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Incels, Violence, and Masculinity: How Masculinity and Membership to Online Communities
Shape Perceptions of Violence

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in
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Introduction

Misogyny – hatred or hostility towards women simply because they are women – is not a new phenomenon. In politics, it has been used as a tool to police women, enforce women’s subordination, and uphold male dominance in patriarchal societies (Diaz & Valji, 2019). Men and women can both harbor misogynistic beliefs, but when these beliefs are held by men they are more likely to be legitimized by patriarchal frameworks (Simoes et al., 2021). There are a number of groups in American society that hold misogynistic beliefs, but some did not start out as communities united on the hatred of women. One such group is now known as the involuntarily celibate (incel) community, though it was not until the end of the twentieth century that such individuals could come together. In 1997, the incel community got its name from an undergraduate project entitled “Alana’s Involuntary Celibacy Project”. The aim of the project was to create a website that could serve as an online space for individuals to express their frustrations about sexuality and dating, and provide support for individuals that felt romantically isolated (Hoffman et al., 2020).

While the community began as an inclusive space for men and women who shared sexual and romantic frustrations, it quickly morphed into “edgy” and extremist ideas that pushed women out (Hoffman et al., 2020; Speckhard et al., 2021). New online forums on platforms such as 4chan and Reddit began to gain visibility in the early 2000s. These new online spaces for incels tend to be dominated by violent rhetoric that promotes misogyny, toxic masculinity, and violence against women (Kelly et al., 2021; Tranchese & Sugiura, 2021). The discussions on incel forums are peppered with celebrations of terrorist attacks, as well as sexual domination over women (Kelly et al., 2021; Lindsay, 2021). The extremist rhetoric has not remained online, but has also inspired offline violence that targets women. The attack in Isla Vista carried out by

Elliot Rodgers – seen by many in the community as the original incel – targeted “stuck-up blond slut[s]” or college girls who belonged to a sorority (Tranchese & Sugiura, 2021). Other perpetrators of violence have been inspired by Rodgers’s attack, including a Virginia bomb-maker who wrote a letter indicating a desire to target “hot cheerleaders” and to carry out an attack inspired by Rodgers (Kelly et al., 2021). Such attacks are part of a larger phenomenon of extremist beliefs that celebrate violence against women (Kelly et al., 2021; Tranchese & Sugiura, 2021).

While there is some research on the online spaces incels inhabit and the violent, misogynistic rhetoric that dominates them (Lindsay, 2021; Preston et al., 2021; Speckhard et al., 2021; Tranchese & Sugiura, 2021), it remains unclear how much of a threat incels really are to women and society. Understanding how incels view and experience masculinity, and how that influences their views on the use of violence, is important for understanding the extent to which this community poses a security threat. The present study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of how incels and non-incels differ with regard to beliefs about sexuality and masculinity and how those beliefs impact their level of support for terrorism or sexual assault as a means of violent change.

Literature Review

Misogyny & Sexual Frustrations

Since the beginning of third-wave feminism in the 1990s, researchers from a variety of fields have given more attention to the impact of misogyny and anti-feminist movements on both women and men. Regardless of the lens through which misogyny is viewed or by whom it is expressed, this expression of hatred and hostility towards women is framed and legitimized by patriarchal frameworks and beliefs (Simoes et al., 2021). While political expressions of

misogyny as a tool to subordinate women are not always obvious in media or everyday life, it is often overtly expressed and acted on by violent extremists (Diaz & Valji, 2019). Beyond political or religious motivations, sexual frustrations – anger associated with a lack of sexual encounters – can cause individuals to hold misogynistic beliefs, or vice versa. Sexual frustration may lead to hostility or the tendency to sexually objectify women (Stickel, 2020). Further, sexual frustrations often correlate with endorsements for rape myths – false beliefs about sexual violence in relation to the victim or the perpetrator (Burt, 1980; O’Connor, 2021). When the focus is placed on female victims, rape myths suggest that women who drink alcohol or are perceived as promiscuous are “asking” to be raped; on the other hand, when the focus is on male perpetrators, rape myths excuse the violent behavior (McMahon & Farmer, 2011; O’Connor, 2021). Rape myths often trivialize incidents of sexual assault, implying that they are not violent or serious enough to be considered cases of “real rape” (O’Connor, 2021; Payne, 1999). Endorsement of such myths has been found to be significantly associated with sexual aggression (O’Connor, 2021). As past research has indicated, rape myths reveal how sexual frustrations can heighten previously held misogynistic beliefs, particularly for men.

Misogynistic beliefs such as these have spread and thrived with the growth of the internet. The rise in online misogyny is marked by behaviors that intentionally inflict emotional suffering through online discourse (Simoes et al., 2021). The misogynistic rhetoric seen in online forums works to normalize violence against women (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Simoes et al., 2021). While online acts of violence do not always translate into offline violence, they are not isolated incidents: online violence against women is part of a continuum of violence that can bleed into political, economic, and social fields (Simoes & Silveirinha, 2019; Simoes et al., 2021). With new platforms online that create opportunities for like-minded people to find

each other, misogyny and violence against women in online spaces has been allowed to thrive as ideas of toxic masculinity feed violent ideologies

Toxic Masculinity

While misogyny can be expressed by men and women, various forms of masculinity can compound negative attitudes towards women held by men. Masculinity, in a general sense, is the social roles, behaviors, and meanings prescribed to men in a given society at a given time (Laskovtsov, 2020). Hegemonic masculinity, more specifically, is a pattern of practice that allows men to continue to display dominance over women (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005); the extent to which this form of masculinity is normalized and legitimized is determined by the social structuring of gender through institutions (i.e., government, education, family) (Laskovtsov, 2020). In the 1990s, a new form of masculinity emerged in popular culture: toxic masculinity. Originally, this form of masculinity was used in political contexts to describe men who lacked adequate fathering and, as a result, pursued unrealistic cultural images of masculinity and sought to prove their manhood with violence or antisocial behavior (Harrington, 2021). It was most often applied to marginalized men in a way consistent with conservative political agendas that sought to socially control low-income, under-employed men (Harrington, 2021). But over time some ideas of masculinity, particularly toxic masculinity, have shifted to address particular issues in both social and political contexts.

