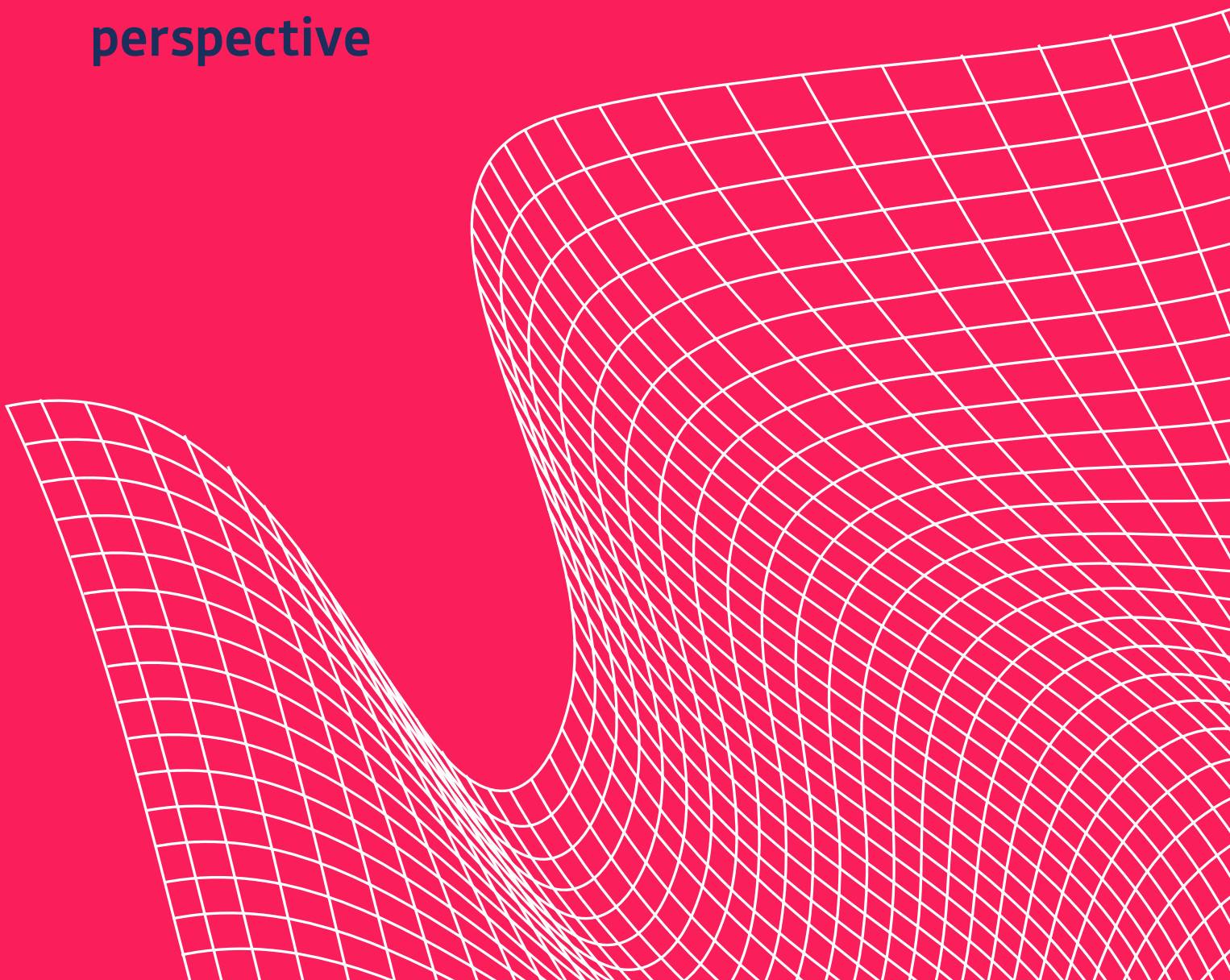# Tracing Online Misogyny

An analysis of misogynist ideologies and practices from a German-international perspective

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bag Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft **GEGEN HASS IM NETZ**

DAS NETTZ

textgain

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1

Introduction

Digital hate directed against women is a pressing issue that has been a public concern for years. Women are systematically attacked and denigrated on the internet. According to a recent representative study by the competence network against online hate[1], women are one of the groups that are most frequently affected by digital hate. At the same time few mechanisms have been developed to protect them.

When women take part in online discourse, they do so under the fear of harassment, leading many to avoid speaking out publicly. This concerning status quo renders the voices of many women unheard, leaving the virtual realm to those who use misogynistic rhetoric. Moreover, this development must be considered against the backdrop of a broader anti-feminist backlash in Western societies.

Investigating the extent and functioning of misogyny online is extremely critical, especially as virtual behavior may reflect more than just offline behavior: It can also serve to aggravate deepening anti-democratic attitudes, and even manifest itself in radical forms and lead to physical violence and murder – such as is the case in the Incels (Involuntary Celibates) subculture. ❶

This report combines quantitative and qualitative approaches to capture the scope and dynamics of online misogyny. Within this framework, we systematize pertinent practices, platforms and subcultures that appear online in connection with organized and non-organized forms of discrimination and violence against women,

The research focuses on Germany, but to truly understand how the phenomenon manifests within the German geographical scope, we need to perform a comparison within different countries and languages. For comparison purposes, we chose the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands on the one hand, because they traditionally have a lot in common with Germany, and on the other hand, Slovakia, because we also wanted to include an Eastern European country.

We likewise investigate subcultural milieus that feed into a particularly aggressive online misogyny: The Incel movement and pick-up artists, who both communicate misogynistic beliefs to young men, in particular. Our in-depth case studies highlight this assessment against the background of an extensive map of misogynistic online phenomena.

1.1. State of the art

Research on hate and discrimination against women has applied diverse terms and used different research agendas. The most common of these include: digital violence, hate speech, cyber hate and cyber harassment. While these terms refer to specific dimensions of hate against women, the term "misogyny" provides a broader cultural perspective encompassing various forms of harm, "either directly in the form of psychological, professional, reputational, or, in some cases, physical harm; or indirectly, in the sense that it makes the internet a less equal, less safe, or less inclusive space for women and girls".[2] By using this term, we are able to cap-

ture a spectrum of discrimination and hate that reflects our methodological approach of identifying phenomena in a transnational manner.

Past research has frequently viewed online misogyny as a tool or gateway to extremist ideologies – be it Islamism or right-wing extremism. However, there is also a specific dynamic of hatred against women expressed on mainstream platforms and in fringe forums – following a certain logic that, in turn, gives rise to its own communities. These (quite diverse) communities are linked by the common ideology of male superiority. Their guiding ideologies are translated into social media formats that appeal to young men and reach millions of people – with influencers such as Andrew Tate serving as one of the most visible examples. Overall, research on online misogyny cuts across different areas of research addressing ❶ gendered relationships and anti-feminist discourses in online contexts and ❷ subcultures and networks that turn against women and feminists with the aim of backtracking on progress and emancipation.

❶ In recent years, anti-feminist discourse has turned into a binding element among various virtual discourses of white and male supremacy. This counter-discourse of so-called male supremacy is a direct response to feminist-emancipative progressive internet cultures.[3] The effects of this toxic tech-culture dominated by discourses of male supremacy is visible across numerous ideologically motivated attacks in both digital and analog realms. The campaigns of different subcultures and actors clearly exhibit the unifying elements of anti-feminism and misogyny.[4] Here, actors focus on presenting "counter-gendered" perspectives intended to undermine emancipatory strategies. This discourse has been bearing fruit and has led to online attacks against women and members of the LGBTQ+ community. Online campaigns such as Gamergate have managed to mobilize actors from different segments of society, also manifesting beyond the digital space. Misogyny expressed online has contributed to terrorist attacks worldwide, including the Incel attacks by Elliot R. (2014), Alek M. (2018) and (to an extent) Stephan B. – the perpetrator of the attack in Halle (2019).

❷ Research to date on misogynistic online subcultures has focused a great deal of attention on so-called Incels. These actors form part of a broader manosphere that organizes and mobilizes itself online against women and feminism.[5] While Incels were initially primarily considered to be a North American community, thereby receiving little attention in the German research landscape, international focus began growing after an attacker drove his van into a crowd of people in Toronto in 2018. A number of salient features characterizing these Incel forums were quickly identified: misogyny, anti-feminism, queerphobia, racism, the glorification and the incitement to violence.[6] Initially deemed to be a clear "fringe community", this phenomenon transnationally plugged into a developing misogynist and anti-feminist manosphere and movements such as Men

Going Their Own Way (MGTOW). As a consequence, the toxic and dangerous mindset of Incels has now managed to spread globally, interconnecting with more widespread misogynist ideologies. We may observe that Incel ideology and its coded language (e.g. "Roastie", "Chad", "Tyrone", "Black Pill" and "Go ER") is also spreading across mainstream online platforms, i.e. outside of exclusive Incel forums, including in Germany. Nevertheless, a significant research gap persists in terms of a systematic analysis of Incel ideology in German. Closing this gap is crucial, as this ideology is inciting hatred towards women and can also be viewed as a form of extremism.[7] Using victim narratives, Incels forward the idea that the persistence of (unattractive) men can only be guaranteed by seriously harming the out-group, namely women – thereby justifying violence against them, even femicide.

1.2. Research questions

While numerous qualitative studies have been conducted on national-level phenomena, specific campaigns and global currents and narratives, little quantified knowledge has been developed on the spread of online misogyny. Given this gap, this study investigates the national and transnational spread of narratives and networks of online misogyny, specifically asking: What are the most widespread narratives of online misogyny, in particular within Incel subculture? Where do they spread? Which networks and subcultures specifically spread hate? At the same time, we aim to contextualize our findings within a broader research framework, considering: How are these narratives related to the anti-feminist countermovement in European societies, especially in Germany? What specific elements can be identified in the German context compared to other countries?

1.3. Context considerations

This report is the outcome of a collaboration effort between Das NETTZ, the Network Against Hate Online, in Germany and the technology company Textgain in Belgium, as part of the work conducted by the Federal Association for Countering Online Hate (BAG »Gegen Hass im Netz«). The four-month pilot project was developed in close cooperation between the two organizations along with Dr. Sylvia Jaki (University of Hildesheim) and it builds on the work of the European Observatory of Online Hate (EOOH). The present report is the publication of our results.
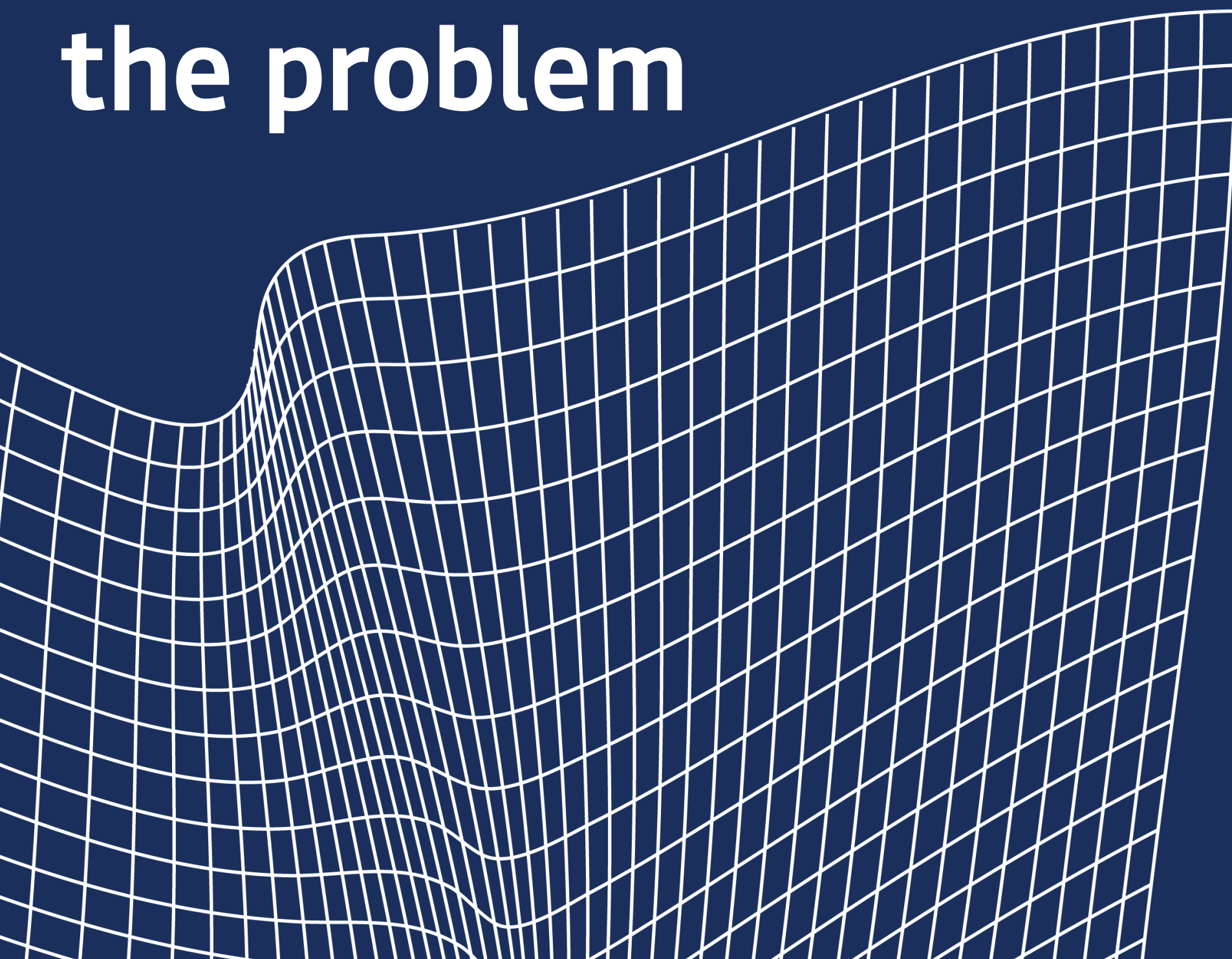
For the qualitative section, the Das NETTZ staff worked together with the expert Karolin Schwarz. In addition, expert opinions from specialists were gathered to deepen the study's individual focus areas. We would like to thank Berlin criminal lawyer Christina Clemm, researcher Catherine Baker from Dublin City University and our expert on extremism and disinformation, Richard Kuchta.

Finally, we would like to highlight that this report uses gender-neutral language only in part. We deliberately use gendered language to shed a clearer light on the masculinist ideology and movement, which are based on ideas of binary gender relations and continue to strongly represent these. This underlying idea should also be reproduced unchanged in the investigation of corresponding movements.

2
Classification of the problem

Digital assaults and attacks on women assume various forms, ranging from transgressive behavior to criminal acts. They result from unstructured interactions that take place on digital platforms and are also organized to varying degrees and linked to different subcultures that exchange information via open forums, semi-open chats and even restricted-access web portals. Platforms as well as policy-makers often lack a clear overview of this rapidly shifting landscape, thereby making it difficult to adequately respond to the associated challenges.

This chapter first aims to systematize existing forms of misogynistic online attacks to identify as many of its facets as possible. In the second part, the more or less organized forces behind these attacks are presented and classified in an attempt to outline the shape of the structure of misogynistic subcultures.

2.1. Typology of misogynist attacks online

Women are exposed to a variety of different and overlapping forms of attacks online, which can occur both individually and be interconnected. The 2018 study "Toxic Twitter"[8] by Amnesty International uses examples to show that these are not only directed at women who are in the public eye, i.e. politicians, journalists or activists, but also women in general. Moreover, women are not only targeted due to their gender, but attacks can also include other forms of discrimination such as racism, antisemitism, queerphobia or hostility towards disabled individuals.

Many attacks on women are criminal under the law. For this reason, we asked Christina Clemm, a lawyer specialized in intimate partner violence as well as gender-specific and sexualized violence, for a legal assessment of when and to what extent forms of harassment, deprecation and threats of violence constitute criminal acts under the law. The following table presents a typology of different forms of assault followed by a detailed description.

Form of attack	Definition and examples	Legal situation
Disparaging appearance	Derogatory or mocking comments about appearance, weight, clothing, make-up etc.	Punishable as an insult according to Section 185 of the German Civil Code (StGB) (insults are disrespectful or statements lacking due consideration regarding a person in word, image, writing and gesture. A person is degraded or portrayed as being inferior, i.e. their personal honor or their claim to worth is attacked); defamation according to Section 187 of the German Civil Code (defamation constitutes deliberate allegations or the dissemination of defamatory statements of fact that can be proven as false) or slander according to Section 186 (slander involves allegations or the dissemination of defamatory statements of fact that cannot be proven with certainty). As a rule, these are prosecuted on the basis of a criminal complaint by the affected party. If this party is a "person of political life", penalty under Section 188 may also be heightened.
Portrayal of women as intellectually or physically inferior	Comments about the supposed lack of qualifications for certain professions (management positions, "traditionally" male professions), sports (soccer) or journalistic reporting (on technology or sports)	If specific persons are addressed, these comments may also be punishable as libel, slander or defamation (see above).

Form of attack	Definition and examples	Legal situation
Rejection of equal rights	Rejection of all equality measures, including attacks on or disparagement of individuals or groups who campaign for equality	If specific persons are addressed, these comments may also be punishable as libel, slander or defamation (see above). If entire groups of people are targeted (e.g. "Feminists are ugly"), prosecution for group incitement is also possible according to Section 130 of the German Civil Code. (The Cologne Higher Regional Court, 1 RVs 77/20, declared the following statement to constitute incitement to hatred: "What are women made for? For reproduction! The woman is closer to animals, the man to heavenly beings"). Attacks, such as threatening to commit an unlawful act due to sexual self-determination, physical integrity, personal freedom or against an object of significant value may be punishable as a threat under Section 241 of the German Civil Code.
Anti-feminist devaluation	Mockery of feminism/feminists, portrayal of feminism as a threat	Generally not punishable. If specific persons are addressed, these comments may also be punishable as insults, defamation or slander or even incitement to hatred (see above).

Form of attack	Definition and examples	Legal situation
Sexualized deprecation	Degradation of women as objects of male sexual gratification and dominance	If specific persons are addressed, this may also be punishable as insult, slander or defamation (see above). Possibly punishable under Section 130 of the German Civil Code.
Rejection of sexual self-determination	Assertion that women are obliged to have sex in marriage/relationship, legitimization of rape, rejection of abortion	Not punishable but covered by freedom of expression. Possibly punishable as incitement to hatred within the meaning of Section 130 of the German Civil Code (see above).

Form of attack	Definition and examples	Legal situation
Gendered disinformation	False reports; fake accounts to allegedly expose the person attacked; dissemination of alleged nude photos	Creating a fake account is not in itself a criminal offense. However, distributing photos of another person may be a criminal offense under Sections 33, 22 et seq. of the German Artistic Copyright Act (KUG) may be considered. In most cases, forwarding sexual images or videos will fall under this offense. However, the injured party must be recognizable in the image. If, for example, the images only contain exposed private parts without head and facial features (or if pixelated), a case-by-case decision needs to be made as to whether the other physical features are sufficient for identification. If such content is repeatedly disseminated and there is a possibility that the affected party may be significantly impaired in life, criminal liability for stalking pursuant to Section 238 (1) no. 7 of the German Civil Code may also be considered.
Victim blaming	Claims that women are responsible for insults, threats and violence, including sexualized violence	No applicable criminal liability, libel or defamation may be considered, in principle (see above).

Form of attack	Definition and examples	Legal situation
Threat/glorification of violence including sexualized violence and murder	Threats of violence, approval or glorification of violence, sexualized violence and murder	Possible criminal liability for threats under Section 241 of the German Civil Code (a threat exists if someone threatens a person with the execution of an unlawful act due to sexual self-determination, physical integrity, personal freedom or against an object of significant value. The same applies to threatening to commit a crime against this person or a person close to them or who, against their better judgment, pretends to a person that a crime against them or a person close to them is about to be committed). Threat of rape/sexualized violence: Possible criminal liability for threats under Section 241 (1) of the German Civil Code (see above). Death threats: Possible criminal liability for threats under Section 241 (1) of the German Civil Code (see above).
Dehumanization	Depiction of women as animals or objects	Possible criminal liability for incitement to hatred according to § 130 of the German Civil Code (see above).

