent worldview behind the 2018 Toronto attack. *Terror. Political Violence* **2021**, *33*, 1667–1691. [CrossRef]
39. Szanto, T. In hate we trust: The collectivization and habitualization of hatred. *Phenomenol. Cogn. Sci.* **2020**, *19*, 453–480. [CrossRef]
40. Capelos, T.; Salmela, M.; Krisciunaite, G. Grievance politics: An empirical analysis of anger through the emotional mechanism of *ressentiment*. *Politics Gov.* **2022**, *10*, 384–395. [CrossRef]
41. Salmela, M.; Szanto, T. Two Types of Political Resentment. In *Moral Psychology of Resentment*; *Forthcoming*; Lewis, M., Kauppinen, A., Eds.; Rowman and Littlefield: Lanham, MD, USA.
42. Nietzsche, F. *Genealogy of Morals*; Diethe, C., Translator; Original work published 1885; Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, 1961.
43. Scheler, M. *Ressentiment*; Coser, L.A., Translator; Original work published 1915; Marquette University Press: Milwaukee, WI, USA, 1961.
44. Aeschbach, S. Ressentiment:An Anatomy. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland, 2017.
45. Capelos, T.; Demertzis, N. Sour grapes: Ressentiment as the affective response of grievance politics. *Innov. Eur. J. Soc. Sci. Res.* **2022**, *35*, 107–129. [CrossRef]
46. Demertzis, N. *The Political Sociology of Emotions: Essays on Trauma and Ressentiment*; Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group: London, UK, 2020.
47. Yankelovich, D. The status of ressentiment in America. *Soc. Res.* **1975**, *42*, 760–777.
48. Glace, A.M.; Dover, T.L.; Zatkin, J.G. Taking the black pill: An empirical analysis of the "Incel". *Psychol. Men Masculinities* **2021**, *22*, 288. [CrossRef]
49. Munn, L. *Alt-Right Pipeline: Individual Journeys to Extremism Online*; First Monday: Canton, TX, USA, 2019.
50. Jiang, L.; Liu, L.; Yao, J.; Shi, L. A hybrid recommendation model in social media based on deep emotion analysis and multi-source view fusion. *J. Cloud Comput.* **2020**, *9*, 1–16. [CrossRef]
51. Das, S. Inside the violent, misogynistic world of tiktok's new star, andrew tate. *The Guardian*. 6 August 2022. Available online: https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/aug/06/andrew-tate-violent-misogynistic-world-of-tiktok-new-star (accessed on 1 March 2024).
52. Kim, S.A. Social media algorithms: Why you see what you see. *Georget. Law Technol. Rev.* **2017**, *2*, 147–154.
53. Auxier, B.; Anderson, M. *Social Media Use in 2021*; Pew Research Center Internet, Science & Tech.: Washington, DC, USA, 2021. Available online: https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/04/07/social-media-use-in-2021 (accessed on 1 March 2024).
54. Ribeiro, M.H.; Blackburn, J.; Bradlyn, B.; De Cristofaro, E.; Stringhini, G.; Long, S.; Greenberg, S.; Zannettou, S. The evolution of the manosphere across the web. In Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media, Virtually, 7–10 June 2021; Volume 15, pp. 196–207.
55. Johanssen, J. *Fantasy, Online Misogyny and the Manosphere: Male Bodies of Dis/Inhibition*; Routledge: London, UK, 2021.
56. Roose, J.M.; Flood, M.; Greig, A.; Alfano, M.; Copland, S. *Masculinity and Violent Extremism*; Palgrave Macmillan: Cham, Switzerland, 2022.
57. King-Hill, S.; Russell, D. The Toxic Influence of Andrew Tate: How Society Has Failed a Generation of Young Men and Boys—Social Sciences Birmingham. Blog.bham.ac.uk. 8 February 2023. Available online: https://blog.bham.ac.uk/socialsciencesbirmingham/2023/02/08/andrew-tate/ (accessed on 1 March 2024).
58. Lumby, J. Disengaged and disaffected young people: Surviving the system. *Br. Educ. Res. J.* **2012**, *38*, 261–279. [CrossRef]
59. Maricourt, C.D.; Burrell, S.R. # MeToo or# MenToo? Expressions of backlash and masculinity politics in the# MeToo era. *J. Men's Stud.* **2022**, *30*, 49–69.
60. Migiro, S.O.; Magangi, B.A. Mixed methods: A review of literature and the future of the new research paradigm. *Afr. J. Bus. Manag.* **2011**, *5*, 3757–3764.
61. Gothard, K.C. *The Incel Lexicon: Deciphering the Emergent Cryptolect of a Global Misogynistic Community*; The University of Vermont and State Agricultural College: Burlington, VT, USA, 2021.