Today, feminists often invoke the phrase “toxic masculinity” as a shorthand for characterizing homophobic and misogynist speech and violence committed by men. Discussions of former President Donald Trump and the #MeToo movements were filled with the phrase as a way of describing the negative behavior of powerful white elite men, in contrast to the earlier applications to marginalized men (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Harrington, 2021). There is no

singular agreed-upon definition for toxic masculinity in its current use, but attempts to define this idea often include mentions of violence, domination, aggression, misogyny, and homophobia (Harrington, 2021). Toxic masculinity blames problematic behavior on character traits of individuals, rather than looking at the problems in the society or institutions that contribute to or allow this behavior (Harrington, 2021). This form of masculinity is based on key elements of hegemonic masculinity: the strong need to dominate and control others; a readiness to resort to violence; and the stigmatization and subjugation of women, gays, and men seen as exhibiting feminine characteristics (Kupers, 2005; Simoes et al., 2021). The current use of the phrase toxic masculinity does not appear overtly in politics, but it continues to be used as a political tool and shorthand for condemning other men's masculinity. Using toxic masculinity as a political tool, male elites may position themselves as "masculine heroes" rescuing feminized victims from "toxically masculine" villains, who are often foreign extremists (Harrington, 2021).

One of the key components of toxic masculinity, which can exacerbate feelings of sadness or isolation, is the policing of masculinity (POM). POM is an interpersonal behavior process in which people communicate the perception that a man's behavior is not in line with masculine norms in a given context (Frosh et al., 2002; Reigeluth & Addis, 2021). Misogynistic epithets, homophobic epithets, and manhood insults or directives (i.e., "man up") are used to prevent or punish behaviors that are insufficiently masculine (Nayak & Kehily, 1996; Reigeluth & Addis, 2021). Men who engage in normative POM seek social acceptance and often partake in aggressive or risky behaviors to improve their social status (Reigeluth & Addis, 2021; Vandello et al., 2008). And the more individuals are upset by POM directed at them, the more at risk they are to internalize those negative perceptions of themselves, in turn making them feel socially distant from their male peers (Reigeluth & Addis, 2021). POM, and toxic masculinity more

generally, is common on internet forums. Exposure to these ideas can exacerbate feelings of insecurity and loneliness that can make vulnerable men at risk to embrace more extremist ideas found on online forums.

Misogyny, Toxic Masculinity, & Violence

There is a strong connection between expressions of misogyny and violence against women. Domestic violence, harassment, gender-based rhetorical violence, and sexual violence are often labelled as expressions of toxic masculinity (Simoes et al., 2021). Toxic masculinity has been used as a tool for some men to place themselves against misogyny and violence against women without taking responsibility for their role in maintaining the social and institutional structures that enable this behavior (Harrington, 2021). Sexual violence and harassment, from this framework, can be discussed as features of toxic men, rather than a symptom of privileges related to institutional and societal structures (Harrington, 2021). Looking more closely at its relationship to violence, misogynistic attitudes have often been associated with violent extremism. Johnston & True (2019) found that in Indonesia, Bangladesh, and the Philippines, individuals who support violence against women were three times more likely to support violent extremism. Further, misogynistic acts are an integral component of the ideology, political identity, and political economy of violent extremist groups (Johnston & True, 2019). Toxic masculinity, in addition to its use in relation to interpersonal and extremist violence, sums up the violence and hostility directed at women in online environments, with gendered cyber-hate threatening women's safety in online spaces (i.e., online forums, gaming communities) (Harrington, 2021; Kavanagh et al., 2019). Looking at the online presence of female athletes, Kavanagh et al. (2019) found that the commentary directed at female athletes can range from longing to hostile, going so far as to become physically and sexually threatening. Sexist humor is

used to normalize or trivialize gender-based discrimination, working to disguise online and offline violence (Kavanagh et al., 2019; Lockyer & Savigny, 2020). Gendered online discourse also works to reinforce hierarchies in which men are dominant and women are subordinate (Kavanagh et al., 2019). Online, misogynistic men adopt violent rhetoric aimed at dominating, silencing, and controlling women in an attempt to protect online spaces for men (Kavanagh et al., 2019). This online toxic masculinity and misogyny, and the associated online and offline violence, define what has become known as the “manosphere”.

Manosphere

The manosphere is a part of the internet that supports and amplifies different kinds of masculinities and men’s rights groups, and has propelled the backlash to feminism (Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019; Tranchese & Sugiura, 2021). The groups that make up the manosphere are a loosely incorporated network of websites and social media communities, with common language that creates a unified identity (Farrell et al., 2019; Ribeiro et al., 2021; Tranchese & Sugiura, 2021). The main motivations for men to engage in these communities is their need to account for their stories, to connect with other “victims”, and to mobilize towards political action (Ging, 2019). These motivations, particularly related to political action, appear to varying degrees based on different manosphere groups (Ging, 2019; Simoes et al., 2021). The ideology that connects these groups is based on misogynistic tropes aimed at silencing women’s voices. Shared beliefs include the idea that feminism has corrupted society, women’s equality is detrimental to men, and that men are victimized by feminists (Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019; Farrell et al., 2019; Tranchese & Sugiura, 2021). These groups are also connected by their desire to ensure women provide effective resources, including assuaging male egos and confidence through sexual availability, gratifying the needs of men, and ensuring their feeling of control (Bratich &

Banet-Weiser, 2019). Overall, the groups that fall within the manosphere are united by a preoccupation with hegemonic masculinity and domination over women.

One specific philosophy appears across manosphere communities: The Red Pill philosophy. This idea, borrowed from the movie *The Matrix*, has rapidly spread across platforms with the increase of anti-feminist ideas, uniting the manosphere communities despite conflicts in their more specific viewpoints (Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019; Ging, 2019; Ribeiro et al., 2021). The philosophy suggests that “taking” the red pill awakens men to feminism’s brainwashing, or what they argue to be the truth of society and women (Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019; Hoffman et al., 2020). In their view, the red pill enables men to recognize that women are shallow by nature, and to understand how men can manipulate and exploit those ‘inherent’ female characteristics (Ging, 2019; Hoffman et al., 2020). It capitalizes on the injuries these men feel they have suffered, and directs the blame at women and feminism. Thus, it offers routes for men to recoup their “natural” capacities, notably by abusing and subjugating women (Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019). The Red Pill philosophy acts as a uniting idea for the more niche groups that fall under the manosphere umbrella, creating the basis of the common language used online.