Form of attack	Definition and examples	Legal situation
Coordinated harassment and threats	Community harassment, coordinated on or off platforms where attacks take place	All of the offenses described above can be considered here, depending on the specific form of harassment. Possible criminal liability for stalking according to Section 238 of the German Civil Code (see below).
Exposure/blackguarding at work, school, university or so-cial environment	Partially coordinated letter from an employer, school, university etc. with the aim of exclusion (loss of job, expulsion from school) or social ostracism	Possible criminal liability for defamation, slander, possibly also stalking. See above.
Doxing	Publication of private data such as an email address, telephone number or address with the aim of generating threats and assaults or creating a perception of actual or perceived threat among those affected	Punishable under Section 126a of the German Civil Code for "endangering dissemination of personal data"
Social engineering	Deception and attack under false pretenses or by assuming a different identity with the aim of obtaining data or content that can be used to threaten or expose those attacked	Possible criminal liability for spying on data pursuant to Section 202a of the German Civil Code or threats pursuant to Section 241
Voyeuristic videos and upskirting	Typically unrecognized filming of women in public, including filming of the upper body or secret filming under skirts or dresses. These videos are often published on social media or porn platforms.	Upskirting punishable according to Section 184 k of the German Civil Code Dissemination of the secretly made recordings is punishable under Section 201a StGb and, if applicable, Section 22, Section 33 of the German Artistic Copyright Act

Form of attack	Definition and examples	Legal situation
Revenge porn	Non-consensual publication of video footage of sexual acts, which may or may not be consensual	Criminal liability under Section 201a of the German Civil Code (violation of the most personal sphere of life and personal rights through image recordings) If repeated stalking occurs in a way that is likely to significantly impair the life of the affected party, criminal liability for stalking pursuant to Section 238 (1) no. 6 of the German Civil Code may be considered.
Creation of non-consensual pornographic deep fakes	Use of profile pictures etc. to create pornographic material using generative AI without the consent of the affected party	Possible criminal liability according to Section 22, Section 33 of the German Artistic Copyright Act If repeated in a way that is likely to significantly impair the life of the injured person, criminal liability for stalking pursuant to Section 238 (1) no. 7 of the German Civil Code may be considered.

Form of attack	Definition and examples	Legal situation
Stalking	Obsessive stalking via various communication channels, both publicly in comments and especially via private messages	All forms of criminal liability under Section 238 of the German Civil Code are possible here. Section 238 (1) nos. 5 to 7 of the German Civil Code covers certain forms of cyberstalking: Section 238 (1) no. 5 is intended to cover cases in which the perpetrator uses software (an app) specially designed for stalking and gains access to the victim's e-mail or social media contacts via hacking methods. Section 238 (1) no. 6 covers the dissemination of images of the victim or persons close to the victim together with associated text messages. Section 238 (1) no. 7 covers cases in which texts or drawings are distributed under the pretense of the victim's authorship, thereby endangering the victim's reputation – e.g. through the use of highly sexualized language.

Disparaging appearance

Derogatory statements about the external characteristics of a woman's appearance is one of the most common forms of digital attack,[9] expressed either directly at an individual or as a comment without direct address. Such attacks are often statements pointing to a supposed deficit of the individual compared to some imagined standard female image or cliché presented as an ideal – particularly focused on physical attractiveness.[10] Women who are in the public eye such as activists, journalists, politicians and or experts (climate researchers, virologists, doctors or lawyers) can be the targets of direct attacks. Concurrently, women can be the victim of attacks when photos of them are available on the internet, such as on social media profiles and employer websites, or specifically uploaded to ridicule.

Attacks can address a range of external characteristics such as weight, facial features, make-up and clothing. Prominent cases of hateful attacks of this kind include insults directed at the co-chair of the Green Party, Ricarda Lang[11]. Women can be the target of such attacks when their physical appearance does not accord with the expectations of an attacker, such as a cover photo in Vogue Magazine showing pop singer Helene Fischer without make-up, which became the target of numerous derogatory and insulting reactions.[12] Insults aimed at the appearance can also be combined with associated attacks or attacks on the victim's family.

Depiction of women as mentally and physically inferior

Insults of this kind are repeatedly directed at women in certain professions or activities traditionally associated with being male[13] as well as those who play certain sports. These attacks can be expressed as a general devaluing of all women, even manifesting in the rejection of women's right to vote.[14] In this context, the female physiology is frequently cited as supposed proof of their inferiority.[15]

Prominent examples include insults directed at ZDF soccer commentator Claudia Neumann[16], who has found success in a once male-dominated field and is confronted with online hate. Another example is that of female gamers who fall victim to misogynistic online hate while gaming or streaming.[17] This has led many of them to avoid identifying themselves as women, with usernames that are not clearly feminine.

Rejection of equal rights

The aggressive rejection of equality measures often goes hand in hand with the portrayal of women as mentally and/or physically inferior. For example, attackers claim that women in certain professional, political, social or athletic positions[18] owe their success not to their qualifications but to gender equality measures, especially quotas. Added to this is the aggressive rejec-

tion of gender equality measures as well as attacks on individuals, groups and institutions supposedly or actually involved in their planning and advocacy. Those affected can include female ministers and female party leaders.

Anti-feminist devaluation

Anti-feminist attacks are a core element of right to far-right agitation as well as organized misogynist actors, as in the case of the MGTOW scene.[19] Moreover, a pejorative attitude vis-à-vis feminism and feminists can be connected to and resonate with other political camps. The range of deprecation is broad: for example, feminists are stereotypically described as ugly, undesirable or sexually frustrated. Feminism is also portrayed as a threat and described, for example, by far-right activists as a "cancer" or as part of an alleged conspiracy against the Western world. Threats are repeatedly made in connection with such allegations. Anti-feminist conspiracy beliefs can also be found in the writings and propaganda material of right-wing terrorists. For example, the right-wing terrorist Stephan B. – who carried out an antisemitic and racist attack in Halle in October 2019 – identified feminism as part of the conspiracy theory called the "great replacement".[20]

Sexualized deprecation

Women often face online attacks that focus on their alleged suitability for intimate relationships or sexual contact. These attacks can arise on the basis of the public appearance, social media presence or posts by women on social networks, even if the posts are not directly related to topics such as relationships or sexuality. These attacks are often accompanied by disparaging dehumanizing remarks about a woman's appearance and are spread in the form of comments, posts or private messages. For example, the appearance of female athletes is sexualized and commented on in terms of their supposed "femininity" or "masculinity".[21] In this sense, women get reduced to the role of a sexually available object.

Rejection of physical and sexual self-determination

Even years after marital rape was criminalized, the viewpoint persists that women in relationships or marriage are obliged to regularly engage in sexual acts. This narrative is also repeatedly reinforced by influencers from the Pick-up Artist sector and followers of the "Red Pill" ideology.

Additionally, attackers promote an aggressive rejection of abortion in general, often regardless of the context behind a decision to terminate. This gets expressed, for example, in the form of insults, threats and harassment towards women campaigning for abortion rights or those whose abortions have become publicly known. This rejection is also expressed in insults and threats against counseling centers or doctors who perform

abortions. Lists of "abortionists" along with the names and addresses of abortion doctors and clinics have come to circulate online. As abortions are often contextualized as murder and the doctors as murderers, these lists can be understood as enemy lists. We also find statements drawing comparisons with the Holocaust, using terms such as "Babycaust".[23]

Gendered disinformation

This sub-area of disinformation can readily be observed on the internet and, in particular, across various platforms and messengers. The associated narratives, false reports and concerted disinformation campaigns often lead to the further spread of misogynistic stereotypes and sexualized attacks. The main aim of these acts is to attack women, question their abilities and careers or even ridicule them.

An example of this type of attack includes the false reports about Annalena Baerbock, particularly those spread during the 2021 Bundestag election campaign for chancellor. In this case, a picture was spread supposedly showing a nude photo taken of Ms. Baerbock in her youth – but, in reality, it was a different woman. Women who are experts in their field and/or hold important public posts (political, social or economic) are pigeonholed, having their roles undermined and called into question.

Victim blaming

This frequently recurring online practice attributes blame to women who are affected by insults, threats, sexualized violence and other forms of violence – such as when a woman is blamed for the assaults to which she has been or is being subjected. This is also evident, for example, whenever women are accused of being partly to blame or guilty if they are aggressively attacked and threatened with violence after making potentially polarizing statements public online. In this case, it is not the perpetrators who are held responsible for their attacks, but rather the women are deemed to be partly responsible or portrayed as the cause of the violence.

Especially in the context of acts of violence, and in particular sexualized violence, blame often rests with women on account of her clothing, whereabouts, behavior or even alcohol consumption, suggesting that such behaviors provoked the subsequent acts.[24]

Threat/glorification of violence, sexualized violence and murder

The threat and glorification of violence, including sexualized violence and murder, has become commonplace on the internet.[25] The intention here is often to intimidate the targets and force them from social media and, in turn, public discourse. In some cases, intentions of committing acts of

violence cannot be ruled out. Apart from public social media posts, threats are also spread via private messages, email or phone calls, such as when private data is published in "doxings". Death threats are frequently made in the context of enemy lists. In connection with threatening messages from "NSU 2.0", women, in particular, including politicians, lawyers and comedians, have been targeted with particularly vulgar fantasies of violence and murder.[26] In the case of the lawyer Seda Başay-Yıldız, these death threats also made reference to her child and other family members.

The glorification of violence, including sexualized violence and murder, are found in comments about acts of violence expressing agreement that those affected deserved the violent attack or even death. Attacks by perpetrators who are known misogynists or Incels often receive considerable online support.[27]

Dehumanization

Women are often dehumanized online, individually or as a group, by being portrayed as inferior to men, devoid of their own personality or rights and reduced to a sexual object. Incels dehumanize women, for example, using the term "femoids"[28] or "foids", a portmanteau of the words "female" and "android" or "female" and "void", along with other terms that compare women to animals.[29] (See chapter 3.1)

Coordinated harassment and threats

Outright harassment and threat campaigns arise time and again, directed at individual women, a group of women or organizations that stand up for the interests of women. Some such campaigns last months or even years. The associated attacks can be coordinated informally via comments and posts on social media or via dedicated communication channels such as forums and chats in messenger apps like Telegram or Discord. They frequently include tips on how to use the different functions offered by social media platforms, how to create (fake) accounts and how to generate ready-made graphics or texts.

One example is a campaign known as "Gamergate" from 2014, which manifested itself in attacks and threats against women in the games industry and their supporters. It included doxings, aggressive insults, threats of violence and death.

Exposure/denigration at work, school, university or social environment

Another common tactic is contacting the employers, schools, universities or social environment with demands for dismissal or social ostracism in retaliation to statements made by women digitally or in interviews –

sometimes orchestrated in a coordinated manner. Contact is often made to "punish" the woman in question for her public statements and force her from the debate. While the statements being responded to are rarely polemical, responses are almost always followed by threats to their economic and social existence. Employers, educational institutions or even families and friends can also be targeted to exert pressure on the women concerned.

Doxing

This act involves publishing private data such as email addresses, telephone numbers or home addresses without the consent of the affected party. The consequences of this can be serious: the affected women are repeatedly forced to change their phone numbers due to temporary or constant stalking. In extreme cases, doxing can even force women to temporarily or permanently leave their home due to concerns for their safety. Apart from being emotionally stressful, this situation can bring with it considerable costs and organizational challenges. Once the data has been published, it is often difficult or even impossible to permanently delete it.[30]

Social engineering

The aim of social engineering attacks is often to obtain information, such as the private address of a woman in order to dox her or get a target to say or disclose things not meant for the public domain – which are then published with the aim of exposing her. An example here includes a series of threats made by self-proclaimed "NSU 2.0", where calls were made to a female journalist's editorial office to obtain her address and other private data.[31]

Voyeuristic videos and upskirting

Regularly, images and videos of women that have been secretly recorded without their consent are posted online.[32] This can include "upskirting", i.e. the undetected filming or photographing of women under their skirts or dresses, or similar videos and photos. Such material is also often uploaded to pornographic platforms, without the consent of the women depicted.

Revenge porn

This refers to the publication of intimate photos or videos of former partners or those depicting sexual acts with a former partner without their consent. This material is then uploaded to pornographic platforms or social media or messaged to employers, schools, classmates, fellow students or friends and family. Revenge porn is often published in retaliation for a

perceived rejection or break-up with the aim of humiliating the targeted women. Narratives of victim blaming can also frequently be observed in this context, by which the women are blamed for having been involved in the creation of the photos or videos.[33]

Creation of non-consensual pornographic deep fakes

The ongoing development of generative AI has also given rise to new tools used to attack women. They are regularly confronted with pornographic material purportedly of them but actually generated by AI tools. Today, deep fakes of this kind account for a large proportion of all deep fakes found online.[34] New apps and filters used to this end are constantly being published – including a Telegram bot[35] that was used to generate pornographic material with the faces of thousands of women. Most recently, in late 2023, several apps emerged, the sole purpose of which is to "undress" women using generative AI. While most large social networks quickly reacted to this development by altering search functions, X (formerly Twitter) initially failed to take any action.[36] In December 2023, a case in Australia also came to light in which teachers and students were affected by generated fakes.[37]

Stalking

Online stalking or cyberstalking refers to continued, unwanted and often obsessive following and harassment of a person via digital media and platforms. The attacks often take place over months or even years. Women affected by online stalking experience repeated, unwanted contact through messages, emails, comments on social media or doxing. Stalkers rely on the anonymity and reach of the internet in order to intimidate their victims and invade their privacy.

2.2. Typology of misogynist subcultures

The attacks on women described above often appear to be mere unstructured acts of deprecation and insults. However, networks and subcultures exist that specifically promote the abusive, derogatory treatment of women. In addition to providing materials or planning joint actions, they also encourage the exploitation of women and fantasies of violence. We identify five networks and subcultures of the so-called manosphere operating transnationally that implicitly or explicitly drive misogynistic trends on the internet. We present each below:

❶ outlining their underlying beliefs and narratives,
❷ identifying important platforms they use,
❸ highlighting their targeting patterns and
❹ tracing the forms of organization among their respective scenes.

Red Pill

"In the eyes of Red Pill supporters, the "deception" consists of a patriarchal-masculinist world order that has become unhinged through manipulation and brainwashing by feminists and even "Jewish globalists". [...] [S]tereotypes of masculinity dominate spaces toward which Red Pill adherents orientate themselves."

The world of the manosphere represents a conglomerate of different masculinist movements and subcultures in which the pill metaphor is widely used. This idea began with the "Red Pill", in reference to the movie "The Matrix", in which the protagonist is given the choice between a red and a blue pill. The blue pill means continuing to live in a simulated reality while the red pill means awakening and entering the real world. This premise has inspired masculinists around the world, with the red pill metaphor spreading globally.

While based on the movie, the metaphor here is a non-fictional reference to reality. In the eyes of Red Pill supporters, the "deception" consists of a patriarchal-masculinist world order that has become unhinged through manipulation and brainwashing by feminists and even "Jewish globalists".[38] Men who opt for the (metaphorical) blue pill experience different consequences: they experience the ridicule and malice of those who see themselves as hegemons within this social analysis. At the same time, they are viewed as holding a certain patriarchal potential that can still be tapped into.

The pillars of Red Pill ideology are very different. Essentially, this ideology is defined by a mantra-like repetition of the idea of a social complex. This is fantasized in terms of gender, reflecting old patriarchal ideas of a social life in which men are granted or spoken of as having disproportionately more participation and public space than women. The focus here is on becoming a man or becoming a man again. This process is subject to specific transformations that can often take place at a psychological, physical and individual level. Thus, stereotypes of masculinity dominate spaces toward which Red Pill adherents orientate themselves. This includes a soldier-like appearance: a man with a stout physique and muscles who pursues a war-like aesthetic. Here, his spirit is meant to develop as equally "unbendable". While he has already proven his strength by (metaphorically) taking the red pill, this also entails developing the determination to free himself completely from an imagined prison of thought, as well as lead other men out of it.

Originating on Reddit in 2012,[39] the movement has evolved in terms of content. Initially, the focus was primarily on conspiracy narratives pointing to global mind manipulation by a Jewish, feminist or left-wing elite – depending on the interpretation. Now narratives and ideological set pieces of the "New Right", such as the "Great Replacement" theory, can also be found within the discourse.

This trend has since assumed spiritual and financial characteristics. Coaching programmes have developed to support other men in "choosing the red pill", which is heavily advertised (see chapter 3.2.). Red Pill narratives can be found in many places across the internet: While Reddit remains popular, there is also a noticeable amount of Red Pill content on mainstream platforms. This is unsurprising as one of the core elements of the movement involves the narcissistic desire to promote one's own agenda – and thus oneself as an individual. To this end, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok and Instagram have emerged as useful social media platforms through which large followings and a constant presence can be amassed.

The Red Pill movement is now very well diffused: ideological pawns can be found among many players in the manosphere. One frequently referenced mainstay is influencer Andrew Tate, who combines components such as strong financial ambitions with misogyny, manifesting in the absolute degradation and objectification of the latter.

(Formal) Organization

The Red Pill movement does not appear to be a highly organized movement. Nevertheless, the offer of coaching sessions and seminars goes hand in hand with a hierarchy that can be used to foster relationships of dependency and thus generate a certain degree of organization. There is also a direct reference to prominent players, such as Tate.

Pick-Up Artists

"Pick-up Artists refers to a loosely networked scene of self-appointed coaches or "experts" who offer their followers instructions on how to deal with (predominantly) women, as well as tips for self-optimization."

Ideology and narratives

Pick-up Artists refers to a loosely networked scene of self-appointed coaches or "experts" who offer their followers instructions on how to deal with (predominantly) women, as well as tips for self-optimization. They focus on various techniques aimed at getting women to have sex, entering into competition or promoting their own self-confidence via different measures. Dedicated coaches, social media channels and forums have been established in the German-speaking context as well in recent years.

Forums, blogs and online and on-site seminars teach adherents various psychological methods and tactics to be used on women. Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) – a series of communication methods meant to influence people and their actions, yet the effectiveness of which has not been scientifically proven – plays a prominent role. Across the relevant forums, entire sections are devoted to communication methods. Various manipulation techniques are recommended to achieve the goal of having as many sexual contacts as possible. These include the prominent tactic of "push and pull", in which compliments are initially given but the women are then humiliated to elicit certain reactions.

A financial component also plays a significant role here. Coaches advertise their training courses based on promises of great success, some of which are held internationally. These include Daryush Valizadeh (also known as Roosh V), one of the most prominent representatives of the scene for years, who was active internationally and held events in Germany, too. He rose to fame among the general public through his demand for impunity in marriage, among other things.[40] Valizadeh is no longer active on the scene and has dedicated himself to orthodox Christianity. He has since rejected extramarital sex as a sin.[41] Even though many techniques and methodical approaches are similar, new, supposedly innovative programs are constantly being advertised through which coaches promise new or better results.

Instructions for this scene have, in fact, existed as books since the 1970s, such as How to Pick Up Girls! by Eric Weber. As early as the 1990s, instructions on how to "seduce" women were distributed within self-proclaimed seduction communities in English-language newsgroups – with forums, blogs, websites and appearances on all available social media networks following, including podcasts.

In this context, the movement has established a specific vocabulary[42] describing various techniques and goals while also propagating often derogatory terms for women. In the context of the pick-up scene, women are primarily portrayed as objects to be conquered. Elements of competition or outright gamification can also be identified here: Different "goals" achieved are rewarded with points, such as a kiss ("kiss close") or sex ("full close"). In this context, women are degraded to objects that serve as a means to an end: achieving the highest number of sexual contacts.

Recruitment

New followers of the Pick-Up scene are targeted via advertising and recruitment through books, seminars, training courses, social media channels or forums. They usually promise to deliver an improved self-image and success with women – defined in terms of relationships or a higher number of sexual contacts. Accordingly, men with a negative self-image are specifically targeted, those who would tend to describe themselves as a failure and have problems establishing intimate or sexual relationships with women.

(Formal) Organization

Rather than necessarily relying on associations or organizations, this scene is organized via forums or via followers of various coaches on social media channels or other public appearances. The largest German-language forum is the "pick up forum" with hundreds of thousands of user posts. It also explicitly calls for exchanges within local loosely organized groups and posts requests for "wingmen" to help approach women. Offline contacts are organized on the "pick up forum" in so-called Lairs that are organized by state, geographical region or city – intended to facilitate finding like-minded people close to home. Until the 2010s, the German Pick-Up scene also met at an annual conference called "Pickupcon".

Incels

"For Incels [...] it is clear that the real reason why they cannot find a partner in times of feminism is due to their innate appearance. Key to Incel ideology is the idea that relationships and sexual intercourse serve as nodes for both personal status and individual happiness."