62. Tranchese, A.; Sugiura, L. "I don't hate all women, just those stuck-up bitches": How incels and mainstream pornography speak the same extreme language of misogyny. *Violence Against Women* **2021**, *27*, 2709–2734. [CrossRef]
63. Biernacki, P.; Waldorf, D. Snowball sampling: Problems and techniques of chain referral sampling. *Sociol. Methods Res.* **1981**, *10*, 141–163. [CrossRef]
64. McNamara, D.S. Computational methods to extract meaning from text and advance theories of human cognition. *Top. Cogn. Sci.* **2011**, *3*, 3–17. [CrossRef]
65. Crouch, M.; McKenzie, H. The logic of small samples in interview-based qualitative research. *Soc. Sci. Inf.* **2006**, *45*, 483–499. [CrossRef]

66. Daly, S. An Asian American Woman's Reflexive Account of Direct Research with Incels. *Forum Qual. Sozialforschung/Forum Qual. Soc. Res.* **2022**, *23*, 3.
67. Husband, G. Ethical data collection and recognizing the impact of semi-structured interviews on research respondents. *Educ. Sci.* **2020**, *10*, 206. [CrossRef]
68. Guo, L.; Johnson, B.G. Third-person effect and hate speech censorship on Facebook. *Soc. Media+ Soc.* **2020**, *6*, 2056305120923003. [CrossRef]
69. Magee, C. I went inside Andrew Tate's Hustler University—Where "Gs" celebrate making $11. *The Independent*. 27 January 2023. Available online: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/andrew-tate-news-hustler-university-prison-b2270271.html (accessed on 1 March 2024).
70. Quinn, B. "Rapid rise" in Andrew Tate-related cases referred to Prevent by schools. *The Guardian*. 12 February 2023. Available online: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/feb/12/rapid-rise-in-andrew-tate-related-cases-referred-to-prevent-by-schools#:~:text=Tate%20was%20arrested%20in%20Romania (accessed on 1 March 2024).
71. Mishra, P. *Age of Anger: A History of the Present*; Farrar, Straus and Giroux: New York, NY, USA, 2017.
72. Campbell, B.; Manning, J. *The Rise of Victimhood Culture. Microaggressions, Safe Spaces, and the New Culture Wars*; Palgrave: New York, NY, USA, 2018.
73. Illouz, E. *The Emotional Life of Populism. How Fear, Disgust, Resentment, and Love Undermine Democracy*; Polity: Cambridge, UK, 2023.
74. Sharafutdinova, G. *The Red Mirror. Putin's Leadership and Russia's Insecure Identity*; Oxford University Press: New York, NY, USA; Oxford, UK,, 2020.
75. Sandel, M. *The Tyranny of Merit*; Farrar, Straus & Giroux: New York, NY, USA, 2020.
76. Mistlin, S. Why too many young men love Andrew Tate—And why we need to understand that, not dismiss it. *The Guardian*. 9 March 2023. Available online: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/mar/09/andrew-tate-young-men-social-media-motivational-sexism (accessed on 1 March 2024).
77. Kenyon, J.; Binder, J.; Baker-Beall, C. *Exploring the Role of the Internet in Radicalization and Offending of Convicted Extremists*; Ministry of Justice Analytical Series; 2021; pp. 1–38. Available online: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/614088c2e90e070442fbdde2/exploring-role-internet-radicalisation.pdf (accessed on 2 March 2024).
78. Speckhard, A.; Ellenberg, M.; Morton, J.; Ash, A. Involuntary celibates' experiences of and grievance over sexual exclusion and the potential threat of violence among those active in an online incel forum. *J. Strateg. Secur.* **2021**, *14*, 89–121. [CrossRef]
79. Illouz, E. *The End of Love: A Sociology of Negative Relations*; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2019.
80. Incel Wiki. Sexual Market Value; Incel Wiki: 2022. Available online: https://incels.wiki/w/Sexual_market_value (accessed on 1 March 2024).
81. Gheorghe, R.M. "Just Be White (JBW)": Incels, Race and the Violence of Whiteness. *Affilia* **2023**, *39*, 59–77. [CrossRef]
82. Incel Wiki. Racepill; Incel Wiki: 2020. Available online: https://incels.wiki/w/Racepill (accessed on 1 March 2024).
83. Sharkey, G. Failure to thrive: Incels, boys and feminism. *Continuum* **2022**, *36*, 37–51. [CrossRef]
84. Pantucci, R.; Ong, K. *Incels and Terrorism: Sexual Deprivation as Security Threat*; RSIS Commentaries, No. 176; Nayan Technoloical University: Singapore, 2020.
85. Hoffman, B.; Ware, J.; Shapiro, E. Assessing the threat of incel violence. *Stud. Confl. Terror.* **2020**, *43*, 565–587. [CrossRef]
86. Bratich, J.; Banet-Weiser, S. From pick-up artists to incels: Con (fidence) games, networked misogyny, and the failure of neoliberalism. *Int. J. Commun.* **2019**, *13*, 5003–5027.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.