Numerous manosphere communities adhere to the Red Pill and related beliefs, though there is great variety in the exact focus of the groups: anti-feminists, father’s rights groups, incels, androphiles (same-sex attracted men who do not identify as homosexual), paleo masculinities (men who believe male domination is natural), and many more (Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019). The groups can be put into four main categories: Pick Up Artists (PUA); Men’s Rights Activists (MRAs); Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW); and incels (Hoffman et al., 2020). PUA and MRAs are the older of the community categories. The early PUA sites, including PUAHate, offered men a sense of self-confidence through seducing and controlling

women (Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019). The PUA worldview and techniques – such as negging, or the use of negative comments to get women to seek approval – transform typically intimate sexual experiences into anti-social forms of sociability (Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019). The PUA community exists both online and offline, with TV programs that have been based on the idea of ‘training’ men in PUA techniques (Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019). The online community comes almost as a response in offline gurus, with sites such as PUAHate becoming spaces for men for whom PUA techniques have failed to air their grievances (Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019). These sites critique PUA from within, but the blame is shifted away from the con of the PUA industry and back to women (Bratich & Banet-Weiser). Men in this community have even conducted formalized attempts to take online misogyny into real-world politics, such as with attempts to roll back women’s reproductive rights (Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019). The PUA online community’s desire to blame women and take action against them is not unique, with other older communities under the MRA umbrella sharing similar views.

As the manosphere has evolved, PUA and other early communities have become less popular, while newer sites and forums such as those within the MGTOW and incel communities have thrived (Hoffman et al., 2020; Ribeiro et al., 2021). These newer communities bring with them more toxic and nihilist views, taking on more extreme anti-women and anti-feminist ideologies (Hoffman et al., 2020; Ribeiro et al., 2021). Overall, and particularly in these niche communities, online violence and hostility towards women has been increasing (Farrell et al., 2019). Marwick and Lewis (2017) argue that these online spaces are primed terrain for alt-right radicalization. In fact, the more toxic online communities have been linked to violent crime committed offline (Farrell et al., 2019). Within the entire online manosphere, the incel community has received a great deal of media attention as it has morphed into an extremely toxic

environment that celebrates and encourages violence against women and what they view to be an oppressive matriarchal society.

Involuntary Celibates

Common Characteristics & Ideology

Despite the increased awareness about the incel community, there is no clear agreement about what exactly constitutes incelhood – identifying as part of the incel community. However, members of this online community tend to fit into the popular definition of men who are excluded, by perception and in reality, from sexual or romantic relations with women (Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019; Speckhard et al., 2021). There are also common characteristics reported by incels. Speckhard et al. (2021) found that members of this community often report having experienced childhood bullying, and there is a high incidence of psychological challenges (e.g., depression, anxiety, and symptoms of autism). In addition to these psychological symptoms, incels may report suicidal ideation or substance abuse (Daly & Reed, 2022). They often have low self-esteem and express insecurities about their physical appearance (Regehr, 2020). Negative emotions and incelhood have a cyclical relationship, in which sadness about incelhood leads to further isolation which exacerbates negative emotions (Daly & Reed, 2022). They often see themselves as so physically unattractive and socially incapable that they are trapped in incelhood (Daly & Reed, 2022; Lindsay, 2021). As a result, they are hyper-aware of their failures in sexual and social relationships in a system that they view as favoring those who fit hegemonic masculine ideals (Lindsay, 2021). They see themselves as undeserving of their romantic and sexual failures since their unattractiveness is uncontrollable (Glance et al., 2021). While not all incels report the same emotional or psychological characteristics, there appears to be a general feeling of isolation and insecurity that embodies incelhood and the online community.

A hatred of feminism, as in the larger manosphere, is common among incels. Feminism is seen as breaking down civil society and enforcing an oppressive matriarchy that robs incels of their right to a wife and sex (Hoffman et al., 2020; Lindsay, 2021). Incels believe that, because of feminism, women have invaded their personal spaces, such as online gaming communities (Lindsay, 2021). Feminism is viewed by incels as the cause of the decline of western liberal society, specifically contributing to the decline in economic positions and the precarious job market experienced by young men (Lindsay, 2021). The denigration of women has typically focused on their sexuality, presenting them as objects who deserve and enjoy sexual abuse and submission (Tranchese & Suguira, 2021). Women are defined by their relationship to men, and are objects of both contempt and desire (Glance et al., 2021). Incels hold women responsible for their sexual desires, while also rejecting female sexuality and describing women as inferior (Glance et al., 2021; Laskovtsov, 2020). Incels also view women as unreliable, particularly with regards to their experiences of rape and abuse (Laskovtsov, 2020; O'Connor, 2021). They consider rape to not be a criminal or offensive act, and often express skepticism about real occurrences of rape and abuse (Laskovtsov, 2020). Anti-feminist rhetoric and discussions of rape myths are common on incel forums, acting as ways to blame women for their sexual isolation.

In addition to these shared characteristics and general manosphere beliefs, there is also a shared ideology that permeates incel forums and unites users. Two key beliefs that are the basis of incel ideology separates them from the rest of the manosphere: society is a hierarchy in which physical attractiveness determines one's place; and women are the primary culprit of the hierarchy (Hoffman et al., 2020). At the top of the hierarchy are "Chads" and "Stacys", idealized men and women; "normies" are in the middle of the hierarchy; and incels, or men who are unable to perform hegemonic masculinity, are at the bottom (Hoffman et al., 2020; Laskovtsov,

2020; Tranchese & Sugiura, 2021). Incels differentiate themselves from normies by their “privileged” insight that women are only attracted to Chads, and that those not born a Chad are destined for mediocrity and isolation (Hoffman et al., 2020). This hierarchy exists, according to incels, because women are inherently shallow and make dating decisions based on physical attractiveness, height, weight, and race (Hoffman et al., 2020). This creates an exclusive dating pool that leaves out incels, thus making women responsible for their isolation and rejection (Hoffman et al., 2020). Based on this ideology, women become the primary targets of incel anger and violence.

Incel ideology is uniquely bleak as their problems are viewed as symptoms of broader societal structures (Daly & Reed, 2022). They feel that they have privileged information about society and women, referred to as the Black Pill. As a critical component of the incel identity related to the Red Pill philosophy of the wider manosphere, is the recognition that incelhood is a permanent condition (Hoffman et al., 2020; Lindsay, 2021). “Taking” the Black Pill awakens incels to their permanent reality and gives them the insight that women and society are biased against them (Glance et al., 2021; Hoffman et al., 2020; Lindsay, 2021; Speckhard et al., 2021). They believe that their situation is permanent and that nothing short of plastic surgery could make a difference (Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019; Lindsay, 2021; Speckhard et al., 2021). Because of the importance put on physical attractiveness in dating, incels often believe that treatment for depressive symptoms will not improve their status or experience since they will still not be attractive to Stacys (Daly & Reed, 2022). They also believe that the world will always be against genetically inferior men, and that women are inherently wired to prefer men with particular physical traits (Lindsay, 2021). Incels claim that their failure to attain traditional masculine attractiveness is the cause of their marginalization (Glance et al., 2021). While incels

claim to separate themselves from traditional masculine power, they police masculinity in others and reaffirm the power of Chads (Glance et al., 2021). By taking the Black Pill, incels come to view their sexual and romantic isolation as permanent, often leading them to seek comfort and solidarity from online forums.