Incel ideology rests on an anti-feminist world view characterized by inherent misogyny and anti-feminism, a binary gender image, (verbal) aggression, vulgarity and an atmosphere of hatred toward others and the self. The original intentions of a proactive self-help forum have mutated into a perverse sphere dominated by a single binary logic. The term "Involuntary Celibacy" (or the self-designation as "Involuntary Celibate", Incel) plays on this, drawing from an understanding of loneliness that Incel attacker Alek M. described as "true, forced loneliness"[43] after his attack in Toronto in 2018. According to Incel logic, the gap of loneliness can only be closed when a woman forms a unit with a lonely man.

At the same time, this unity is only of temporary interest: one essential element of the ideology is a fundamental *conviction* that men are biologically entitled to a woman purely on the basis of their gender. This fantasized conviction, tracing back to the 1950s and traditionalist gender-social constellations, is central to the understanding of this subculture. One prevalent idea is that a man has the birthright of being automatically assigned a woman as a partner. By this logic, antagonistic feminism (especially the second wave of feminism) is responsible for the deconstruction of the patriarchal world order – one imagined as being natural. The Incels view the act of emancipating women from the patriarchal logic – and allowing them to enter freely into chosen and not exclusively hetero-normative (sexual) partnerships – as a reason for being unsuccessful in the search for a partner.

Biologism is the pillar of the essential markers of Incel ideology. Instead of analyzing society, biological markers are used, leaving no room for interpretation outside of the commonly accepted patterns. For Incels, for example, it is clear that the real reason why they cannot find a partner in times of feminism is due to their innate appearance. Women implement this (newly) gained freedom of choice so categorically that only men who are considered extremely good-looking externally (so-called "chads") are eligible for a partner. Incels, on the other hand, are second-rate men (so-called "beta" or "omega males") or losers of the "genetic lottery"[44], and therefore uninteresting to women. This underlies their conviction that no measures to influence one's appearance, such as weight training or surgery, have a lasting positive influence on innate appearance. External unattractiveness is portrayed as absolutely unchangeable.

Women themselves are divided into two main categories: on the one hand, there are "Stacys", considered to be visually very attractive women who can easily win over a "Chad". Then there are "Beckys", perceived as average, at best. Although they are generally looking for a relationship with Chads, they usually have to settle for less attractive men. In this logic, members of this movement are Incels (characterized by a lack of visual attractiveness), forced to make do without a partner as no woman would

opt to enter into an intimate relationship with them, not even a "Becky". Key to Incel ideology is the idea that relationships and sexual intercourse serve as nodes for both personal status and individual happiness. However, as these cannot be realized due to the circumstances outlined above, clear enemy images are instilled to clarify the matter of who's guilty. This is subsequently projected onto women, who assume the role of scapegoat and represent the enemy, *par excellence*. Some non-Incel men are also attributed to this group of culprits, meaning that chads and betas are the target of contempt. The (destructive) hatred, however, is directed against women, which is often expressed in anti-feminist conspiracy narratives, the constant presence of violent fantasies and the glorification, in extreme cases, of femicide and attacks.

Platforms and key players

Forums are important relevant networking sites for Incels. One of the most important is the forum incels.is. To date, this forum has served as the main hub for the subculture. It is international and conversations are mainly held in English. The subculture is also present and visible to some extent on other forums and image boards such as Kohlchan, 4chan and Reddit. The website "Incel Wiki" is an online encyclopedia providing an overview of the objects and narratives of Incel ideology, along with public documentation of the topic.

Incels are likewise active on social media; here, however, accounts are dispersed and do not enjoy the cohesive power of the movement's original formats, such as forums. This seems to be partly due to the fact that some platforms, such as TikTok, prevent meaningful keywords such as "incel" and descriptive ciphers such as "black pill" from being used as search options due to the ideology behind them. Concurrently, one characteristic of this subculture is that its followers and protagonists rarely present themselves in public, *en face*, but prefer to exchange ideas among like-minded people in their own sphere without having to fear counter-speech.

Recruitment

Direct contact rarely appears to take place in public spaces or via popular platforms, especially across VLOPs (very large online platforms). The subculture exhibits a reluctance to present itself to the outside world. In terms of content, however, victim narratives are generally presented during moments of address, where the common denominator of misogyny and the supposed responsibility of women for the fate of the Incels is always present. We cannot currently identify any active recruitment attempts, but this requires further investigation.

(Formal) Organization

So far, we have not identified any direct degree of formal organization. Owing to the great popularity of the well-known forums, these serve as contact points for young men who feel drawn to this ideology. The risk of radicalization appears particularly virulent on these sites due to the prevailing monothematic interactions and discussion style. A minor aspect of formal organization is potentially provided by forum moderators, who have the power to remove reported users from the forum as well as content. However, (formal) organization of incels as a group represents a major gap in research and monitoring.

Special features in the German-speaking context

The identification of the German or German-speaking Incel scene faces a number of hurdles. The primarily English-language character of the international forums means that little communication takes place in German. However, these do provide some interesting insights that could be explored in greater depth elsewhere, such as the attempt to network in a purely German-speaking sphere outside of the international context.

MGTOW

"The prevailing narrative describes women as parasitic. She does not primarily strive for romantic love, but seeks financial support and expects material benefits, while her fundamental aim is to harm the man."

The self-designation MGTOW (short for "Men Going Their Own Way") succinctly illustrates the ideological core of this subculture: the ideology propagates the independence of men from both women and the state by striving for liberation from social expectations on the part of the latter.

In the first radicalization phase, the implementation of this demarcation results in detaching oneself from long-term relationships with women or avoiding them. In addition, there are efforts to control the libido and reduce the postulated dependence on sexual relationships, with some members even practising complete abstinence.[45] The majority of the scene remains at this stage. However, the MGTOW ideology fundamentally goes beyond this. The dissociation from state structures follows in a third and fourth step, first with the economic exit and finally with the complete exit from society.[46]

The perceived discrimination of men should also not be counteracted by state intervention. Demands such as the elimination of the gender pay gap, which is postulated by some feminist movements, are rejected and condemned. In the world view of MGTOW supporters, "gynocentrism", which emphasizes the idea that women are systematically preferred, leads to the dominance of women in the social hierarchy over men.[47] Women, especially feminists, take the position of scapegoat in this view.

The movement is accompanied by the belief that women select men according to certain performance parameters, which gives men with average characteristics less chance of finding a partner. The prevailing narrative describes women as parasitic. She does not primarily strive for romantic love, but seeks financial support and expects material benefits, while her fundamental aim is to harm the man.[48]

In principle, the MGTOW movement recognizes the male traditionalist gender role imposed on them and the associated demands and attempts to deconstruct them. Interestingly, this shows an attempt to break through gender stereotypes, although the actual actions and statements often remain in traditional male, sometimes toxic patterns.[49]

MGTOW narratives include a categorization of men into alpha and beta roles. Within this social hierarchy, MGTOW supporters position themselves below alpha men, who are referred to as "chads", analogous to the incel subculture, but at the same time they look down on men who remain in relationships with women. These men are seen as traitors, victims of manipulation.[50] These views are clearly reflected in the MGTOW communities in the online context: men who speak positively about women or contradict the principles of the movement come under suspicion and risk exclusion from the community.[51]

Platforms and key players

The movement initially communicated on Reddit and in forums. The important MGTOW subreddit, along with the website and forum MGTOW.com, are now no longer accessible. The subreddit was blocked due to violations of Reddit's hate speech guidelines. Platforms such as YouTube, in turn, have become popular information and interaction points, with the YouTube channel Sandman now an important player in this regard. New content in video format is posted here almost daily and, in 2020, the videos reached over 90 million views.[52]

(Formal) Organization

It appears that public groups and channels are primarily used for structured organization, but rather as informal platforms focused on the exchange and discussion of content and personal issues. These channels have an individual character and show no clear formal organization or recognizable structures for targeted coordination or hierarchy.

Men's Right Activists

"The men's rights movement encompasses various ideological focuses and narratives. However, disguised under an often toned-down rhetoric are attacks on equal rights and women's right to self-determination."

Ideology and narratives

Likely the most influential and longest-standing group within the manosphere (including the German-speaking one) are the men's and fathers' rights activists. The men's rights movement encompasses various ideological focuses and narratives, with male health serving as a key area. Men's and fathers' rights activists criticize, among other things, the supposedly diminished attention paid to men's health problems compared to those of women. Another important focus area is family law: this includes discussions about custody disputes, child support and parent-child alienation. The latter is at the center of some ongoing campaigns promoting the idea that women attempt to sabotage relationships between their ex-partners and their children through lies, deception and fabricated allegations.[53]

The emphasis on "protecting the family" from "individual demands" is a recurring theme, as can be seen in the movement's petition papers.[54] Biological parenthood is classified as the sole, true and relevant consideration within the concept of the family. Accordingly, they emphasize that only the parenthood of father and mother can be considered a true family. The specific views and goals of the movements and individual actors within it are diverse. While some members voice legitimate concerns such as the problem of parent-child alienation, others tend towards extreme or radical positions. However, disguised under an often toned-down rhetoric are attacks on equal rights and women's right to self-determination. This rhetorical approach uses the concept of "mimicry": misogynist or extremist convictions disguised as moderate and established positions in gender politics. One current example of this is the Social Inclusion Forum, which presents itself as a serious player in gender equality policy while, underneath, it links to masculinist, misogynist movements.[55]

Platforms and key players

Men's rights activists use social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram and TikTok to disseminate information that supports their causes, engage the public on issues related to men's rights and gender, mobilize supporters and build online communities, with a focus on younger generations. Representatives of men's rights activists have a stronger presence on YouTube, where channels serve as education means for the so-called "baby boomer" generation, in particular.

In the German-speaking men's and fathers' rights movement, associations serve as central organizational structures. In order to push through their agenda, men's and fathers' rights activists publicity seek to exert influence at a legal and political level. These associations act as instruments for lobbying and enforcing their, at times, extreme positions. These organized structures give the movement a certain legitimacy and credibility, allowing for resources to be gathered, expertise to be pooled and sup-

porters to be mobilized. Through the support of political representatives, such associations can gain influence and contribute to the dissemination of the concerns of this movement at a political level. Numerous larger and smaller blogs and websites also exist with integrated forums that can be assigned to this subculture. These sites are closely linked with one another through links and cross-references, forming a robust network. The MagickMale forum represents a point of exchange that focuses on providing training and coaching to men. It aims to offer them the opportunity to "unleash" their masculinity and learn how to perceive their role as a man.

A few central players can be identified among the large number of associations and websites. The grouping in German-speaking countries tends to operate according to the "top-down" principle, with a clear hierarchical structure. Within this community, there is often a leader who exerts significant influence on the community and assumes the role of a guiding figure. Arne Hoffmann is one such personality within the German men's and fathers' rights movement. His blog, Genderama, is a platform on which articles about the men's movement are regularly published.

(Formal) Organization

In contrast to other subcultures in the manosphere, well-developed organizational structures can be identified in German-speaking countries, which also exert influence at a political and legal level. According to CORRECTIV (2023), well-connected players sometimes lobby at government level, as well. As a result, there are clearly identifiable representatives and supporters who represent the movement and strive to drive political and social change. Issues such as fathers' rights are used as a door-opener topic to penetrate broader segments of society. This can lead to the centralization of the movement, but also to internal conflicts and differences of opinion – especially if different currents within the movement hold different views. The associations and networks involved in this movement sometimes come together at central networking meetings such as the German Gender Congress.

3

Case studies in the German context

Following our overview of different patterns of devaluation of women along with relevant actors in the digital space, we present two in-depth qualitative case studies to link these aspects and identify the specific nature of international phenomena in the German-speaking context. To this end, we focus on two communities with very different arguments and digital appearances, both of which have a specific impact on young men: Incels and Pick-Up Artists.

These subcultures exhibit an extremely high degree of misogynistic and contemptuous positions, directly linked to their respective world views. In this hatred of women, they share a fundamental positioning and ideological overlaps. In most other aspects, however, they fundamentally differ: For example, one essential difference is that Incels perceive their situation with the fatalistic view of immutability, while Pick-Up Artists promote a scope of action for men in and through their methods and dealings with women. In contrast to Incels, this makes the subculture particularly active in male-hegemonic practice. The present case studies do not aim to compare the subcultures, as each is a separate and unique corpus in terms of content and methodology. Due to the unusual communicative practices of Incels, we also conduct a quantitative analysis of postings in this community in Chapter 5.

3.1. Case study: Incels in German-speaking countries

This case study is based on data collected via the incels.is and 4plebs platforms. In total, the corpus consists of 182 comments (58 via incels.is and 124 via 4plebs) and provides insights into the German or German-speaking Incel community. To this, we specifically take material from 4plebs into account. This platform provides attributions to a specific country with a national flag generated via the user's IP address. The data from incels.is comes mainly from German-language threads, which can be analytically assigned to users from German-speaking countries. The case study contains two parts:

❶ a content-related analysis of particularly virulent topics and ideologies prominent in the comments and serve as an example of the German discourse and

❷ a linguistic analysis of the data, on the basis of which discourse-linguistic strategies of the German-speaking Incel subculture are discussed.

Themes and ideology

Misogyny. The omnipresent misogyny also shows to be central in the German discourse –ranging from mild resentment and insults to death threats and real consequences, thus painting a broad picture of content. As women serve as a representation of the suffering experienced by Incels, this misogyny takes on different forms. Women experience dehumanization, which is recognizable through various markers. For example, the term "foid" is a marker for the emptiness of meaning associated with women – based on the idea that they are merely empty shells carrying neither

meaning nor added value, who can /should be filled with ejaculate by men in the sense of maximum objectification. Ideas such as "artificial wombs" promote the notion of replacing women with artificial, literal birthing machines, and creating a utopia without them. This open proclamation of misogyny functions as a latent threatening gesture: the global elimination of all women is included in the group's subtext.

The use of the term "prostitution" is also walking a fine line of dehumanization. Women are generally referred to in the context of this topic, but with fundamentally negative connotations and reduced to a stereotype. A purely utilitarian idea is present, which finds meaning in the attitude that women would only allow men into their lives for the sake of money, therefore exploiting their own position that cannot be linked to any true feelings. This suggests that women have no romantic interest and are not acting out of love, as they are only interested in their own advantage. Finally, degrading concepts in this area (e.g. "hooker", "whore" or "hoe") simply copy the meaning of prostitution as a socially extreme binary-paradoxical interpretation of rejection, criminalization and fetishization.

The data also contains a virulent reference to underage women and girls, who are often referred to as "Loli" (in reference to "Lolita") and reflect an inclination that is inherently linked to the theme of virginity. In the sense of a patriarchal "first possession", the preference for virginity is cherished, combined with a claim to ownership and the expectation that, as a man, one can shape a woman sexually and have her for himself based on a claim to purity.

Lastly, the articles are blatantly anti-feminist: Feminist movements are identified as the root of evil, leading men to become Incels in the first place. The frustration about women being able to choose their own partnerships highlights the importance of ownership claims for Incels as representatives of an old, traditionalist-patriarchal social complex.

Racist and antisemitic attitudes. Racism is also characterized by an extreme ambivalence in the German Incel landscape. On the one hand, racism functions as a means of identification and explanation. For non-white Incels, it is understandable why women decide against them on account of their skin color. There are inherent differences in the German discourse, with different ethnic group affiliations being played off against one another in different ways, where one specific community is often portrayed as hegemonic, meaning that others have to subordinate themselves ("[…] in Germany, the wogs rule the rap scene. BBC [note: Big Black Cock] theory in Germany is garbage imo"). Racist patterns of inequality are thus perceived and played out in their own settings. This usually leads to further rejection and self-pity. Associations that are incorporated into social situations lead to tearful feelings of loss. At the same time, the idea of white supremacy and strong racist and racializing elements are also part of Incel ideology

("I just hate those Lowiq wogs who only produce shit when they say something"). Women are said to be only interested in relationships with non-white men, creating the idea of "reverse racism".

Antisemitic attitudes usually manifests themselves in the form of conspiracy narratives, which are openly expressed as antisemitism in particular. Feminism was introduced by unnamed Jewish elites in order to actively practice the oppression of men (and specifically Incels over the course of these active oppression mechanisms). It is thus perceived as a factor of power ("The day will come when Jewish occupation and propaganda finally ends. The Jews and femoids will pay for it all"). At the same time, antisemitism is also flagrantly portrayed as a number or an empty signifier. The idea of a feminist world conspiracy is visible in some places, which seeks feminist control of world events instead of a supposed Jewish elite.

Social injustice. The German discourse is also rife with statements of social injustice against Incels. Fears and experiences of deprivation serve as an immanent (mono)theme in this context, allowing us to analyze why young men are attracted to Inceldom. Hatred of women functions as an overlapping element and serves as an outlet for the feeling of loss from the lack of a relationship. The idea of Inceldom itself is based on a patriarchal, masculinist understanding that men are entitled to have a woman as a partner. However, as this is denied to Incels (according to their own logic), feelings of universal injustice arise.

This feeling that is expressed is not exclusively about women. Rather, it is seen as a fully comprehensive system in which supposedly naturally given (patriarchal) hierarchies are out of balance and only certain men ("chads"), if any, have a decent chance of having a relationship with women. These unfulfilled claims of ownership are characteristic of the kind of experiences of social injustice in the German (and international) Incel scene ("in a healthy society, getting a girlfriend would just be something that more or less happens on its own"). Finally, this experience is answered with the eponymous involuntary celibacy. Many statements go further and often there is talk of suicide and/or an assassination attempt to escape the situation ("go rope or go ER" ["ER" stands for Elliot R., an Incel assassin (2014)]).

Biologism and right-wing narratives. Biologistic, right-wing and masculinist narratives are also prevalent. Biologism is all-encompassing here, serving to illustrate and secure one's own world view. Everything that is obviously external is linked to the problems associated with a lack of a relationship. Body size, the shape of one's chin, face etc. serve as an explanation for the existence of the Incel phenomena, which is presented as biologically centered. Thus, those who have genetically superior appearance have an advantage and better prospects in the sexual marketplace ("I hate Incels who claim that size doesn't matter at all. Face = body size.").

Sometimes there is a direct reference to neo-Nazis or even Nazi-glorifying ideology ("SIEG HEIL !!!! Piss of, roastie, you got subhuman eyed, I only date blu eyed maidens."). In this context, New Right ideas are spread like classic Nazi vocabulary ("final solution to the women's question"), while masculinist ideas are omnipresent (albeit contradictory) and can also become a narrative in connection with right-wing ideology ("Hitler Youth, military service. Make men masculine and self-sufficient and the femoid will automatically follow").

Linguistic analysis

incels.is:

Coded language. Incel-related vocabulary is used by many users, mostly untranslated and infrequently translated ("Schwarzpille" for "blackpill", "es ist vorbei" for "it's over", "abseil" for "rope" and "suiTreibstoff" for "suifuel"). The use of these subcultural terms corresponds to what we know from the English-speaking Incel community. This vocabulary particularly includes different appearance types of Incels ("mentalcel"), terms from the field of external attractiveness ("looksmatch", "looksmaxx", "beta", "sub-8", "manlet"), derogatory terms for women ("stacy", "femoids"), terms for competitors ("chad", "chad lite", "normie") as well as for the hopeless situation of Incels ("blackpill" and "redpill" vs. "bluepill") and their downfall ("incel revolution", "cope", "ropen").

Acts of speech. Polarized discourse is highly persuasive. This can be seen, for example, in the increased use of directive speech acts (requests), which are either explicitly expressed or indirectly – i.e. as representative speech acts (statements) that have a pronounced action component. This deontic element is much less pronounced here, unless, for example, a statement is about inciting violence ("It's time we found a final solution to the land whale issue"). In the majority of cases, only statements about the perceived state of affairs are made. This may be explained by the community's fatalistic impression that the situation of Incels is hopeless and can only be countered by suicide or emigration ("As a man you're fucked in Germany, Chad or Death has its meaning …").