Online Incel Forums

The online incel community offers a supportive environment for individuals who identify with incelism. The rise of the internet has allowed sexual predators, including incels, to move violent behavior online to degrade women, seek followers, and share their destructive behavior (Byerly, 2020). However, the incel forums, such as Reddit's r/ForeverAlone, IncelSupport, and LoveShy.com, were originally open to both men and women who felt lonely and shy in sexual and romantic contexts (Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019; Regehr, 2020). But over the years, the forums have pushed out women as they have become more about incitement and escalation, rather than the original supportive network (Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019). These digital platforms have become places for incels to find each other, share violence inclinations, reinforce mutually held beliefs, and celebrate deadly accomplishments (Byerly, 2020). In many ways, the online forums have become tools for radicalization and drivers of offline violence (Glance et al., 2021). As newer communities that are a part of the larger manosphere, incel forums optimize the violent shift in rhetoric in the manosphere.

While incel forums can be a safe space to vent frustrations, they can also increase maladaptive beliefs and behaviors. For instance, insecurities about physical appearance, low self-esteem, and mental health symptoms can be aggravated by the toxic environment of incel forums (Regehr, 2020). Depression, suicidality, and misogyny, which are all correlated with endorsements of violent attitudes and behaviors, can also be compounded by engaging with the

content found on incel forums (Speckhard et al., 2021). Rather than offering positive solutions or alternatives to address feelings of hopelessness about sexual exclusion, the toxic culture and digital echo-chamber of these forums normalizes and solidifies harmful rhetoric (O'Donnell & Shor, 2020; Regehr, 2020; Speckhard et al., 2021). Social media in general, and incel forums in particular, amplify toxic messages of aggrieved manhood (Byerly, 2020). The Red Pill and Black Pill philosophies create social pressure within incel networks that encourages members to be hostile and callous (Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019). The language of incel ideology creates a limited world view that makes social reality and perceptions of everyday situations an obsessive experience (Regehr, 2020). The anger that incels feel regarding their lack of romantic or sexual relationships is aimed at mainstream society, which is seen as helping women move upward at the expense of men (Regehr, 2020). Additionally, feminism and politically correct culture is commonly framed as oppressive (Lindsay, 2021). Incels engage in “shit-posting” – posting intentionally shocking content for reactions on forums or social media sites – to push back on the emasculation they feel from society, to reinforce their shared worldview, and to create a feeling of understanding and acceptance (Daly & Reed, 2022). The echo-chambers that are created in online incel spaces feed on the negative emotions and feelings of isolation to reinforce the Black Pill philosophy and anti-feminist ideas.

While incel ideology is not inherently political and there is no cohesive political agenda for the group, they generally view themselves as an oppressed group that can only improve their situation by the total restructuring of society (Kelly et al., 2021). There are some who advocate for the legalization of violent actions to punish and control women for their disobedience and failing to fulfill feminine roles (Kelly et al., 2021). Others advocated for concentration camps for women, or a government mandate for state-sponsored girlfriends and forced monogamy (Kelly et

al., 2021). The community has also become integrated with the alt-right community. These groups share common grievances, and there are many individuals that consider themselves part of both communities (Hoffman et al., 2020; Regehr, 2020). Discussions of violence and the celebration of the subjugation of women has increased since the creation of the original incel forums, and has led those in the community to seek out other groups with extremist ideas that have complimentary political agendas.

Incel Ideology & Violence

The majority of incels on popular forums are depressed, lonely, and non-violent, and use online forums to find a sense of belonging and understanding (Speckhard et al., 2021). But exposure to violent, misogynistic content, often in the form of fan art and comedy, solidifies anti-feminist beliefs and normalizes violent ideologies (Regehr, 2020). There are some key themes that incorporate violent language that appear throughout incel forums: rape culture (i.e., sexual objectification of women, trivialization of sexual abuse); pro-attitudes of violence against women; sexual entitlement; male victimization and oppression; and the masculinity crisis (Laskovtsov, 2020). Much of the discourse on incel forums incorporates language of warfare, revolt, and terrorism, though it remains unclear how seriously individuals are committed to the violent statements they support and post (Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019; O'Donnell & Shor, 2020). Speckhard et al. (2021) found that there was a slightly higher incidence of violent ideation among incel men compared to non-incel men, even when the incels did not intend to act on those ideas. As violent ideologies and actions have become normalized within the community, the transition from online to offline violence is seen as a natural progression (Regehr, 2020). When violent threats are made by incels, they are not directed at the victims, but rather are shared with their community; this in turn leads to them receiving encouragement to engage in their violent

fantasies (Regehr, 2020). And when violence transitions to offline victims, the actions are celebrated as a legitimate means of expressing anger related to incel beliefs (Regehr, 2020). This transition to offline violence is not hypothetical; there are a number of cases in which the perpetrator expressed that their inceldom was the primary driver of their terrorist attacks (Hoffman et al., 2020).

As the online incel forums have become increasingly violent and militant, there are a few key motivations that can be seen in incel support of violence, and which may explain why some engage in acts of violence offline. Some seek attention and fame, or to gain support for their cause. They view violence as a means of spreading the Black Pill philosophy, as well as an exciting means of increasing their notoriety (Kelly et al., 2021; O'Donnell & Shor, 2020). Others are motivated by revenge on Stacy's, or the sexually active women who incels feel have rejected them as men (Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019; O'Donnell & Shor, 2020). Speckhard et al. (2021) found that when incels expressed a higher level of embraced misogyny, there was a higher likelihood of violent ideation. The focus of revenge is rarely Chads, and is instead aimed at women who deny incels sex, at women and men who ridicule incels, or the larger non-incel community that is indifferent to their plight (Glance et al., 2021; Laskovtsov, 2020; O'Donnell & Shor, 2020). Still others may view violence as a means of reinforcing their masculinity by instilling fear in society when other approaches have failed (Laskovtsov, 2020; O'Donnell & Shor, 2020). These incels are introspective and are explicit in their discussions of the relationship between gender constructions and violence (O'Donnell & Shor, 2020). And some incels support or carry out violence in the hopes of it leading to political change that would improve their status. They believe that the patriarchy can be restored through violence, though what forms of violence are viewed by incels as the most effective remains unclear (O'Donnell & Shor, 2020).