Emotionality. The extent to which an individual communicating online is emotionally involved can never be definitively determined on a purely textual level. However, there are linguistic characteristics that can indicate emotional involvement, particularly in the area of linguistic expressiveness. This applies in particular to vulgar language ("fuck", "ficken", "vögeln"; "drecks-", "dreckig"; "kacke", "verschissen", "Dünnschiss", "scheiß"), as well as intensifiers that only occur sporadically ("übelst", "blackpill des todes"). Similarly, content that relates to one's own person suggests emotional involvement. This is particularly the case when users talk about their own (hopeless) situation. The use of death-related

vocabulary ("suicide", "suicidal", "death sentence") is striking, some of which is in English interestingly ("Fuck alter. Direkt suicide"). Either these terms are deemed to be typical Incel vocabulary (as in "suifuel") or it is easier to write about such existential matters in a foreign language. This idea is supported by comments such as "This all seems far too personal to me" and "I think it gives you a certain closeness when you read posts in your native language." Other types of voacbulary used conveys an aggressive tone, namely terms associated with physical violence ("wegklatschen", "Endlösung", "Vergeltung", "Hass", "töten", "Rache") and insults ("Kanacke", "Hure/Milfhuren", "bitch", "Schlampe", "Fotze", "Nutten", "slut", "hoe", "Weib", "Weibsbilder"). Particularly striking is the wide variety of swear words against women, including dehumanizing metaphors such as "Landwal" and "Toilette", which suggest that parts of the community are extremely misogynistic.

4plebs:
Coded language. Incel-related vocabulary also occurs here. The terms "roastie" and "femoid/foid" are used particularly frequently to describe women in a derogatory way (although this is also related to the type of data collection). Other terms used include "Stacy", "Becky", "femcels", "Chad", "cucked", "red pill", "cope", "rope", "go ER" (as an abbreviation for "go Elliot Rodger"), "it's over" and "incel revolution". Unlike incels.is, as we are dealing with a broader forum (4plebs is an archive of the imageboard 4chan), it is hardly surprising that more general terms from the manosphere, gaming vocabulary or feminist discourse also appear (e.g. "thot", "rekt", "simp", "pussy privilege", "gynocracy", "gynocentric", "trad girls", "MILF").

Emotionality/Hatred against Women. Intensifiers such as all-caps formatting to demonstrate anger, repeated graphemes ("shieeet") or general vulgar language (sexuality: "spread one's legs", "pussy", "suck dick", "cock", "fuckable", "fuck off", "tits"; fecal language: "disgusting shit", "asshole", "shithole", "fatass", "bullshit") and, in particular, the depiction of the "final enemy" woman, who must be eliminated (see below).

The posts are riddled with insults to women ("whore", "slut", "bitch", "hoe", "cunt", "fuckface"). To intensify them, the terms "roastie" and "femoid/foid" are also combined with adjectives or adverbs ("fucking") ("retarded, worthless, roastie", "useless femoid"). Women are also described with adjectives from vocabulary associated with stupidity or mental illness ("dumb", "primitive", "retarded", "mentally ill", "insane", "psychopathic", "neurotic", "brain damaged", "nicht helle in der Birne"). Women are not seen as being fully human beings, as is made clear in the dehumanization metaphors ("leeches", "subhuman", "creature", "whale", "devil").

The act of reproduction is described as "inseminate" or as a simple reproduction of genes. The fact that many Incels speak out in favor of "artificial wombs" shows that, contrary to the emotionality in other areas of

Incel-related discourse, the act of procreation is viewed in a matter of fact way here. The woman is considered inferior to the man (men have "authority" and deserve respect, while women must be tamed and be "submissive"). This superiority of men is mixed with posts that glorify violence against women and use vocabulary from the fields of violence, rape and femicide ("slap", "bitchslap", "slap across the face", "put in their place"; "spread her legs", "rape"; "blast everyone's skull", "need to be hanged", "to off", "gun", "bullet"). Posts repeatedly emphasize that these measures serve the "Final Solution/Endlösung", the "total femoid genocide" (also: "total white femoid death" or "total elimination").

Interpretation

Overall, hatred against women is clearly visible on 4plebs. The texts here take on a more deontic tone while violence against women is often tolerated or even seen as desirable. Here we are dealing with a topos that is typically associated with radicalization: namely, the continued existence of the in-group can only be ensured by harming the out-group. More than the actual German-language posts on incels.is, this shows the potential danger associated with this community. However, one hypothesis could be that German Incels find it easier to write aggressive posts like these in English than in German. Many of the topos and linguistic strategies that shaped the community a few years ago have remained and the "pioneer" attackers are still celebrated as heroes. However, the discussion about "Loli wives" seems to be new, specifically the demand to be allowed to marry underage women in order to avoid the promiscuity of adult women.

3.2. Case study: Pick-Up Artists and life coaches on TikTok

This case study examines misogynistic and anti-feminist narratives among Pick-Up Artists and life coaches on TikTok. Many of the actors examined take Andrew Tate as a role model for their appearance and their presentation style in videos. This American-British influencer and entrepreneur became known for his men's training programs that promise financial and sexual success. Tate is known for his podcasts and videos appearances, he is very active online and frequently attracts attention for his extremely misogynistic and LGBTQ-hostile[56] statements. In Romania, Tate is facing charges of human trafficking and rape. The influencer is also popular among young people.

TikTok was selected as the platform to study due to its increasing relevance, particularly among teenagers and young adults. According to the

JIM Study 2023[57], 59% of young Germans use TikTok daily (2022: 54%), with only Instagram (62%) and WhatsApp (94%) being more popular.

Method

We first used TikTok's search function to look for profiles that had the word "coach" or "dating coach" in the username or shared related information or offers in their profile descriptions or used certain hashtags that could be attributed to Pick-Up Artists or life coaches who deal with relationships and sex. Eleven accounts were selected that run their coaching activities commercially, i.e. selling seminars, e-books and other relevant products on their own websites or elsewhere.

Videos from the eleven accounts were sorted in descending order according to the number of views they received using the analysis tool Buzzlytics. We then selected ten videos for each account based on their relevance either by title, thumbnail or other characteristics, i.e. videos that deal with one or more of the following or comparable topics:

- Behavior guidelines for men
- Behavior guidelines for women
- Instructions for crossing women's boundaries
- Feminism

These 110 videos were then automatically transcribed by Whisper and coded with regard to their narratives.

Evaluation

Altogether the accounts have a total of 256,801 followers. The account with the fewest followers has 1,633 and the largest has 103,800 followers. All accounts together have over 4.3 million video likes and more than 71.8 million video views. Depending on the profile, the number of videos varies between less than 100 (three accounts), 100 to 500 (seven) and the profile with the most followers has over 800 videos.

 Three of the eleven accounts describe themselves as "dating coaches" in their profiles, while the others use terms such as "approaching women", "seduced" or "flirting". Masculinity is also one of the topos addressed, referred to with phrases such as "manhood" and "WINNER network for men". All eleven accounts have their own websites or online presence that redirect users to online stores for items such as e-books. Only one profile did not link to a website, although this specific "flirt trainer & dating coach" did have his own website.
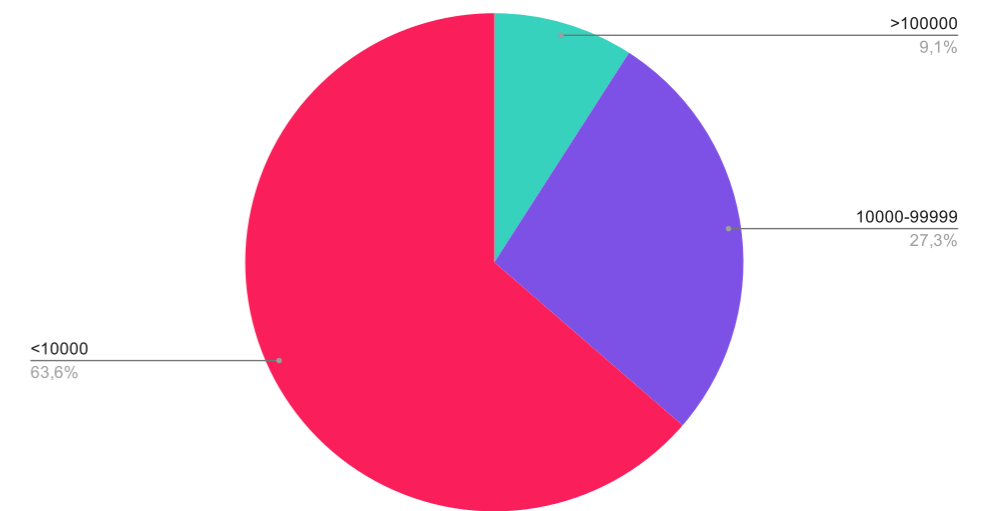
Number of followers

>100000
9,1%

10000-99999
27,3%

<10000
63,6%

Figure 1: *Number of followers of the 11 accounts analyzed*

Narratives

Rejection of sexual self-determination (6 videos)

In six of the 110 videos, women's sexual self-determination is either rejected or women who have had multiple sexual partners are portrayed as promiscuous and incapable of holding down a relationship. Women are also repeatedly dehumanized and equated with objects, such as in the following example: "The value of a woman is determined, among other things, by her body count. So pay attention to how high it is. Do you want every key to be able to open your protected lock?" Or: "That's why diamonds, gold and super sports cars are valuable, because they are not available in large quantities. They are something rare and that's exactly how we like to think of our partners." In one video, a Pick-Up Artist expresses his disapproval of women who decide not to have sex: "You kick this woman out of your place immediately, a woman who flirts with you, comes home with you, even kisses you, but when it comes down to it, just won't let you. That's a manipulative woman, and if she starts like this now, it will only get worse later. So get rid of it, quickly."

Rejection of friendships between men and women (4 videos)

Friendships between men and women are discussed in four of the eleven videos analyzed. In all of them, such friendships are portrayed as unrealistic, and unfair motives are attributed to male friends in particular. One video, for example, states: "And if a woman still thinks there's some best male friend who's got absolutely no thoughts, then you're not stupid – because there are no stupid people – but you're ignorant." In another, "Male friends don't exist. If you tell her that male friends are nonsense, then she

has to understand that. Because anyone who claims to be her boyfriend would immediately sleep with her. Anything else would be a lie. Every man knows that."

Anti-feminism (11 videos)

Eleven out of 110 videos contain various anti-feminist narratives. One video, for example, postulates that boys are "mentally castrated" by feminism and that feminism leads to the disintegration of family structures. In another video, protesters for equal pay in Iceland are described as being intellectually deficient, and the demand for equal treatment is portrayed as ridiculous or dishonest. Elsewhere, one says: "There's no feminists in a burning building. In this situation, feminism is immediately forgotten." In another video, a Pick-Up Artist claims that women who have fled Ukraine are "living it up" in Germany, while men are not allowed to leave the country. Women are also repeatedly portrayed as intellectually inferior. And in one case, anti-feminism is linked to antisemitic conspiracy narratives: "Who actually invented feminism? The Rockefellers. Why? Before, only men paid taxes. Now women pay taxes too. Think about it."

Hypermasculinity (7 videos)

In seven videos, hypermasculinity is presented as the only ideal worth striving for. The coaches repeatedly address the fact that women like guys who are "assholes" as this embodies the ideal image of a man, including as a partner. The division of men into the archetypal "alphas" and "sigmas", who are superior to the "betas", is also common in Red Pill circles. This hierarchy manifests itself in statements such as: "Women would rather share the alpha than be with a beta", or: "These things turn women on. It's not the nice, cuddly neighbor next door, it's the pirate, it's the werewolf, it's the vampire or it's the super-dominant, mega-rich alpha male."

Manipulation and deception (2 videos)

The use of manipulation techniques is just as much a part of everyday life in the Pick-Up scene as faking certain behaviors. They are not presented as ethically questionable or wrong but as a legitimate means to an end. The reactions and needs of women are not taken into consideration in this context. In two of the videos, instructions are given on manipulative behavior. One says: "Push her away and she'll want you even more", another: "If you really want to take it to the limit, then play with a woman like a cat. You know when you watch cats, if you keep waving the laser pointer back and forth, the cats go completely crazy. But if the pointer just stands still, then women, or at least cats, lose interest in the game."

Male dominance and exercising control (16 videos)

Male dominance over women is presented as the ideal state in relationships and justified by putting it down to biology as a seemingly natural order: "Men are simply the stronger sex. The man can assert himself." The loss of this dominance and control is described with terms such as "betaization", "effeminization" or "feminization".

Women are also denied control and responsibility over decisions which are seen as the task of men: "Because, believe me, she doesn't want to make any decisions. She wants to let herself go with you and she wants you to take absolute control." Ideal women are portrayed as submissive: "Three signs that this is a high-quality woman. First, she listens to the man. Second, she listens to the man. And third, she listens to the man."

Masculine women and feminine men (19 videos)

Women with stereotypically masculine behaviors and characteristics – and, conversely, men with stereotypically feminine behaviors and characteristics – are portrayed as unnatural, as an imbalance due to deviations from a hierarchy that is propagated as natural. This manifests itself in statements such as: "If you're away from an alpha atmosphere, from your male pack, for too long, you'll become betaized over time. You become softer and softer, more feminine, more pleasant. You lose your razor-like sharpness. That mustn't happen." This depiction is the theme of a large number of the videos in our analysis. Women portrayed as "masculine" are also described as undesirable: "I swear to you, when I see a masculine woman, you can't imagine how quickly everything tightens up inside me. When I think about it, I could just as easily get with a man."

Stereotyping (7 videos)

Women are constantly being placed in traditional roles. This world view manifests itself in the assessment of their suitability for relationships and marriage, based on their willingness to cook or clean for their partner, as expressed in statements such as: "And if a woman longs for a man who loves her, who protects her, who's there for her, who provides for her but isn't even able to cook and clean properly, then she need not wonder why she's a booby prize."

Undermining freedom of choice (8 videos)

In eight videos, women are denied the freedom to decide how and with whom they want to spend their free time. Women who celebrate carnival or visit clubs are described as promiscuous and unreliable: "She's going to celebrate carnival? Fuck her. How good can she be if she has to dress

up half-naked to attract the attention of hundreds of guys?" Or: "Just as he wouldn't want you to upload photos of yourself in a bikini because it's disrespectful."

Rape: Legitimization and blame (3 videos)

Three videos by two coaches trivialize or legitimize rape or blame women for the violence perpetrated against them, for example with statements such as: "It's a fact that if a woman is raped in Dubai, she has to go to prison. Quite rightly so! Quite right! Why doesn't she stay at home with her husband? Why?"

Playing down transgressive behavior (5 videos)

In several videos, transgressive behavior is explicitly portrayed as desirable. The range of requests include: to interrupt random women on the phone in public ("The best pick-up artists are always the ones who also display a healthy selfishness and who know that they are more important than her phone call") or to repeatedly make physical contact ("If she says it's going too fast for her, then, no problem. Reach out again a few minutes later"). A clear refusal of sex on the part of the woman is also presented as negotiable or it is also claimed that a no actually only means that the man should keep trying: "If you're on a date with a woman and she says 'But don't think we're going to have sex tonight', then she means exactly the opposite."

Other (14 videos)

Another 14 videos deal with various topics that do not fall within the other narratives above. These include videos that directly address women by claiming that those between the ages of 18 and 25 must find a partner because their "value" as a partner decreases afterwards. In addition, women undergoing psychotherapy and single mothers are described as unsuitable for relationships: "And the dumbest thing a man can do in evolutionary terms is invest time and energy in the children of a weird woman."
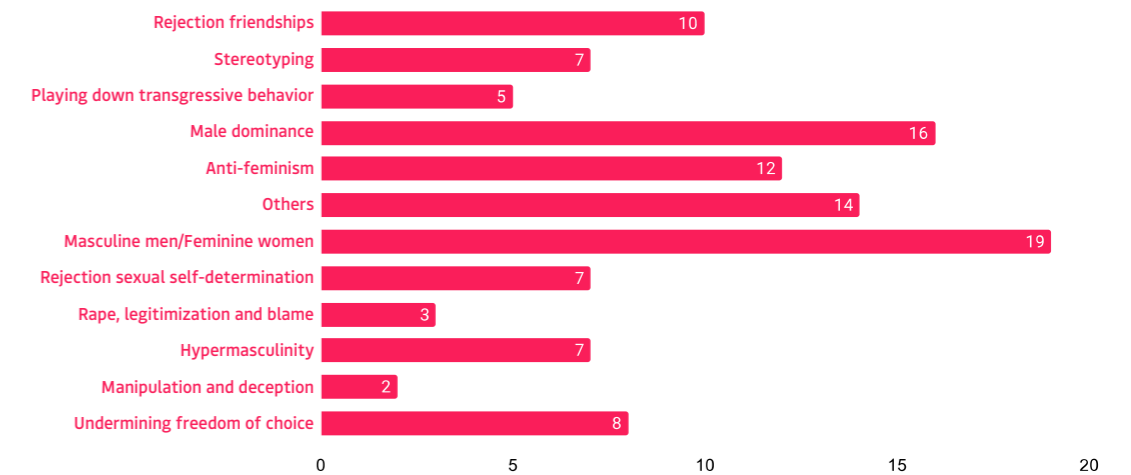
Narrative

Figure 2: *Distribution of the different narratives in the videos*

Conclusion

This case study shows that Pick-Up Artists and misogynistic life coaches enjoy considerable reach on TikTok. Many misogynistic narratives, hate and even the legitimization of transgressive behavior and sexualized violence can be identified in the videos here. Overall, the realm of the audiovisual targeting of young users by such actors remains under-researched. Given the immense international popularity of misogynistic, violent and violence-glorifying influencers such as Andrew Tate – along with German actors who rely on similar narratives and practices – it is crucial to conduct further research to analyze the impact of this scene on its often very young audience, as well as the possible effects on attitudes and behavior.

4
Case studies in an international context

In addition to a specific analysis of the German-speaking Incel and Pick-Up Artist subcultures, our study focuses on misogynistic online attacks in the UK and Slovakia, two countries characterized by the prevalence of agile, misogynistic scenes. These country case studies serve to broaden the perspective of the German framework with the aim of placing online misogyny in a transnational, European context while also accounting for its diversity. At the same time, we should reinforce that the national case studies are not directly comparable.

4.1. Länderüberblick: Großbritannien

By Catherine Baker [58]

The study of and intervention to prevent online misogynistic targeting remains challenging due to the digital sphere's ability to transcend and traverse temporal and spatial boundaries. Despite this, online misogyny takes on specific characteristics and creates a myriad of resulting harms in different geographical regions, influenced by the sociopolitical, cultural, and linguistic context of the country in question. One such example can be seen in the landscape of online misogyny in the UK context. Research has repeatedly demonstrated the frequent nature of misogynistic abuse directed towards women and girls on social media in the UK context. A 2014 study by DEMOS analyzed the frequency of misogynistic language used by UK-based Twitter accounts over 26 days and found a total of 131,711 messages contained the words "slut" or "whore". Of this number, over a third were ascertained to be directly misogynist or threatening in nature.[59] Online misogynist abuse, both globally and in the UK, is not confined to aggressive social media messages but includes pervasive image and video-based abuse. A 2018 YouGov found that 47% of women in the UK aged between 18-24 years had experienced cyberflashing, colloquially referred to as receiving "unsolicited dick pics".[60]

In the UK, frequent targets of misogynistic abuse and harassment on social media are politicians and journalists, as well as academics and any other women engaged in public-facing work. Such backlash often includes threats of physical harm, frequently including threats of sexual violence. A study by Amnesty International examined the prevalence of misogynistic hate on social media in the lead-up to the 2017 UK General Election, finding that in the month running up to the election 1 in 20 tweets (5.03%) directed at women MPs was abusive in nature, targeting women across the political spectrum. Such misogynistic targeting was further intensified towards those occupying intersecting identities, including MPs from ethnic or religious minorities. For example, Black and Asian women MPs received a disproportionate number of abusive messages (approximately 35% more than white women). Furthermore, misogynistic hate directed at these MPs was often explicitly racialized, including racist comments or slurs. Notably, Dianne Abbott - the first Black woman elected as MP in the UK Parliament - was the recipient of over one-third of all the abusive messages directed at women in the six months leading up to the UK election.[61]

UK journalists are also frequent recipients of online misogynistic abuse, including vivid, violent threats of sexual abuse. Online misogynistic targeting is often aimed at women who express feminist or socially progressive sentiments. For example, in 2013, after British feminist writer Caroline Criado-Perez successfully campaigned for Jane Austen to appear on the new £10 banknote (in place of Charles Darwin), she was targeted by a flood of violent, misogynistic abuse, including the creation of a targeted Twitter account called @rapehernow.[62]

Notably, media reporting on online misogynistic abuse faced by women and girls often paints a false dichotomy between "offline" and "online" abuse. Such binarization not only undermines the impact online misogyny can have on the day-to-day life of those targeted but minimizes the ways in which online misogyny can rapidly escalate into acts of physical violence. For example, in 2016, amid the Brexit campaign, MP Jo Cox was murdered in the street in her constituency in Yorkshire, attacked by a white supremacist who targeted her due to her pro-immigration and equality views. Academics argue that widespread media coverage of her murder, conceptualizing it as a decontextualized act of random violence, minimizes the underlying context of white supremacist misogyny in the UK.[63]

As aforementioned, online abuse targeted at women often takes on intersectional dimensions. Research in the UK has shown that women in the LGBTQ+ community are frequent recipients of online misogynistic abuse fueled by their perceived lack of conformity to cis-heteropatriarchal ideals of womanhood. One group that faces such intersectional forms of online abuse are trans women and girls.[64] The online targeting of trans and gender-nonconforming women in the UK rose dramatically in response to public and political debate around reforms to the Gender Recognition Act in 2018. Since then, the UK has become a hub for anti-trans discourse and organizing. The targeting of trans women online spans the political spectrum, including the far-right, conservatives, and self-identified liberal trans-exclusionary radical feminists (TERFs). Academics have elaborated on how such online abuse and harassment are enabled by an "increasingly radicalized climate of transphobia" in the UK, fueled by political lobbying and uncritically perpetrated by some traditional media,[65] the cumulation of which has led to the UK falling four places in the ranking of European LGBTQ+-friendly countries.[66]

Another major source of online misogyny in the UK in the past decade has been fueled by the aforementioned rise and diversification of the manosphere - including so-called influencers such as Andrew Tate. Like other forms of hate on social media, the misogyny perpetrated and normalized by actors such as Tate is often characterized as an "online" issue with little impact on offline discourse. However, the widespread popularity of Tate has had a range of offline effects, including a significant rise in misogyny in UK schools. Teachers and other school officials have spoken about the popularity of these ideas among school-aged boys, raising concerns over the

proliferation and normalization of misogyny in UK classrooms.[67] A recent study by UK advocacy group Hope Not Hate found that 80 per cent of boys polled aged 16–17 had consumed Tate's content – significantly more than had heard of the current UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. Over half reported holding a positive opinion of Tate (51 per cent), with less than a fifth holding a negative opinion of him (19 per cent). In contrast, 82 per cent of girls aged 16–17 polled held a negative view of Tate.