These incels support the legalization of prostitution as a means of restoring men's "rightful" access to women for sex (Laskovtsov, 2020; O'Donnell & Shor, 2020). They also advocate for the government to reduce or subsidize the cost of plastic surgery so that incels can make themselves more physically attractive, and thus increase their access to sex (O'Donnell & Shor, 2020). Overall, it is their hatred from women and themselves related to their failure to meet hegemonic masculinity that leads incels to support the use violence.

Sexual violence, when viewed as a continuum, can appear in many forms – harassment, assault, mass murder – and can be facilitated by social media and online forums (Byerly, 2020). When incels engage in violence online or offline it is a form of sexual violence often aimed at a large number of random strangers, with the underlying motivations centered around sex and gender issues (Byerly, 2020). For incels, sex becomes a weapon to express hate towards women and society (Tranchese & Sugiura, 2021). They justify sexual violence against women with the argument that women, based on their gender alone, should be used for sex, and if they will not provide men with sex willingly then men have the right to take it (Laskovtsov, 2020). Violent acts carried out by incels can be classified in three interconnected levels. The first is violence against themselves, or suicide (Lindsay, 2021). Many incels report being depressed and not satisfied with their life situation, feelings that are compounded by the Black Pill philosophy and encouragement from other users of incel forums (Lindsay, 2021). Suicide is often discussed on forums, and many see it as the only solution to their permanent placement at the bottom of the social hierarchy (Glance et al., 2021; Kelly et al., 2021; Lindsay, 2021). The second level of violence is interpersonal violence against online users. On incel forums, this comes in the form of encouragement of suicide or acts of self-harm as a method of coping with incelism (Lindsay, 2021). On other online platforms, incels will abuse and threaten other users who are seen as

threats (Lindsay, 2021). By utilizing a network of harassment, incels hope to discourage women from using the internet and to reinforce male hegemony in online spaces (e.g., gaming, incel forums, etc.) (Lindsay, 2021).

The final level of violence is violence aimed at society in general and is the form of violence that is most often addressed in the media. Incels who engage in this form of violence often desire mass violence that creates chaos and highlights their grievances (Lindsay, 2021). Since politics and other methods of change are often seen as futile, their fantasized uprisings and terror attacks are constructed as a necessary form of action against feminism and its supporters (Kelly et al., 2021; Lindsay, 2021). Regardless of the form incel violence takes, violent action from the incel community is connected by a desire to meet the standards of hegemonic masculinity and to take down the oppressive patriarchy (Lindsay, 2021). They struggle to reconcile their dependency of their masculine identity on heterosexual sex with their belief that women are inferior, and may resort to violence to combat this tension (Preston et al., 2021). While most men who identify as incels are non-violent offline, they engage in forums that celebrate multiple forms of violence as a means of social and political change. This in turn may lead typically depressed and non-violent individuals to engage in online or offline violence, justified by Black Pill and anti-feminist beliefs.

Present Study

Past research has established a link between inceldom and violent rhetoric (Kelly et al., 2021; Lindsay, 2021; Preston et al., 2021; Tranchese & Sugiura, 2021), as well as a link between inceldom and offline violent actions against women and support of such violence (Kelly et al., 2021; Speckhard et al., 2021). Research has not yet examined whether incels show different levels of support for different forms violence (i.e., terrorism, sexual assault). The current study

seeks to examine if there is a difference between incels, other members of the manosphere, and non-incels in their perception of and support for violence against women. It also seeks to determine if the type of violence influences opinions of incels regarding violence against women. Specifically, this study will examine if incels have more favorable views of terrorist attacks or of sexual assault against women, if both are motivated by incel ideology. This study has three main hypotheses:

H1: Men who identify as incels hold more negative opinions of women than the comparison groups of interest.

H2: Men who identify as incels express stronger support for violence against women than the comparison groups of interest.

H3: Men who identify as incels express stronger support for terrorism motivated by incel ideology compared to sexual assault motivated by incel ideology.

In addition to assessing views of women and violence, the study will also examine how incels internalize masculinity. This study has two hypotheses related to masculinity:

H4: Men who identify as incels express stronger support for traditional masculinity ideology than the comparison groups of interest.

H5: Men who identify as incels have higher levels of gender role conflict than the comparison groups of interest.

Method

Participants

Incels, the primary group of interest for the present study, are typically heterosexual cis-men. As such, only individuals who identify as cis-men over the age of 18 were invited to participate in the study. Participants were recruited from Reddit forums and other online

High School or GED	3	18.8	5	26.3	12	14.8	20	17.2
Some College	5	31.3	5	26.3	27	33.3	37	31.9
Bachelor's	5	31.3	5	26.3	23	28.4	33	28.4
Master's	1	6.3	2	10.5	10	12.3	13	11.2
Ph.D.	2	12.5	1	5.3	4	4.9	7	6.0
Other	0	0	1	5.3	5	6.2	6	5.2
Employment								
Unemployed	3	18.8	2	10.5	4	4.9	9	7.8
Student	5	31.3	5	26.3	22	27.2	32	27.6
Part-Time	1	6.3	0	0	8	9.9	9	7.8
Full-Time	7	43.8	12	63.2	47	58.0	66	56.9
Marital Status								
Single	15	93.8	9	47.4	47	58.0	71	61.2
Single, but in Relationship	0	0	2	10.5	12	14.8	14	12.1
Married	1	6.3	7	36.8	21	25.9	29	25.0
Divorced	0	0	0	0	1	1.2	1	0.9
Separated	0	0	1	5.3	0	0	1	0.9
Mental Health								
Worried About Symptoms ^a	14	87.5	13	68.4	55	67.9	82	70.7
Received Treatment ^a	10	62.5	6	31.6	29	35.8	45	38.8
Treatment Alleviated ^a Symptoms	3	18.8	5	26.3	21	25.9	29	25.0

Note. N = 116. Participants were on average 30.24 years old ($SD = 10.99$), and participant age did not differ by condition.

^a Reflects the number and percentage of participants answering “yes” to this question.

Procedure

The present study used a survey design, which was run through Qualtrics. The study procedures took place entirely online. The link to the survey and a brief study description were posted to online forums, and participants were invited to use the link to access and complete the survey on their phone or computer. Participants were not compensated for completing the survey. Participants first completed the consent procedures. Next, they were randomly assigned to read one of two vignettes, which are described in detail below. They then completed a series of

measures on views of violence, incelism, and masculinity, also described in detail below. And finally, participants were debriefed on the purpose of the survey.

Consent

Upon using the link to access the survey, participants were presented with a consent form. Participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to examine the opinions of men who are active online regarding perceptions of violence and masculinity. Participants were also informed that their answers are confidential and that the data gathered during the study would only be viewed by the researchers. They were informed that the risks to confidentiality were similar to the general risks to privacy associated with using the internet. If participants indicated that they consented to complete the survey, they were directed to the first section.

Debriefing

After completing the survey, the participants were directed to a debriefing form. The debriefing form explained the purpose of the study. Participants were reminded that their responses are confidential, and were asked if they still wished to participate or if they would like their responses to be excluded from analysis. Lastly, participants were provided with the contact information for the principal investigator and academic literature related to the present study.

Measures

Vignettes

Participants were randomly assigned to one of two vignette groups. The first group read the terrorism vignette, which described a terrorist attack in which female college students were the main targets and the suspect was a young man connected to incel groups online. The second group read the sexual assault vignette, which described the sexual assault of a female college student by a young man connected to incel groups online. While the details of the attacks

differed, three factors were the same: the victims were described as female students from a local college; the suspects were both described as a 22-year-old man; and the description of the suspects' connections to online incel forums were the same.

After reading the assigned vignette, all participants were directed to respond to a set of statements related to the vignette. One category of statements dealt with the victims of the attack (e.g., "The victim(s) represent an oppressive society that creates barriers to men"); another category of statements dealt with the suspect (e.g., "I understand why the suspect carried out the attack"); and the third category dealt with the use of violence (e.g., "Violence is more effective than political action"). This section contained 17 statements; of those 17 statements, 4 were victim-related, 6 were suspect-related, and 7 were violence-related.

Participants responded to a 7-point Likert scale for each statement, with 1 corresponding to "Strongly Disagree" and 7 corresponding to "Strongly Agree". The subscale and total scores were obtained by computing the mean score of the items. Low victim subscale scores were interpreted as support for the female victims, and high scores were interpreted as victim-blaming or a lack of sympathy for the female victims. Low suspect subscale scores were interpreted as not supporting the suspect and his actions, and high scores were interpreted as support for the suspect and his actions. Low total scores were interpreted as not supporting for violence against women, and high scores were interpreted as supporting violence against women.

Inceldom Measure

The second section of the survey was the inceldom measure, which measured the extent to which participants agreed with statements related to incel ideology or experiences. There were two categories of statements participants responded to. The first category contained statements concerning romantic relationships (e.g., I have been rejected based on my physical

attractiveness; Only plastic surgery would help me be successful in finding a sexual partner). The second category contained statements concerning women and feminism (e.g., Women are generally selfish and shallow; Feminism represents the breakdown of society). The block contained a total of 23 statements, 10 of which were related to romantic and sexual relationships and 13 of which were related to women and feminism.

Participants responded to a 7-point Likert scale for each statement, with 1 meaning “Strongly Disagree” and 7 meaning “Strongly Agree”. The total score and the score for each subscale was obtained by computing the mean score of the items. Low total scores were interpreted as low on incel characteristics, and high scores were interpreted as high on incel characteristics. Low relationship subscale scores were interpreted as positive views of experiences with romantic relationships, and high scores were interpreted as negative views of experiences with romantic relationships. Low women subscale scores were interpreted as positive views of women and feminism, and high scores were interpreted as negative views of women and feminism.

Male Role Norms Inventory-Short Form (MRNI-SF)

The third section of the survey was the Male Role Norms Inventory-Short Form (MRNI-SF). The MRNI was developed to measure an individual’s internalized cultural belief systems and attitudes toward masculinity (Levant et al., 2011). The Short Form version of the MRNI was used in this study to limit the number of statements or questions participants were asked to respond to. There are 7 subscales: Avoidance of Femininity (i.e., Men should watch football games instead of soap operas); Negativity toward Sexual Minorities (i.e., Homosexuals should never marry); Self-Reliance through Mechanical Skills (i.e., Men should have home improvement skills); Toughness (i.e., When the going gets tough, men should get tough);

Dominance (i.e., A man should always be the boss); Importance of Sex (i.e., A man should always be ready for sex); and Restrictive Emotionality (i.e., A man should never admit when others hurt his feelings). The MRNI-SF contains 21 items, with 3 items per subscale.

Participants responded to a 7-point Likert scale for each statement, with 1 meaning “Strongly Disagree” and 7 meaning “Strongly Agree”. The Total Scale score and the score for each subscale was obtained by computing the mean score of the items. High Total Scale scores indicate higher levels of endorsement of traditional masculinity ideology (Levant et al., 2011).

Levant et al. (2013) found that the MRNI-SF has concurrent validity with the Gender Role Conflict Scale (O’Neil et al., 1986), the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (Mahalik et al., 2003), and the Normative Male Alexithymia Scale (Levant et al., 2006). Reliability tests for the MRNI-Revised had two groups: European American and African American college students, and U.S. and Chinese College Students. The Cronbach alphas for the Total Scale scores were 0.84 and 0.88, respectively (Levant et al., 2007).

Gender Role Conflict Scale-Short Form (GRCS-SF)

The fourth section of the survey was the Gender Role Conflict Scale-Short Form (GRCS-SF). The GRCS-SF was developed to assess the degree to which “rigid, sexist, or restrictive gender roles result in personal restriction or devaluation of others or self” (O’Neil et al., 1995). The Short Form version of the GRCS was used in this study to limit the number of statements or questions participants were asked to respond to. There are 4 subscales: Success/Power/Competition (i.e., “I like to feel superior to other people”); Restrictive Emotionality (i.e., ‘I have difficulty expressing my tender feelings’); Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between men (i.e., “Hugging other men is difficult for me”); and Conflict Between

Work and Family Relations (i.e., “Finding time to relax is difficult for me”) (Wester & Vogel, 2012). The GRCS-SF contains 16 items, with 4 items per subscale.