In addition to an increase in misogynist attitudes, the extreme misogyny and aggrieved entitlement circulating in online manosphere spaces carries a risk of inspiring acts of radicalized mass violence fuelled by male supremacist ideology. To date, such forms of radicalized misogynistic violence have primarily taken place in the US and Canada. However, these risks are also present in the UK context. In 2020, a man in his early twenties was arrested in Middlesbrough in the north of England for possession of a large number of weapons and explosives. The suspect's online activity revealed frequent searches for manosphere content and information on previous terrorist attacks.[68] The perpetrator of the 2021 mass shooting in Plymouth in the south of the UK, which claimed the lives of five people, had a similar history of engaging with misogynist and anti-feminist content online prior to the violent attack.[69] These risks of extreme acts of terrorism highlight the serious and violent nature of online misogyny.

A frequent theme of radicalized misogynistic violence is the intertwining of misogynistic and far-right ideologies. Research on far-right attitudes in the UK found strong evidence of a relationship between misogynistic attitudes and far-right ideology.[70] Such findings are unsurprising given the history of misogyny and anti-feminism in UK-based far-right groups, such as the British National Party (BNP), advancing, for example, the belief that feminism is a tool to destroy the nuclear family and contribute to the "demographic demise" of white Europeans. With the increasing presence of far-right organizing in the online sphere, misogyny and anti-feminism continue to represent central discourses in contemporary UK far-right discourse, often focusing on a perceived loss of power felt by white men, conceptualized as due to the increased rights and visibility of women and ethnic minorities.[71]

Taken together, the iterations and impacts of online misogyny in the UK context demonstrate the diverse yet intersecting dimensions of online hate targeting women and girls. While often transnationally organized and enacted, exploring the disparate and geographically specific harms caused by such online hate and harassment can highlight specific nuances of its effects. For example, how "online" and seemingly transient forms of online misogyny - whether an emerging manosphere figure or election hate campaign - cause distinct and lasting harm in the lives of women and girls, limiting free and full participation in the digital public sphere.

4.2. Country overview: Slovakia

By Richard Kuchta[72]

Online misogyny in Slovakia is a growing concern that reflects broader global trends in the digital landscape. While Slovak political discourse includes a large share of harmful content particularly targeting the LGBTQ+ community, migrants, or liberal figures (both online and offline), exclusionary behaviour towards women happens in a more unnoticeable way, be it through threatening in private messages or by targeting female politicians by insults, disinformation, harassment, sexist comments, or dehumanization. This phenomenon not only perpetuates harmful stereotypes but also poses a significant threat to the safety and well-being of women in the online sphere. According to the Institute of Labor and Family Research (IVPR),[73] two thirds of Slovak women have experienced some sort of harassment, whereas 40% have experienced it online. According to ECRI, women are one of the groups that were targeted by hate speech via the internet and social networks, which increases particularly during election campaigning and thus discourages female candidates.[74]

Female public figures

Slovakia is the first country among the V4 states that elected a woman as their head of state, bringing a higher visibility to female candidates and women active in public affairs – which also results in higher exposure to hateful and derogatory content. According to the Gender Equality Index,[75] Slovakia scored the fifth lowest score among EU member states with a particularly negative score in women's participation in public affairs. With 33 out of 150, the participation of women in the Slovak Parliament is also one of the lowest in the EU, even though the last election saw the highest number of women being elected.

One of the most targeted female politicians is Slovak President Zuzana Čaputová, regularly facing attacks[76] from both former coalition and opposition members. The attacks against Čaputová encompass comments on her appearance, abilities, and skills, as well as instances of dehumanization. She has been the subject of disinformation and conspiracy theories, including claims that she acts on behalf of third parties, such as George Soros or the US, suggesting she is incapable of making independent decisions. Social media users also derogatorily refer to her as "Ame-Ku," a shortcut for "americká kurva" (transl. American whore), likely employed to circumvent content moderation on social media platforms. While political actors often focus on harsh criticism and disinformation, hateful comments towards the President can be found in the comments section under posts containing such claims. Čaputová, along with several female candidates, was also targeted during the 2023 parliamentary elections. Data from Globsec[77] indicates
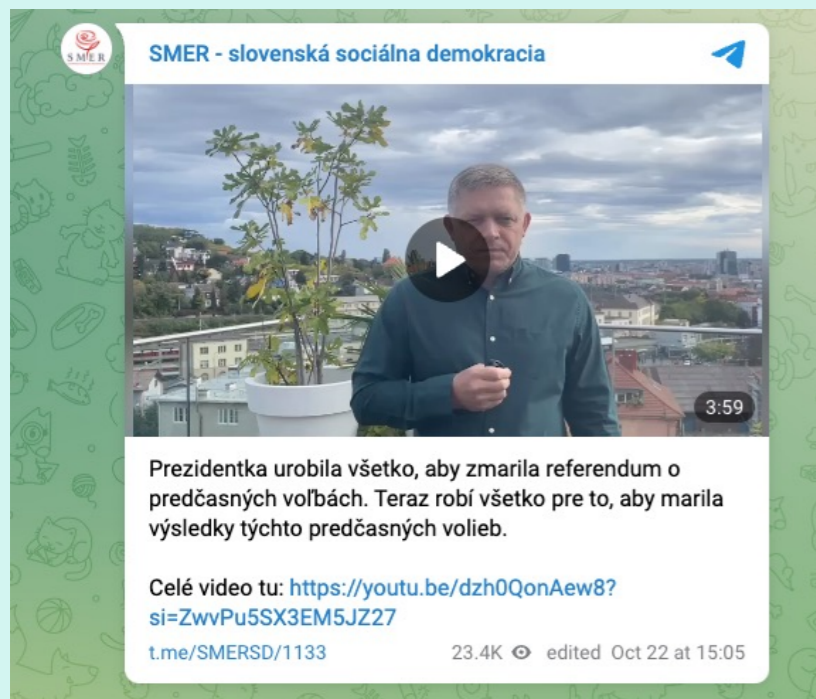
Figure 3: *Video in which Robert Fico accuses Zuzana Čaputová of election interference and suggests she is instructed by a third party.*

Translation: *The president did everything to thwart the referendum on early elections. Now she is doing everything to spoil the results of these early elections.*

that between 1 June and 1 September, Čaputová was the most targeted among all female politicians, despite not being a candidate in the parliamentary elections.

Globsec's study also shows that before the recent Slovak parliamentary election, female politicians were attacked in 88% of the most popular posts within the observed sample, a notable contrast to the 66% observed for male politicians. This discrepancy highlights the pervasive nature of attacks across both monitored groups. Women were more commonly targeted for attacks on their alleged intellectual abilities, whereas men faced criticism more frequently regarding their experience and skills. Both groups encountered attacks and mockery related to appearance, gender stereotypes, age, and the use of sexism and

misogyny, albeit to a lesser extent. According to the report, even though male candidates were also targeted, they received significantly fewer attacks than female public figures, pointing to a higher concentration and coordination of attacks directed at specific individuals within the female group.

The recipients of hateful comments extend beyond female political candidates to encompass other women engaged in political or societal issues, including journalists and NGO representatives. Female journalists face targeting through public posts, comments under their own posts, or private messages. Public posts often feature false and misleading information about the individuals, questioning their morality and competency. Comments under posts include insults and hateful messages, while

private messages can escalate to death threats. Slovak media has reported numerous instances of Slovak female journalists receiving death threats and hateful messages, with more severe cases primarily directed at female journalists.

Public posts targeting female public figures often originate from nationalist, populist, or far-right political parties, as well as individuals and media activist outlets. Given the significant role a president can play in political decisions, these entities scrutinize the life and work of the president, with their narratives frequently straying from factual criticism. Since these political actors operate within the mainstream of Slovak politics, any posts containing hateful content against their opponents could potentially violate platform Terms of Service and be removed. Instead, these actors disseminate false and misleading information about their adversaries, such as other political figures, critical journalists, or subject matter experts. Hateful comments under posts were often shared by anonymous accounts, pointing towards a deliberate strategy of hateful commenting. In the case of female candidates, insults are directed at their abilities, appearance, or moral values, highlighting the distinctive manner in which female politicians are targeted.

Pick-Up Artists

Slovakia features a limited pick-up artist scene, mirroring the political landscape. These issues are predominantly mainstreamed in magazines

without significant overlap into the pickup artist and manosphere community. The research identified only two Slovak-language websites and two Facebook pages dedicated to pick-up artist content, offering courses in seduction, with one platform extending courses to women. However, this particular website incorporates elements reminiscent of the pick-up artist scene prevalent in the West. Although the pick-up artist scene is relatively small in Slovakia, Slovak users can access such content through the Czech language, which is easily understood by Slovaks.

Czech sources frequently surface in the Slovak disinformation and conspiracist scene, with a more extensive scene in Czech language encompassing accounts, Facebook pages, Facebook groups, YouTube channels, and websites. Among the pick-up artist content, a manosphere website, Facebook page, and Facebook group were identified, all interconnected. The content within the Facebook group includes illegal and harmful elements, such as racist, transphobic, and homophobic content, along with references to right-wing extremism. Notably, content often originates from manosphere influencers in Anglo-Saxon countries, shared by users based in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Although currently a relatively small community, the potential intersection with other homophobic or racist content may expand the follower base and introduce Slovak-only pick-up artist content.

In conclusion, the landscape of online misogyny in Slovakia reveals

that gender-based violent content online has two faces. Women, particularly those in public life, face a multifaceted onslaught of harassment, disinformation, and derogatory comments, manifesting through various channels such as social media, private messages, and even influencing parliamentary elections. The unequal targeting of female public figures compared to their male counterparts underscores the need for concerted efforts to address this issue. Moreover, the intersection of online misogyny with other harmful ideologies, such as those propagated by pick-up artist and other manosphere communities, amplifies the potential for a more widespread and damaging impact on women.

Conclusion

This first part of this report examined different areas of misogynist online agitation. In addition to a comprehensive overview of various forms of misogynist attacks and their legal classification under German law, we also considered the transitions between virtual and analog attacks, paired with the classification of subcultures in the manosphere. The classification of this scene required us to carefully differentiate between the respective groups and ideologies in terms of content and structure, namely: the Red Pillers, Incels, MGTOW, Pick-Up Artists and men's rights activists were outlined.

Our zoom-in on the Incel subculture in German-speaking countries highlighted core elements of a region-specific discourse through an ideology-critical and linguistic analysis that provides insights into this relevant online misogynist movement. The subsequent analysis of Pick-Up Artists and life coaches on the social media platform TikTok examined the misogynistic narratives across a large number of videos for, scanning the content serving as a basis for the business models of masculinity influencers. Finally, the case studies on Great Britain and Slovakia offered insights into the specifics of these respective regional contexts. This led us to a broader overview outlining and classifying the state of online misogyny in these respective contexts.

The following part of the report provides a quantitative analysis. Using computerized methods, we supplement our systematization from the first section with data in different languages that enables a quantitative classification in relation to a variety of related aspects. The aim here is to arrive at statements about the degree to which misogyny is prevalent in various online contexts. Assessing the language used by misogynists not only helps us to better understand devaluation practices but also highlights context-, country- and language-specific characteristics.
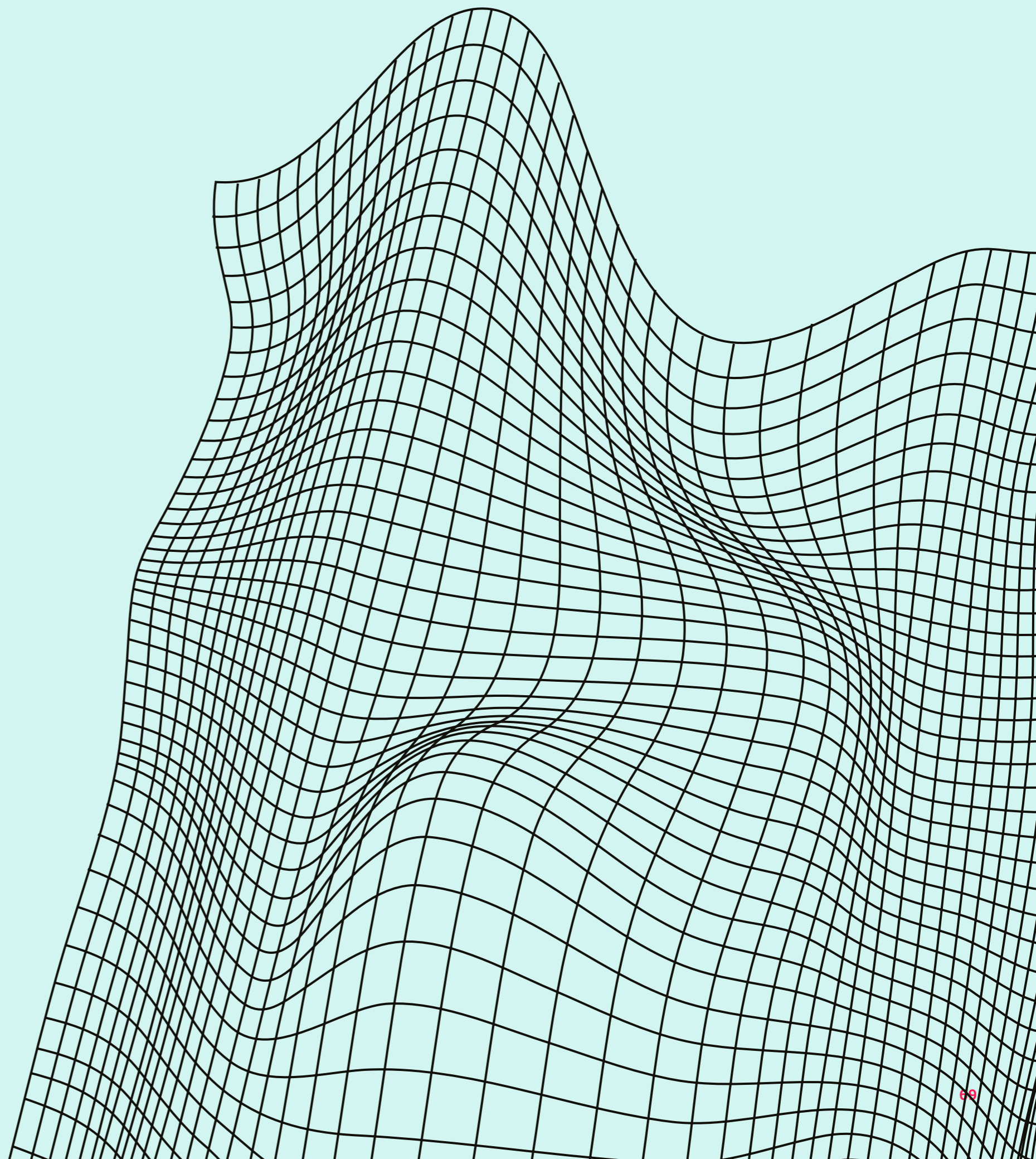
5

Quantitative analysis

5.1. Introduction

In the following analysis, we will attempt to capture and quantify aspects of online misogyny across multiple languages. Probing the severity of the problem is the first step towards drawing a more complete map of the different communities and ecosystems involved in its development. Sources corresponding to different subgroups of the overall manosphere were included to provide a more nuanced understanding of the variations between them. Special focus has been placed on Incels, since violent language is commonplace in this community and some of its members have been responsible for femicides in the United States and Canada, but also in the United Kingdom. We aim to have a better understanding of how this community conveys its ideas through language and how it may or may not influence mainstream social media platforms.

We will be looking at the data from different angles. Firstly, that of toxicity analysis, which is a process described in the methodology section. Secondly, we will be looking at misogynistic and Incel language on mainstream platforms to understand the interplay between both. Finally, we will be looking at the data from the perspective of the keywords contained in the dataset to measure which words or phrases are most commonly used and understand where the emphasis of those communities lies.

5.2. Methodology

Data

The dataset used for the current analysis contains a total of over 10 million messages over the five working languages of the study (English, German, French, Dutch and Slovak) and was gathered from online sources that can be divided into four subsets:

Incels

Messages from Incels' main forum incels.is, and similar sites in terms of form, content and communities (neets.net and looksmax.org). While non-English messages can be found there, the overwhelming majority are written in English (99.55%).

Manosphere

Messages from blogs, forums or mainstream platform groups (e.g. subreddits) that are of the broader manosphere (MGTOWs, Men's Rights Activists,

anti-feminists, …). This subset includes a broad variety of message types: longer blog articles, comments about these articles, shorter forum messages, etc.

Fringe

Messages from alternative social media platforms or imageboards. Such places are hotbeds of hate speech, extremism and often the birthplace of nefarious trends and jargon. These include, among others, 4chan[80] or German equivalents Kohlchan and Krautchan.

Mainstream

Messages sampled from the VLOPs: Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, Instagram. 50% of those messages were sourced using search words related to women (i.e. "Frau" and "Frauen" in German) for topical relevance while the other 50% is a random sample from the same sources. This subset serves as a reference baseline/control group to measure manosphere and incel content against.
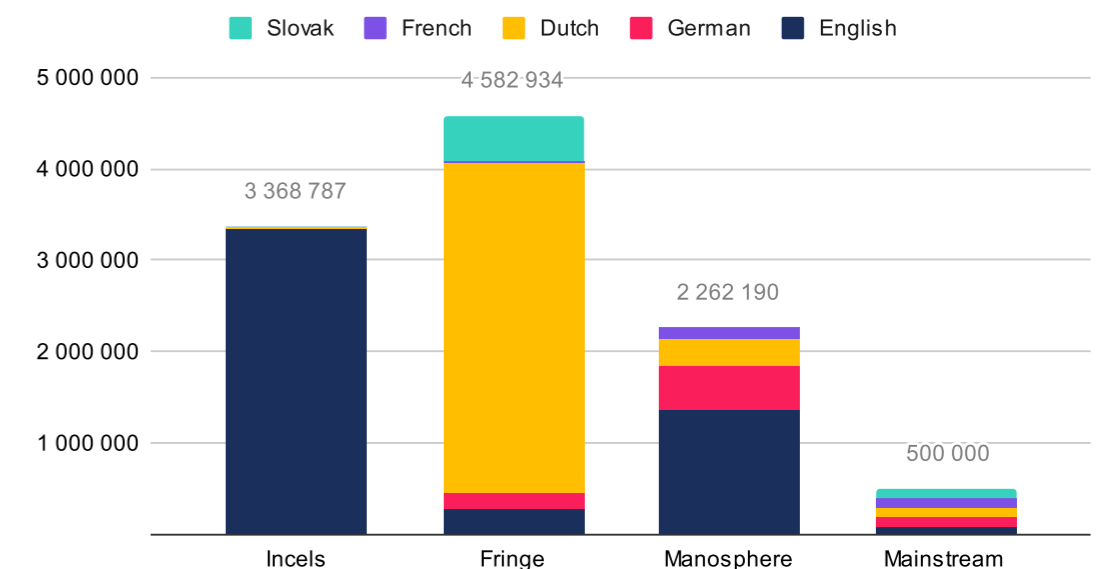
Data distribution

Figure 4: *Data Distribution per Language and Source Type*

Those sources were provided by our native speaker experts for each of the five working languages. To discuss women online, each language community gathers in different places, with different linguistic and communication codes on platforms with designs that further influence communication. This leads to the dataset being heterogeneous in terms of the sources provided for each language.

For instance, Slovak has little to no specific forum or platform group to discuss topics relevant to our study. Hence, Slovak data could be found on mainstream platforms in reasonable quantities, but only marginally on other source types.

Incel content specifically was harder to diversify in terms of languages since dedicated forums seem to only exist in English.

We mitigated language community discrepancies to the best of our ability by sourcing comparable places (e.g. manosphere groups, blogs and forums) when available.

Hate speech metrics

Given the semantic and contextual nature of hate speech, it does not naturally lend itself to being quantified. To that end, Textgain has developed an explainable hate speech measurement framework that evaluates messages along two axes: **toxicity level and topic categories.**

Both are based on lexicons populated by experts with linguistic, cultural and topical knowledge: they assign a toxicity level to each entry (word or phrase) as well as the categories it belongs to (Racism, Sexism, Violence, etc.)[81].

In the context of this study, native-speaker experts for each language were instructed to provide and label entries related to misogyny in general, to the manosphere (e.g. (pseudo)-intellectual phrases and neologisms), to Incels as well as to sexual intimidation (e.g. rape threats) given that it represents an extreme and illegal form of misogyny.

WORD	TRANSLATION	SCORE	HATE	SHIT	FUCK	FOOL	SCUM	SLUT	GOOK	HELL	HEIL	PLOT	KILL	IFFY	SLUR	CONTEXT
Search...		●●●●	😡	💩	🐷	🤡	🐸	👱	👊	✊	👽	💣	🤔	✅		
noodlewhores	Asian whores	●●●●	☐	☐	☑	☐	☑	☑	☑	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☑	incels

Figure 5: *Example of an annotated entry*

Toxicity

Toxicity is a continuous metric reflecting how undesirable a message is, on a scale from 0 to 100. A toxicity score of 0 therefore means that a message is harmless while 100 indicates extreme levels of (potentially illegal) hate speech.

When lexicon entries are labeled, they are ranked on a scale from 0 (harmless) to 4 (extremely harmful). When detecting and measuring hate speech on the Internet, occurrences of different toxic words in a message are combined to calculate a message's overall toxicity score (between 0 and 100).

Categories

Categories represent discrete hate speech categories to which a given entry belongs. They are not mutually exclusive and range from swear words and ridiculing to sexism, disinformation and death threats. Other fields such as "context" and "translation" help provide meta-information and context for lexicon managers. The "Sexism" category is of particular importance for this study and will be considered in combination with other categories to derive meaningful subsets at the quantitative level.

5.3. Measuring misogyny

In this section, we will be looking at how severe misogynistic messages are across the various data sources. We only selected the messages that featured any mention related to women (neutral mentions like "women" or derogatory ones). For each source type, we visualized the distribution of misogynistic messages into three toxicity levels:

- **High**: toxicity score equal or above 0.80;
- **Medium**: toxicity score between 0.20 and 0.80;
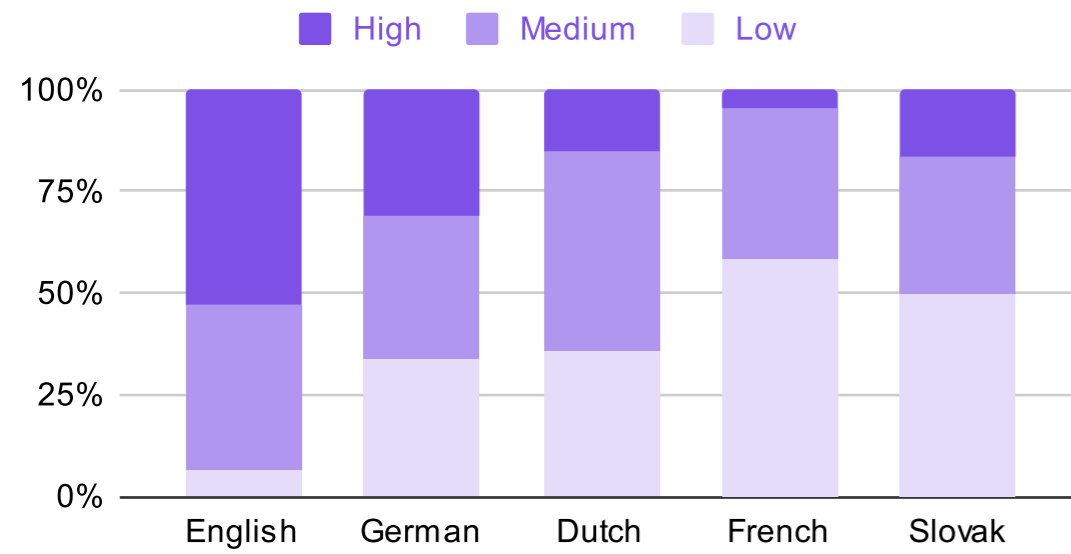- **Low**: toxicity score equal or below 0.20.

Incels

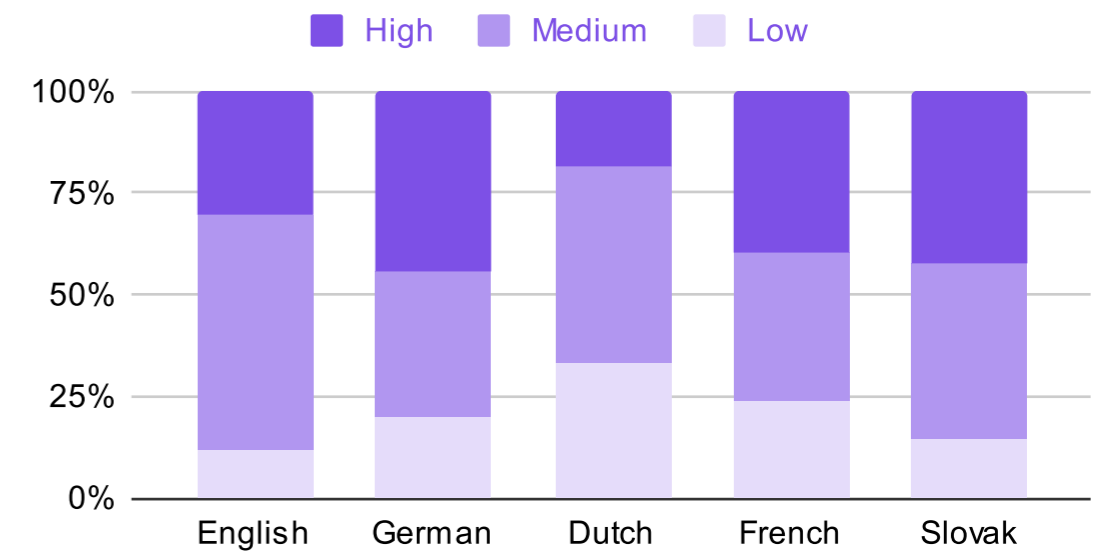Figure 6: *Distribution of misogynistic messages in the Incel subset per language*
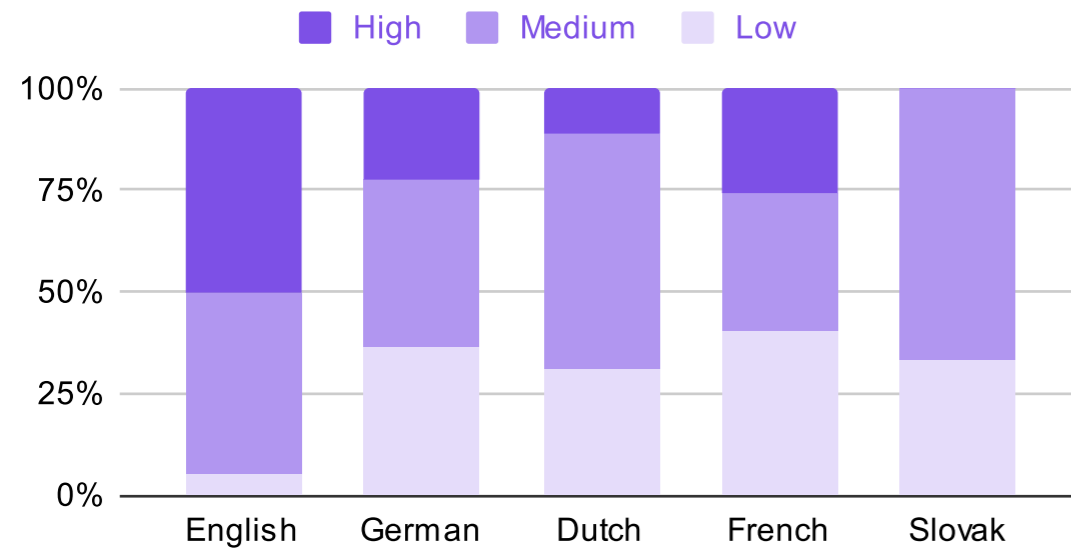
Manosphere

Figure 7: *Distribution of misogynistic messages in the manosphere subset per language*

Fringe

Figure 8: *Distribution of misogynistic messages in the fringe subset per language*
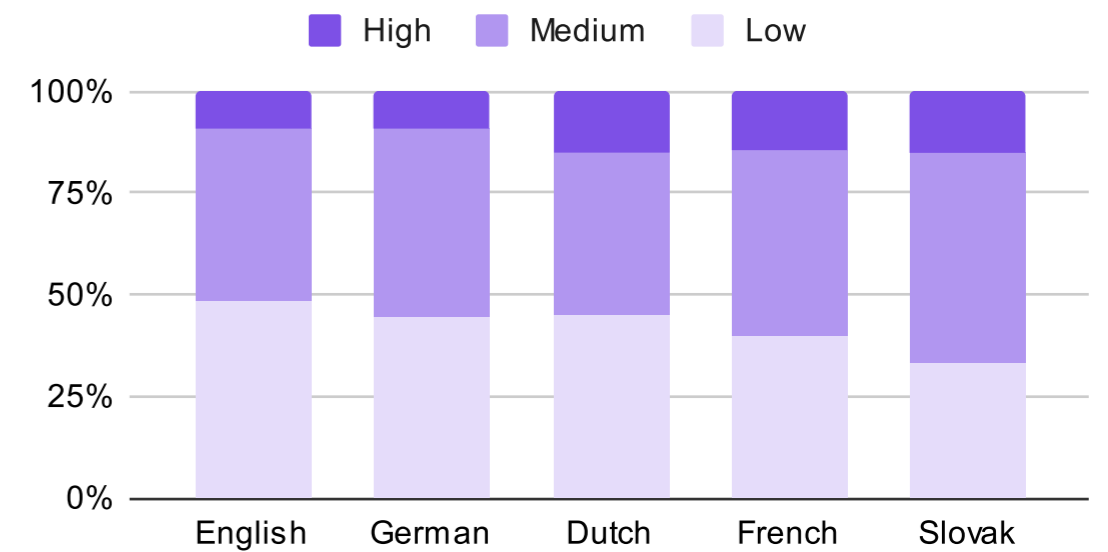
Mainstream

Figure 9: *Distribution of misogynistic messages in the mainstream subset per language*

The charts above look at the distribution of toxicity across languages and communities. Without surprise, the Incel community is the one featuring the biggest proportion of medium and highly toxic messages in English, with barely any message being slightly or non-toxic.

Interestingly, the manosphere's distribution closely resembles that of Incels, except for French. This suggests that French manosphere circles are more vehement and insulting towards women.

In English and German, the most extreme forms of toxic language towards women seems contained outside of the mainstream sphere: it is more prominent in Incel, manosphere and fringe subsets compared to the situation for French, Dutch and Slovak, whereas it is comparatively less prominent in the mainstream part. A possible explanation is that English may be given a lot of attention by platforms and their moderators compared to other languages since it is the *lingua franca* of the Internet and moderation resources are more available, and German messages may be more closely monitored and moderated thanks to the German NetzDG law.

Chronological analysis

We examined the presence of severe misogynistic posts on social media from the beginning of 2022 up until the end of 2023 on both mainstream and fringe platforms for all five languages. French and Slovak are excluded from the time analysis because unavailability of data for those languages during certain times of the year rendered the analysis for these languages irrelevant. We therefore focused on German, English and Dutch.

Mainstream

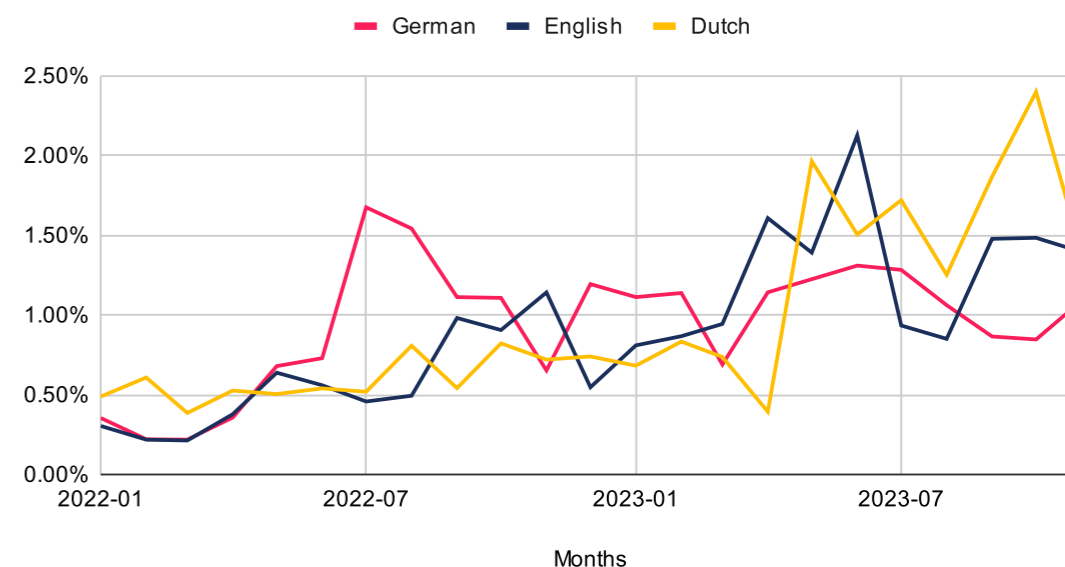## Misoynistic messages on mainstream platforms

Figure 10: *Proportion of highly misogynistic messages on mainstream platforms over time*

In Figure 10, we plotted the percentage of highly misogynistic messages per month for the mainstream platforms. A post is considered highly misogynistic if it contains entries labelled as sexist and its toxicity score is 0.8 or higher. A score above 0.8 indicates serious forms of hatred. For example, repeated uses of multiple discriminatory words to target a specific group (in this case women) or person would fall within this category.

For all three languages, we observe an increase in the percentage of misogynistic messages on mainstream platforms. German remains mostly stable on average, except for misogynistic messages peaking in July and August 2022. When we zoom in on these messages, we mainly find homophobia and transphobia towards lesbian and trans women. This may have been a reaction to pride-month and the many associated celebrations. However, this peak is not present in July and August 2023.

Misogynistic messages in Dutch significantly increased over the last 3 quarters of 2023. After investigating sampled messages from that timespan, there seems to be no one event responsible for that increase. While external factors may explain it (e.g. an increasing popularity of far-right parties in the Netherlands and the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium), it is not explicitly reflected in the data and no definitive conclusion can be drawn from the data itself.

Incels

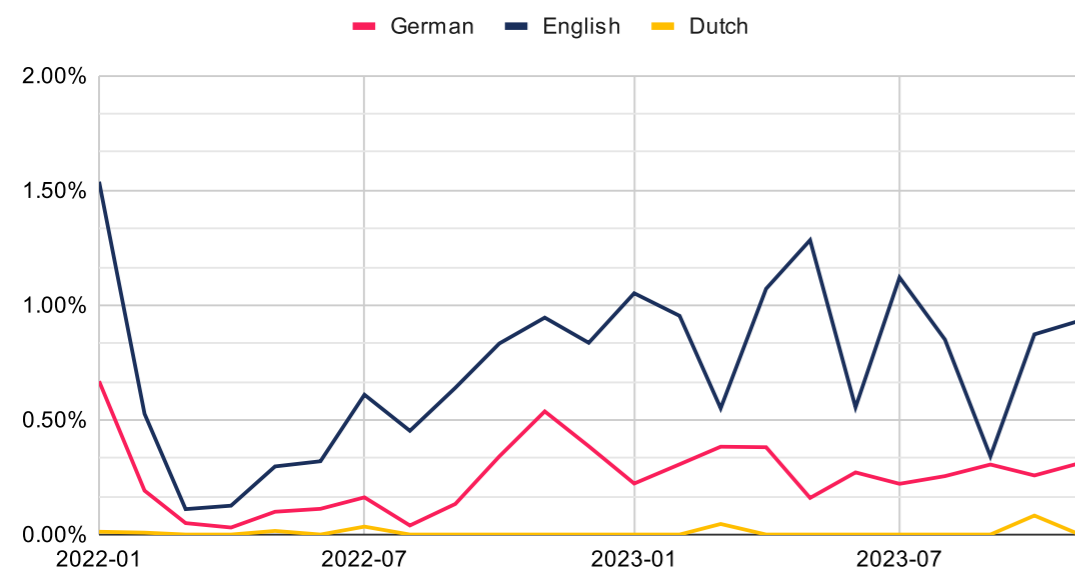## Incel vernacular on mainstream platforms

Figure 11: *Proportion of highly misogynistic messages on mainstream platforms over time*

On mainstream platforms, the proportion of messages using Incel vernacular has increased over the last two years. This is mainly the case for German and English, while Dutch remains very flat to non-existent. The peak at the beginning of 2022 reflects discussions about Incels where some of their jargon is discussed. The overall increase starting at the end of 2022 for English and German can mostly be attributed to two factors:

- the increased awareness about Incels and their language being discussed more frequently on social media, without it being used directly against women or other individuals;

- the sporadic use of the most common concepts and words from the Incel community (e.g. "beta male" or "chad").