Participants responded to a 6-point Likert scale for each statement, with 1 meaning “Strongly Disagree” and 6 meaning “Strongly Agree”. The total score and the score for each subscale was obtained by computing the mean score of the items. High total scores were interpreted as higher levels of conflict regarding male gender roles and gender norms (Levant et al., 2011).

O’Neil (2008) found that the GRCS has convergent validity with commonly used masculinity measures, as well as good construct and structural validity. Test-retest reliability for the GRCS was found to range from 0.72 to 0.86 (O’Neil, 2008). The internal consistencies for college students were found to range from 0.70 to 0.89 (O’Neil, 2008). The internal consistencies across diverse groups were found to range from 0.71 to 0.91 for men from Korea, Germany, Canada, Taiwan, and Sweden, as well as American men who identify as gay (O’Neil, 2008).

Demographics

The final section of the survey was the demographics section. This included a number of questions about the participants’ age, gender, ethnicity, education, marital status, and employment. There were also questions addressing experiences of mental health symptoms and treatment. Additionally, there were questions through which participants could self-identify as an incel or as a member of another manosphere community if appropriate.

Results

Multivariate Analysis

A one-way MANOVA was used to compare manosphere identification groups on the six measures. The three manosphere identification groups were referred to as incel, manosphere, and

non-manosphere (i.e., those who did not self-identify as belonging to any manosphere community). There was a statistically significant difference in mean scores based on manosphere identification, $F(12, 214) = 2.988$, $p < .001$, Wilk's $\Lambda = .734$ (see Table 2).

Table 2
Multivariate Tests^a

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Intercept					
Pillai's Trace	.959	417.855 ^b	6.00	107.00	<.001
Wilks' Lambda	.041	417.855 ^b	6.00	107.00	<.001
Hotelling's Trace	23.431	417.855 ^b	6.00	107.00	<.001
Roy's Largest Root	23.431	417.855 ^b	6.00	107.00	<.001
Manosphere Identification					
Pillai's Trace	.278	2.906	12.00	216.00	<.001
Wilks' Lambda	.734	2.988 ^b	12.00	214.00	<.001
Hotelling's Trace	.347	3.069	12.00	212.00	<.001
Roy's Largest Root	.294	5.289 ^c	6.00	108.00	<.001

^aDesign: Intercept + Manosphere Identification

^bComputed using alpha = .05

^cExact statistic

^dThe statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.

To determine which specific group mean scores were significantly different, post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test were conducted (see Table 3). Mean vignette scores revealed that the incel group ($M = 3.78$, $SD = .79$) reported significantly more support for violence than the non-manosphere group ($M = 3.06$, $SD = .68$). However, the incel group did not report significantly more support of violence compared to the manosphere group ($M = 3.42$, $SD = .94$).

Mean relationship subscores revealed that the incel group ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 1.38$) reported significantly lower levels of success in romantic and sexual relationships compared to the manosphere group ($M = 2.79$, $SD = .91$) and the non-manosphere group ($M = 2.76$, $SD = 1.1$). Mean

women subscores revealed that the incel group ($M = 4.67$, $SD = .66$) reported significantly more negative views about women and feminism compared to the non-manosphere group ($M = 3.62$, $SD = .89$); however, there was no significant difference on the women subscale between the incel group and the manosphere group ($M = 4.2$, $SD = 1.02$). And the mean inceldom scores revealed that the incel group ($M = 4.42$, $SD = .64$) endorsed more statements related to incel ideology compared to the manosphere group ($M = 3.65$, $SD = .84$) and the non-manosphere group ($M = 3.29$, $SD = .80$). These results suggest that the inceldom scale can differentiate between incel and non-incel individuals.

The incel group ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 1.28$) reported significantly higher levels of endorsement of traditional masculinity ideology compared to the non-manosphere group ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 1.05$) when compared on MRNI-SF scores. There was no significant difference between the incel group and the manosphere group ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 1.06$) for endorsement of traditional masculinity ideology. The mean GRCS-SF scores revealed that the incel group ($M = 3.70$, $SD = .78$) reported higher levels of conflict regarding male gender roles and gender norms compared to the non-manosphere group ($M = 3.20$, $SD = .73$). However, there was no significant difference between the incel group and the manosphere group ($M = 3.36$, $SD = .75$) when compared on GRCS-SF scores.

Table 3
Comparison of Manosphere Identification Groups on Survey Measures

Dependent Variable	(I) Manosphere Identification	(J) Manosphere Identification	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Vignette Score	Incel	Manosphere	.3565	.25140	.335	-.2406	.9537
		Non-Manosphere	.7180*	.20291	.002	.2360	1.1999
	Manosphere	Incel	-.3565	.25140	.335	-.9537	.2406
		Non-Manosphere	.3614	.18909	.140	-.0877	.8106

	Non-Manosphere	Incel	-.7180*	.20291	.002	-1.1999	-.2360
		Manosphere	-.3614	.18909	.140	-.8106	.0877
Relationship Score	Incel	Manosphere	1.2452*	.37801	.004	.3474	2.1431
		Non-Manosphere	1.2718*	.30510	<.001	.5471	1.9965
	Manosphere	Incel	-1.2452*	.37801	.004	-2.1431	-.3474
		Non-Manosphere	.0266	.28432	.995	-.6488	.7019
	Non-Manosphere	Incel	-1.2718*	.30510	<.001	-1.9965	-.5471
		Manosphere	-.0266	.28432	.995	-.7019	.6488
Women Score	Incel	Manosphere	.4636	.30135	.277	-.2522	1.1794
		Non-Manosphere	1.0518*	.24323	<.001	.4741	1.6295
	Manosphere	Incel	-.4636	.30135	.277	-.1794	.2522
		Non-Manosphere	.5882*	.22666	.029	.0498	1.1266
	Non-Manosphere	Incel	-1.0518*	.24323	<.001	-1.6295	-.4741
		Manosphere	-.5882*	.22666	.029	-1.1266	-.0498
Inceldom Score	Incel	Manosphere	.7695*	.26796	.013	.1330	1.4059
		Non-Manosphere	1.1372*	.21627	<.001	.6235	1.6509
	Manosphere	Incel	-.7695*	.26796	.013	-1.4059	-.1330
		Non-Manosphere	.3677	.20154	.166	-.1110	.8464
	Non-Manosphere	Incel	-1.1372*	.21627	<.001	-1.6509	-.6235
		Manosphere	-.3677	.20154	.166	-.8464	.1110
MRNI-SF Score	Incel	Manosphere	.1208	.36888	.943	-.7554	.9970
		Non-Manosphere	.8362*	.29772	.016	.1291	1.5434
	Manosphere	Incel	-.1208	.36888	.943	-.9970	.7554
		Non-Manosphere	.7155*	.27745	.030	-1.3745	-.0565
	Non-Manosphere	Incel	-.8362*	.29772	.016	-1.5434	-.1291
		Manosphere	-.7155*	.27745	.030	-1.3745	-.0565
GRCS-SF Score	Incel	Manosphere	.3446	.25125	.359	-.2522	.9414
		Non-Manosphere	.5066*	.20279	.037	.0249	.9883
	Manosphere	Incel	-.3446	.25125	.359	-.9414	2.522
		Non-Manosphere	.1620	.18897	.668	-.2868	.6109
	Non-Manosphere	Incel	-.5066*	.20279	.037	-.9883	-.0249
		Manosphere	-.1620	.18897	.668	-.6109	.2868

Based on observed means.