Fringe platforms (not shown here) do not display a similar increase. This may indicate that fringe platforms are not becoming more misogynistic, but that misogynistic fringe content, such as Incel and manosphere ideologies, is seeping through on mainstream platforms.
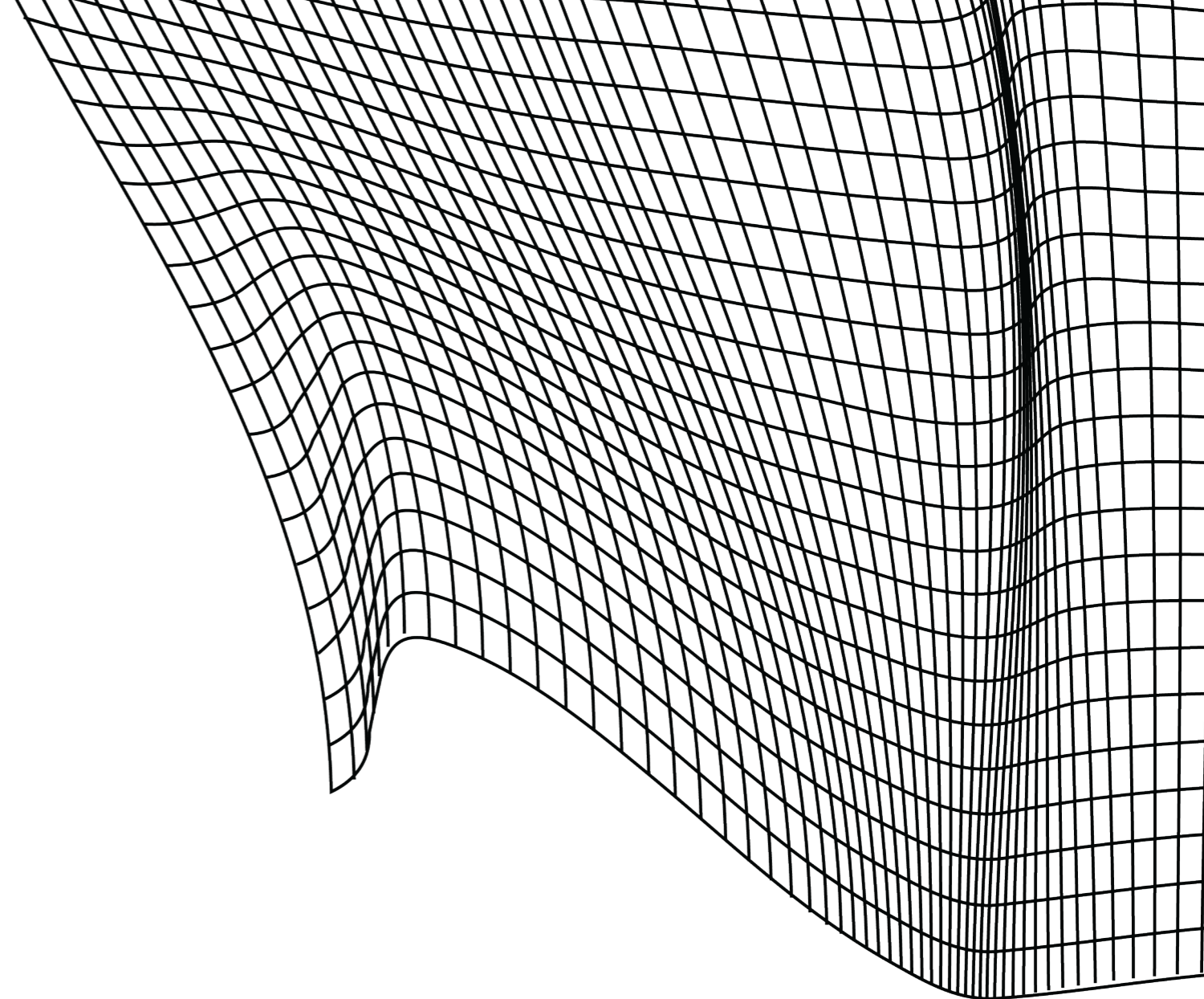
German focus

For each subset, we investigated the most prominent keywords in German and visualized them in a word cloud. Words that occur more frequently will be displayed in a bigger font and more centrally than those which are rarer. The size of a word is not directly equal to the absolute number of occurrences of that word, but rather to its proportion relative to other words. Word clouds help give a quick sense of how language is used on the whole to understand which topics and aspects draw the focus of different communities.
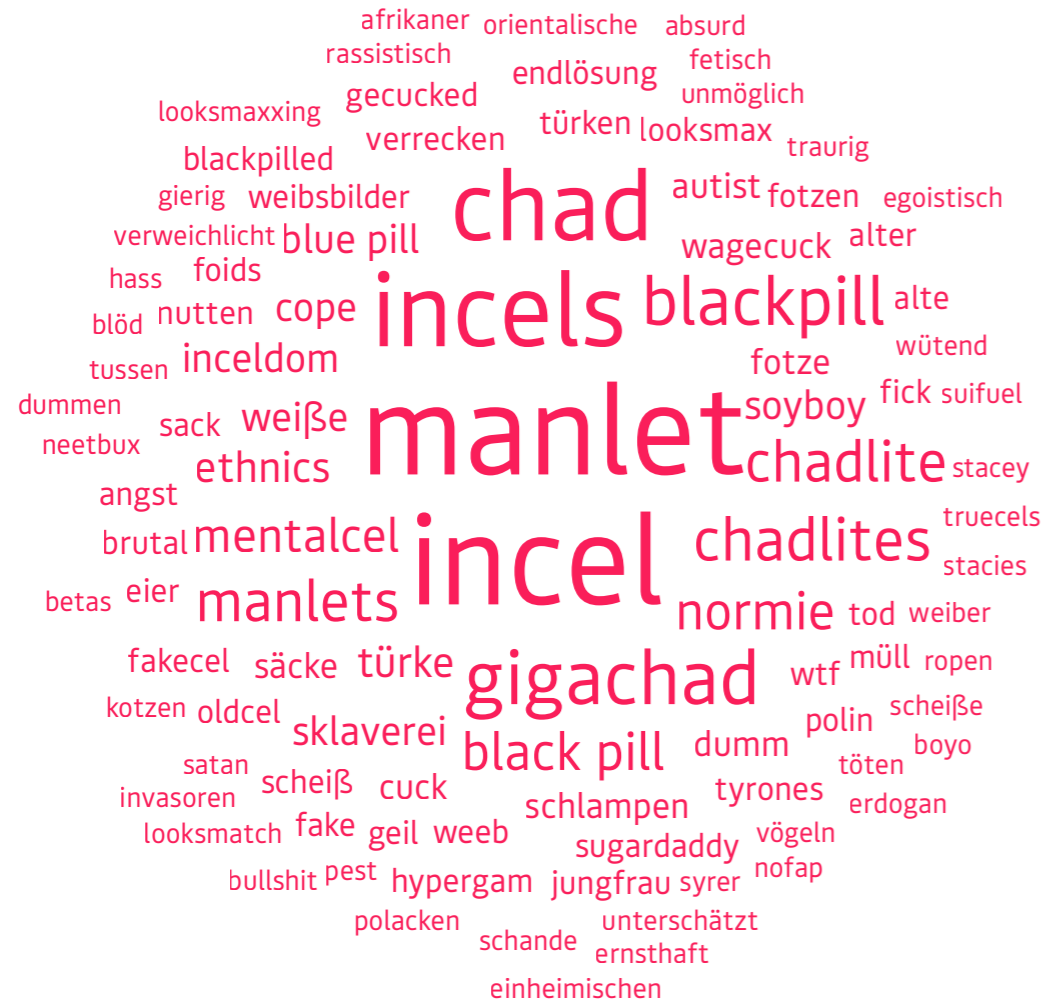
Incels

afrikaner orientalische absurd
rassistisch endlösung fetisch
looksmaxxing gecucked unmöglich
blackpilled verrecken türken looksmax traurig
gierig weibsbilder autist fotzen egoistisch
verweichlicht blue pill **chad** wagecuck alter
hass foids
blöd nutten cope **incels** **blackpill** alte
tussen inceldom fotze wütend
dummen sack weiße **manlet** soyboy fick suifuel
neetbux ethnics chadlite stacey
angst **incel** **chadlites** truecels
brutal mentalcel stacies
betas eier manlets normie tod weiber
fakecel säcke türke **gigachad** wtf müll ropen
kotzen oldcel polin scheiße
satan sklaverei black pill dumm töten boyo
invasoren scheiß cuck schlampen tyrones erdogan
looksmatch fake geil weeb sugardaddy vögeln nofap
bullshit pest hypergam jungfrau syrer
polacken unterschätzt
schande ernsthaft
einheimischen

Figure 12: *Word cloud for the Incel subset*

Apart from the words referring to the community itself, the most recurrent expressions mostly refer to men: "manlet", "manlets", "mentalcel" and "soyboy" as depreciating terms, while others such as "gigachad", "chadlite" and "chadlites" are positive references. This is mostly coherent with the Incels' worldview and their identity that is built around a poor self-image.

It is interesting to note the discrepancy between terms referring to men and those referring to women. Indeed, terms such as "Fotze", "Schlampen", "foid", "foids", "stacey" and "staceys" appear comparatively less frequently. This seems to indicate that Incels' online discussions in German focus rather on men's identity than on grievances about women.

Finally, the ethnic component also appears on multiple instances through words such as "Türke", "Türken", "ethnics", "weiße", "Afrikaner" or "orientalische". While minor, this hints at the importance of race and ethnicity in the Incel ideology. This is further confirmed by the existence (though not reflected here) of dedicated words to designate Incels of a given origin or ethnicity: Indian ("currycel"), Asian ("ricecel") or African/black ("blackcel").

Manosphere

dummheit
propaganda schlampen
schweine weiße armen dummen
fuck tolle geiler fachkräftescheisse
gefickt
quatsch schwarze lustig loch sau waffen dicke
scheiss schlimm muschi bösen
witz scheiß nutten **schland** angst weib müll
hater dreck **weiber** fettsack null ausländer
red pill
säcke blöd eier hart **geil** alter geile idioten
brutal doof **gewalt** olle falsch fetten löcher
hass böse tod alte **opfer** ficken hühner
shithole fressen teufel
fresse lüge arsch krieg dumm hund depp
unsinn scheiße diskriminierung mist assi
täterkrank billig alkohol
taliban hölle fettelügen tittendumme
schlampe stück neger möse nutte falschen
geilen haufen lächerlich frauenquote
gefährlich vergewaltigung
messer missbrauch

Figure 13: *Word cloud for the Manosphere subset*

The keywords related to the manosphere are vastly different from those coming from incel sources. They mostly feature slang words and neutral terms related to violence such as "Opfer", "Krieg", "Gewalt", "Tod" along with vulgarity and profanity ("Titten", "Arsch", "ficken", "Sau", etc.). The presence of neutral terms related to violence (along with more precise terms such as "Fachkräfte" or "Diskriminierung") next to outright vulgarity potentially suggests two different groups within the dataset: a more factual, (pseudo-)intellectual branch, and another one having low-level discussions.

Fringe

Figure 14: *Word cloud for the Fringe subset*

Fringe platforms are home to many radical ideas and are known for their very loose moderation policies (or lack thereof). Unsurprisingly, racism is very high along with mentions of Jews, which is linked to the rampant antisemitism these platforms host. Words insulting women ("cunt", "bitch") are present but not central.

Mainstream

Figure 15: *Word cloud for the Mainstream subset*

Our control subset (50% random data, 50% women-related) reflects a broader variety of topics. "Muslime", "Islam", "Juden" and "Antisemitismus" indicate online discussions on religions, while other terms such as "Krieg", "Querdenker", "Ausländer" and "Impfpflicht" reflect other aspects of political life. Overall, these terms are indicative of online discussions about societal issues, as one would expect from mainstream online platforms. It is to be noted that incel-related words appear on the margins ("incels", "chad") but are not statistically significant.

Misogynistic threats and sexual intimidation

In this section, we zoom in on the violent nature of misogyny, namely violent threats (e.g. death threats) and a subset thereof: sexual intimidation (e.g. rape threats). While misogyny in general is detrimental and discriminatory for women, violent manifestations of it are the most pressing concerns, and may constitute illegal hate speech in the most extreme cases. It is therefore of public interest to know more precisely where it occurs the most and under what forms. To quantify those phenomena, we selected messages that met all of the following criteria:

Misogynistic threats

- toxicity score of over 80% (0.80);
- references to both hate categories: "Sexism" and "Violence".

Sexual intimidation

- toxicity score of over 80% (0.80);
- references to all three hate categories: "Sexism", "Violence" and "Sex".

The toxicity score and hate categories are based on our annotated lexicons explained in 5.1. The intersection of those dimensions as well as the combined presence of the aforementioned categories constitute a reasonable assumption for quantitative analysis.

For instance, the occurrences of "woman" and "torture" would cause a message to pertain to both categories related to misogynistic threats ("Sexism" and "Violence") but may have a toxicity score of 0 if it is mentioned in a neutral context, e.g. an activist raising awareness. For that message to be included, it has to appear in a highly toxic context. Similarly, should the terms "slut", "fuck" and "kill" appear together, they would correspond to the three needed categories for the "Sexual Intimidation" subset as well as themselves contributing to the toxicity score.
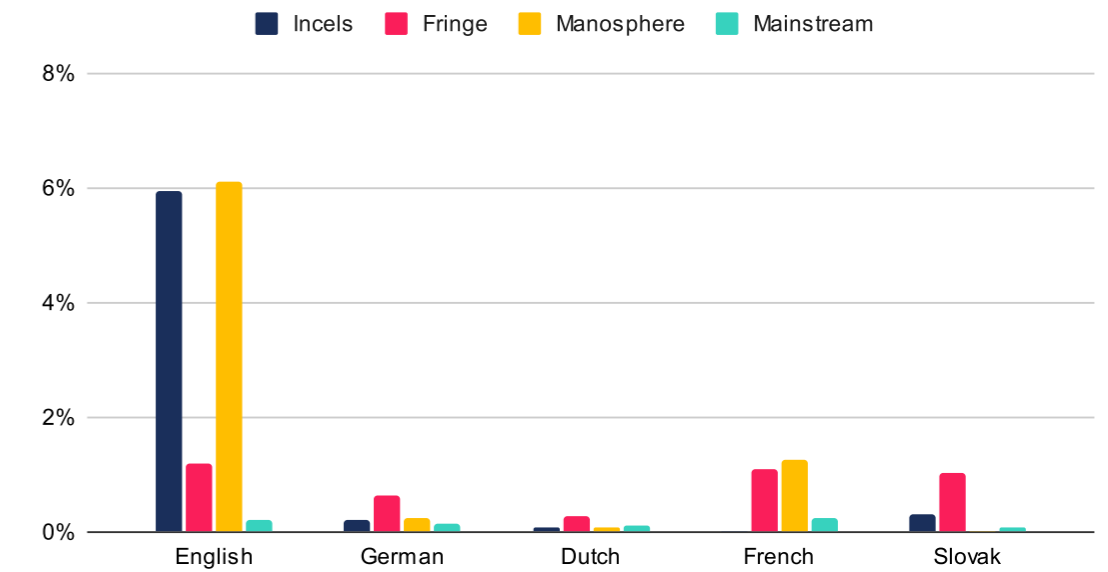
Figure 16: *Proportion of misogynistic threats for each subset per language*

English stands out as having the biggest proportion of misogynistic threats in the Incel and manosphere communities, while we observe minor peaks in French (fringe and manosphere) and Slovak (fringe). It should be noted that manual exploration of online spaces revealed English to likely be the communication language of the large majority of Incels, irrespective of their mother tongue.

All of the Incel threats are from the main Incel forums, and 95% of English threatening messages from the manosphere come from five subreddits[82]. Threats coming from fringe platforms all emanate from the unregulated and infamous platform 4chan.
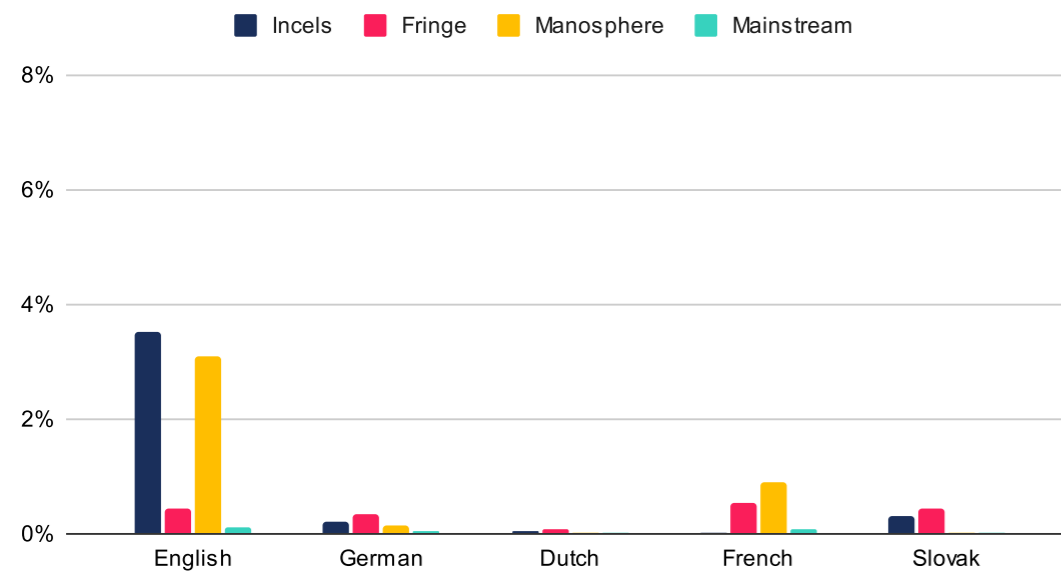
Sexual intimidation

Figure 17: *Proportion of sexual threats for each subset per language*

We observe a similar distribution as for the misogynistic threats. This is to be expected since all posts containing sexual intimidation would be included in the misogynistic threats, while the opposite is not true. Sexual intimidation must include an explicit sexual component. The sources of these intimidations are the same as those for threats. Outside English, it should be noted that they remain fairly limited.
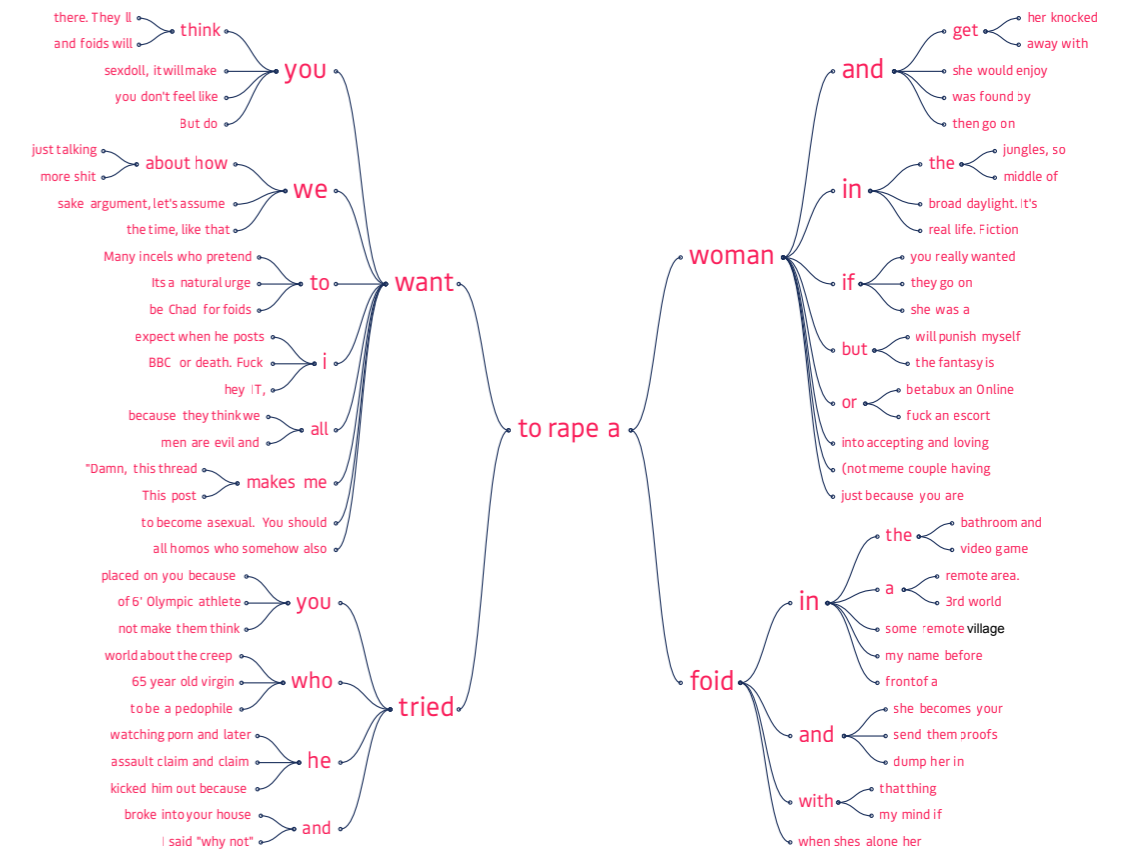
Figure 18: *Word co-occurrences of "rape" in sexually threatening messages in English*

The above word tree shows word combinations found in messages from the dataset. The bigger a word appears the more frequent it was found in messages, and it is connected to its most frequent co-occurrences by a line. The left and right sides should be read independently: words on the left side do not necessarily connect with words on the right side, only up to the central word. The word tree above is an example of the most prominent word combinations of example messages containing sexual intimidation in English.