The error term is Mean Square(Error) = .548.

Note: N = 115 for the MANOVA due to one non-manosphere participant not completing all of the scales.

*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Univariate Analysis

A two-way ANOVA (see Table 4) revealed that there was not a statistically significant interaction between manosphere identification and vignette assignment on the vignette score, which indicates support for violence ($F(2, 110) = .055, p = .947$). The simple main effects analysis showed that manosphere identification did have a statistically significant effect on vignette scores ($p = .002$), meaning manosphere identification has a significant effect on support for violence. This is supported by the findings in multivariate analysis described above. However, simple main effects analysis showed that vignette assignment did not have a statistically significant effect on vignette scores ($p = .725$). Thus, these results do not provide evidence that the type of violence and manosphere identification interact regarding support for violence, but manosphere identification may alone impact support for violence.

Table 4

Manosphere Identification and Vignette Assignment Effect on Support for Violence

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	776.089	1	1.648	1396.001	<.001
Vignette	.069	1	.069	.124	.725
Manosphere Identification	7.30	2	3.650	6.566	.002
Vignette * Manosphere	.061	2	.030	.055	.947
Error	61.153	110	.556		

Discussion

The findings of the present study provide evidence that incels hold more negative views on women and feminism compared to non-incels, consistent with prior research showing that incels hold hostile views towards women and feminism (Glance et al., 2020; Hoffman et al., 2020; Laskovtsov, 2020; Lindsay, 2021; O'Connor, 2021). The inceldom scale, created in part by using

the findings from prior research on how incels view women and feminism, was able to differentiate between incels and non-incels. This scale, if further developed, could be beneficial in future research on the incel and manosphere communities.

Our findings also provide evidence that incels, when compared to non-incels, are more likely to support violence motivated by incel ideology where women are the primary targets. Past research has shown that incel forums are dominated by violent rhetoric that promotes violence against women, and that the forums contain celebrations of terrorist attacks and sexual domination over women (Kelly et al., 2021; Lindsay, 2021; Tranchese & Sugiura, 2021). Past research has also found that incels have a slightly higher incidence of violent ideation compared to non-incels, and that incels have higher levels of embraced misogyny that is linked to a higher likelihood of violent ideation (Speckhard et al., 2021). The results of the present study support prior research by demonstrating that incels indicated higher levels of support for violence compared to non-incels. However, within the incel group, there was no significant difference in the support of violence between those who read the terrorism vignette and those who read the sexual assault vignette, suggesting that incels may harbor a more generalized, rather than specific, support for violence.

Our findings also suggest that incels are more likely to hold more traditional views of masculinity and to experience higher levels of conflict regarding male gender roles, compared to non-incels. This supports prior research that has found that incel ideology is centered around hegemonic and traditional masculinity that contributes to a hierarchy that places incels at the bottom (Hoffman et al., 2020; Laskovtsov, 2020; Tranchese & Sugiura, 2021). The present study suggests that constrictive, traditional views of masculinity are common among incels. These

views of masculinity may contribute to negative opinions of women and the feminist ideology, as well as contribute to support for violence.

While our findings were significant, the present study has limitations that may impact the findings. The study had a relatively small sample of incel (n = 16) and manosphere (n = 19) participants. Due to the hostility expressed by forum users regarding “liberal academia” and women, it was difficult for the researchers to reach individuals in these communities who were open to participating. The small sample of incel and manosphere participants is also related to a short data collection period. Calls for participants were posted for about two months on the forums that could be accessed. More time to both find accessible forums and to post the survey link may have yielded more incel and manosphere participants. Additionally, accessible forums were hard to find, as many incel forums on Reddit and other sites are insular and do not allow posts from researchers. Additionally, many incel forums that have been used in past research (i.e., r/Braincels, incel.net) were banned or shut down prior to data collection for the present study. These forums often hosted more extremist posts compared to other active forums. Because these forums were not accessible during data collection, incels who hold more extremist beliefs could not be reached directly and they would be less likely to have the opportunity to participate. As most incels are non-violent (Speckhard et al., 2021), it is likely that the participants in the present study may be representative of the majority of incels. But in order to better understand how extremist incel rhetoric can lead to support for violence or violent action, incels who hold extremist beliefs need to be reached. Future research should seek to compare violent incels with non-violent incels to identify the characteristics that predict violence. There are also potential limitations to the non-manosphere group, as some participants that did not self-identify as members of a manosphere community may still interact with manosphere forums and hold

similar beliefs. This may in turn skew the results from the larger population of non-manosphere men on the Internet, who may not interact with manosphere forums. Thus, there may be more significant differences between incels and non-incels that could not be captured with the sample for the present study.

Another limitation of the present study is that the inceldom scale is untested, and thus the validity and reliability of this scale is not known. While the results of the present study suggest that the inceldom scale can differentiate between incels and non-incels, further development of the scale is needed. Development of this scale may be useful for future research that is focused on incel ideology as it can help to identify participants who hold incel-related beliefs. Future research should also consider looking at what beliefs contribute most significantly to support for violence among incels, or what beliefs contribute most significantly to the carrying out of violent acts. Understanding how different belief systems (i.e., political, religious, ideas about gender roles and norms) interact with incel ideology could reveal why this group tends to engage in violent discussions online, and what drives some to act on their violent ideation. As incels continue to be considered a security threat in the United States, understanding these interactions could help security agencies better predict when violence could occur offline. Additionally, understanding the appeals of incel ideology and how other beliefs may contribute to individuals' accepting an extremist ideology could help with the creation of intervention programs for those engaging with incel and other manosphere communities.

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