Firstly, "woman" and "foid" are the two most frequent words used with "rape". While "woman" may be expected, "foid" shows the frequent dehumanization of women in instances of sexual threats. Secondly, two verbs are associated with "rape": "want" and "tried", indicating either volition or an attempt. This is especially concerning since both those verbs are associated with personal pronouns such as "I" or "we", rather than "he" or "they".
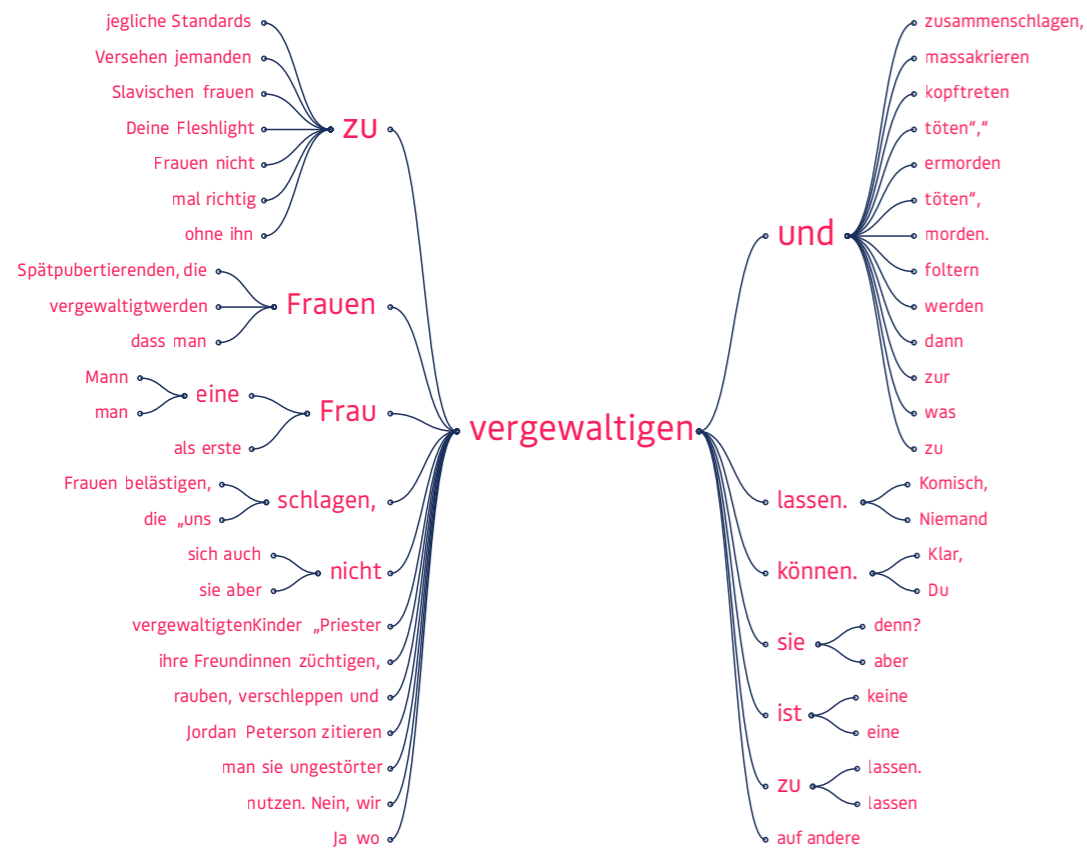
The word tree above shows examples of how "vergewaltigen" is used in incel circles. Further investigation in the dataset shows that the word is used mainly in two ways: in a rape fantasy setting (as exemplified by the concurrent use of "und foltern", "und töten", ...) or to criticize and blame other people (mainly people with a migration background). The concurrent use of "vergewaltigen" and violent actions underlines the desire for violence around the notion of "rape" from this community.

5.4. The language of the Incel community

In this section we will start by exploring Incel vernacular before investigating to what degree it has seeped into other online discourse spaces. Since the majority of the data is in English, we will mainly look at it from an English-speaking angle and focus on the German part when relevant. As mentioned previously, it is useful to investigate the English Incel vernacular since a large part of it carries over untranslated into other languages.

Furthermore, since English serves as lingua franca on the Internet, a portion of messages written in English will necessarily also pertain to our target countries, even though the proportion in which it happens cannot be known.

Overview

Incel vernacular from this word cloud can be split into three main categories:

- **Sexuality and vulgarity**

  Examples: "fuck", "fucking", "sex", "shit"

  These terms are extremely common since they can both serve as swear words and as actual references to sexuality, the latter being a core component of Incel identity.

- **People categorization**

  Examples: "incel", "incels", "chad", "foid", "foids", "whore", "subhuman", "manlet"

  These words are part of the "incel taxonomy" of people who are never seen in a neutral light. They are categorized according to their attractivity and/or their sexual activity where "incels" and "manlets" are at the bottom of the sexual food chain while "chads" are on top. "Foids" and "whores" are very common derogatory terms for women in general. "Subhuman" can be used either for women or be self-referential, as self-deprecation is also a significant component of incel identity.

- **Insider vs. outsider**

  Examples: "blackpill", "blackpilled", "normies", "based", "bluepilled"

  Such terms serve to describe the binary distinction between adherents to the Incel ideology who have taken the "black pill" (the Incel variation of the "red pill" from the movie "Matrix") and those who have not, the "normies" who have taken the "blue pill" and chosen to "stay away from the truth".

Other dimensions are to be found (ethnic, intellectual, violent, religious) but are not as central as those mentioned above.
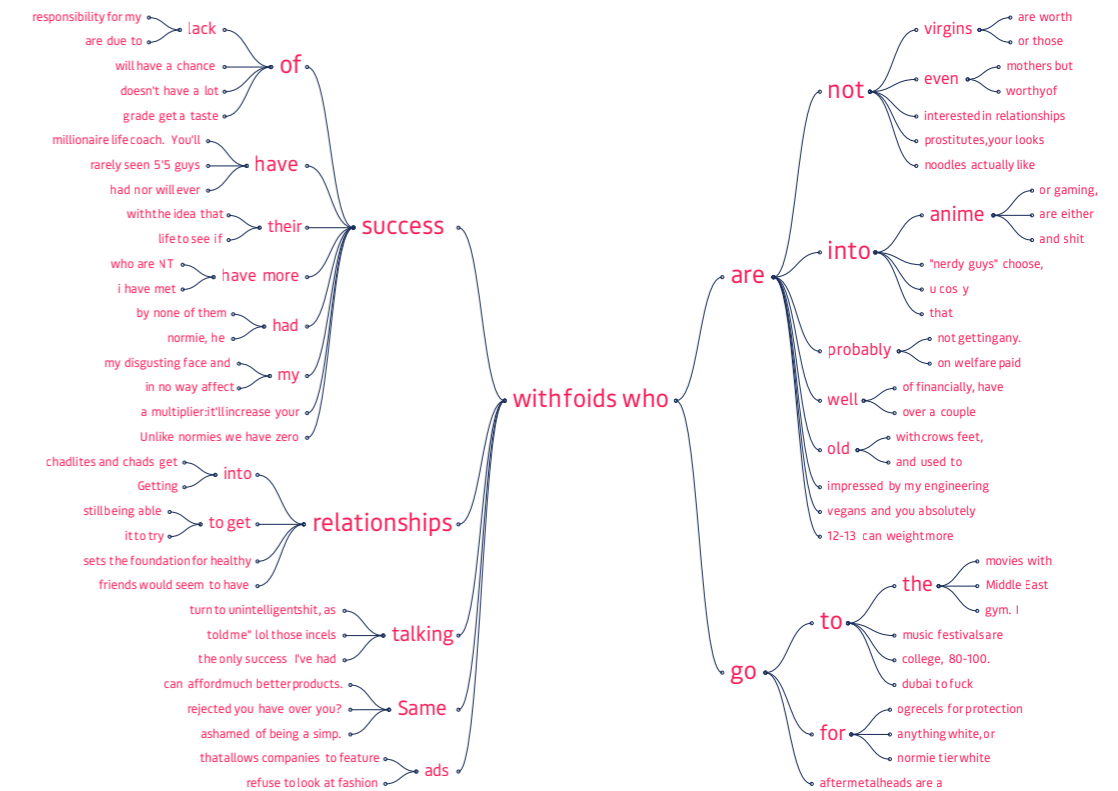

Figure 21: *Word tree for "foids" from Incel messages in English*

We also took a look at a central term ("foids") from the previous visualization to have a sense of its use in context. Most of the conversations revolve around interactions and relationships. Indeed, relationships are bound to be a central topic since they define themselves through their celibacy. The casual tone found in many examples contrasts with the dehumanization conveyed by the word "foids". That word is not found in outburst of anger and frustration, but in casual chats about relationships. This points to the banalization of that dehumanization and to "foids" being standard and synonymous for women by default.

Incel influence

In the following charts, we look at the proportion of words and phrases associated with Incels in the different subsets. The first chart serves to convey the sense of magnitude compared to the Incel community and the second allows for a clearer view of the proportion of Incel vernacular in the other subsets.
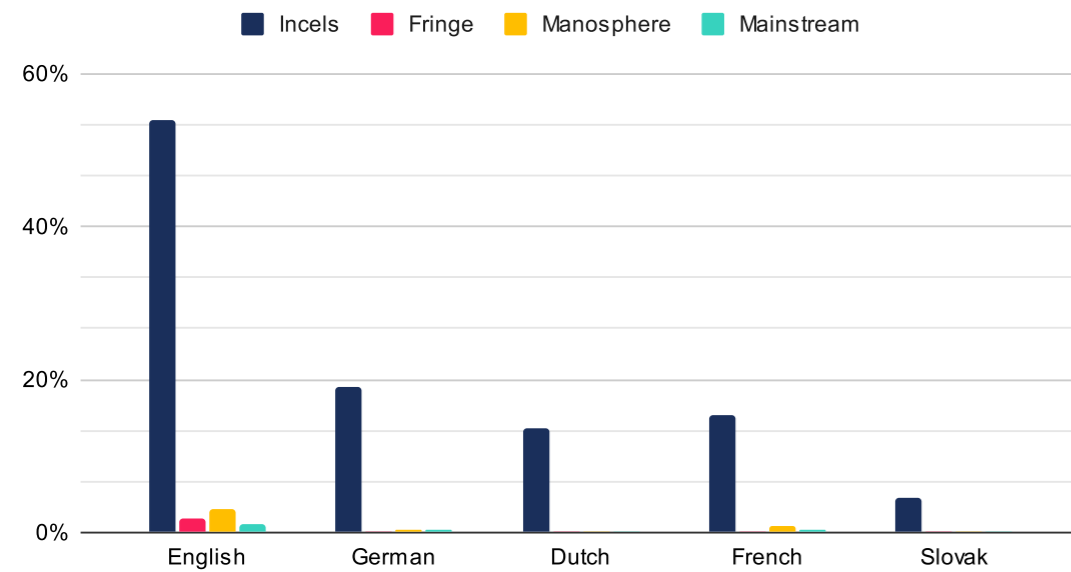
Incel vernacular proportion

Figure 22: *Proportion of Incel vernacular in subsets per language*

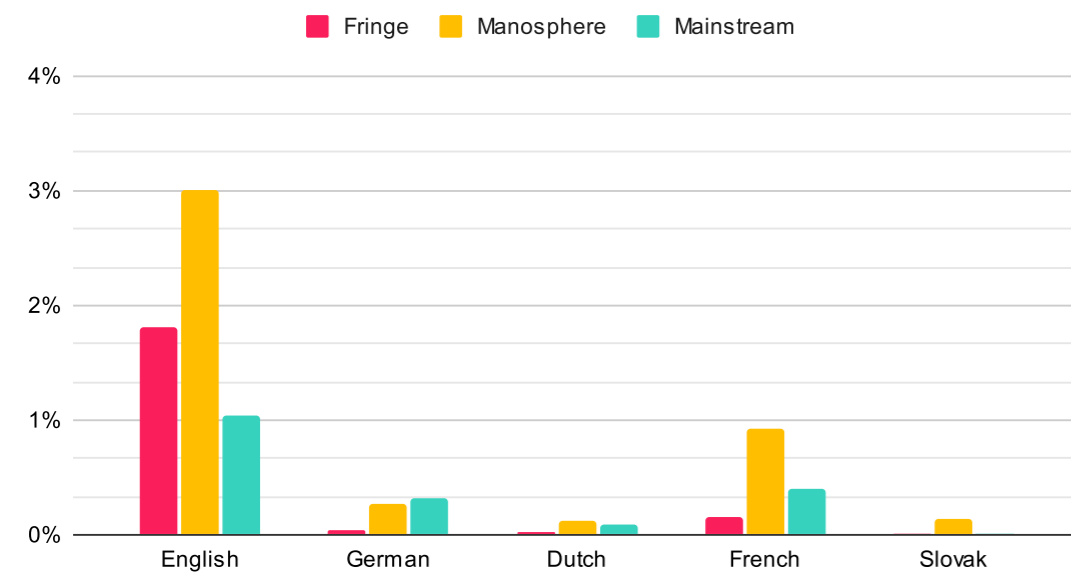## Incel vernacular proportion (zoom in)

Figure 23: *Proportion of Incel vernacular in subsets per language (without the Incel subset)*

On the whole, the presence of Incel vernacular in other subsets was marginal, although it seems to have penetrated the English language space more than others. In all instances except German, the manosphere is the community most influenced by Incel vernacular. This is explained by their shared defiance, contempt or sometimes hatred of women. It is therefore logical that their vocabulary would overlap more than others.

The following word clouds show which Incel-related terms appear in different communities. It is to be noted that, as the graphs above show, the Incel influence remains rather limited and these terms are found in small proportions. Further research should focus on tracking their evolution over time from a larger dataset.
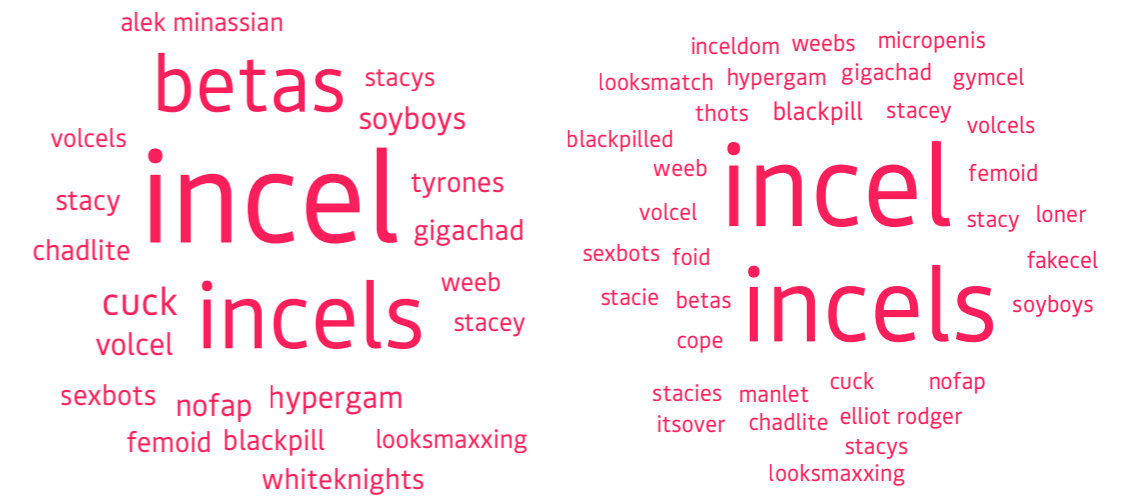

Figure 24: *German word cloud for Incel messages*

Figure 25: *German word cloud for messages on mainstream platforms*

Even though these word clouds are derived from German data, it is interesting to note that they exclusively contain Incel vernacular borrowed from English.

Apart from the evident "incel" and "incels", the manosphere seems to focus on "betas". This term (also found as "beta males") designates men inferior to "alphas" or "alpha males". Other words like "soyboys" or "whiteknights" could be put in the same category. "Volcel" and "volcels", designating "voluntary Incels" may refer to MGTOW.

Both the manosphere and the mainstream spaces contain some terms associated with more extreme expressions of "inceldom": "blackpill", "blackpilled", "itsover" as well as names of two North-American incel terrorists: Alek M. and Elliot R.. Glorification of previous terror actors is commonplace in extremist circles (e.g. Brenton Tarrant in far-right extremist circles) where they are seen as heroes or martyrs for their cause. This phenomenon should be monitored so as not to inspire future terrorist attacks.

5.5. Conclusion of the quantitative study

In conclusion, misogyny is still prevalent and increasing on all platform types, with incel and manosphere communities exhibiting the most toxic forms of it. Dehumanization of women is central and ties into (sexual) violence, either real or fantasized. Germany shows equivalent levels of misogyny as other languages on all platform types. While mainstream conversations remain relatively preserved from Incel influence, Incel and manosphere communities still feature worrisome, violent language towards women. Further research is needed to understand the interplay between communities and the evolution of (misogynistic) conversations around women.
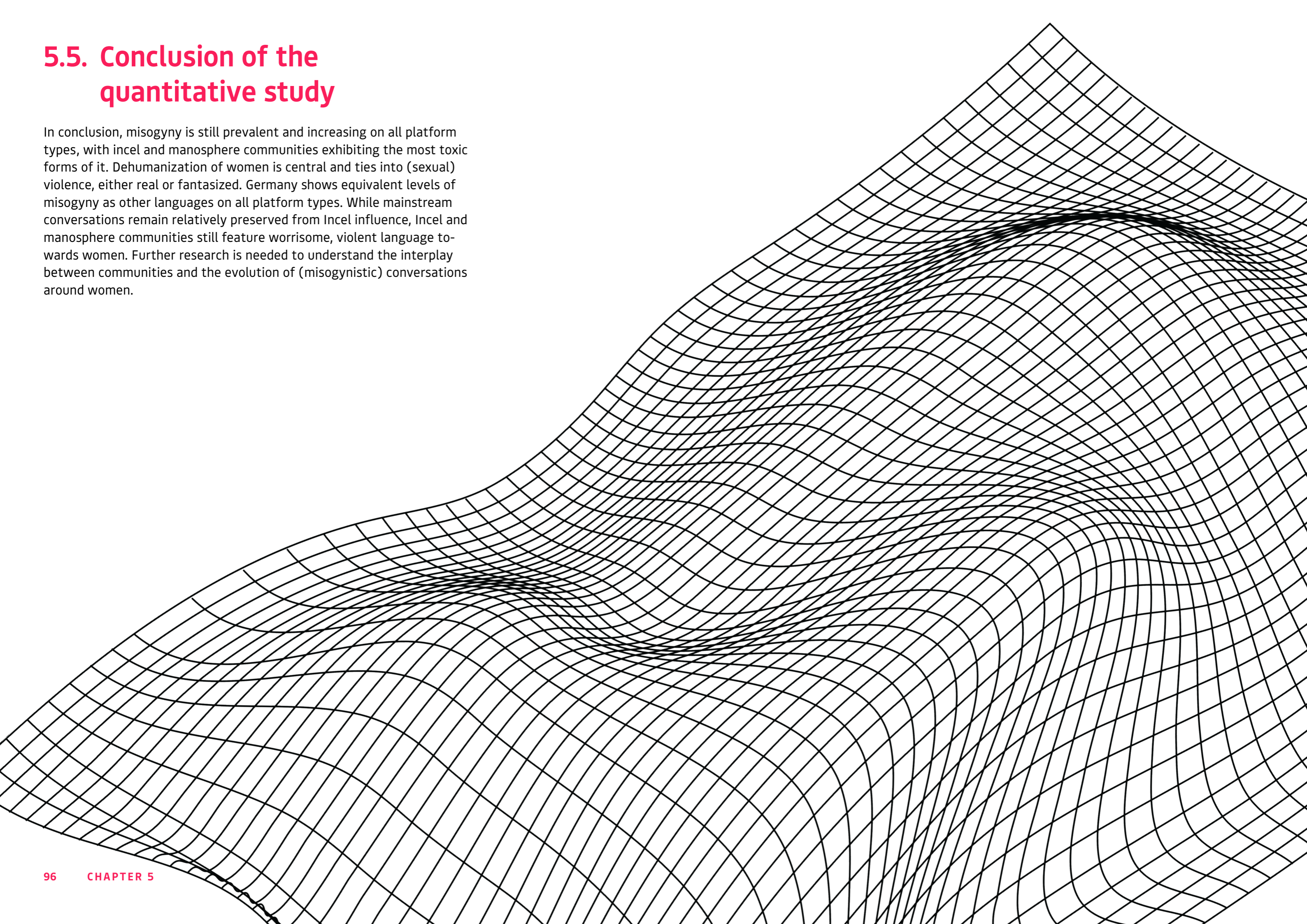
6
Conclusion

Our pilot study aimed to highlight the phenomenological diversity of online misogyny and to demonstrate initial ways in which its spread across platforms and languages can be measured and analyzed over time. We limited the scope to identifiable patterns and groups of actors, approaching the topic through qualitative and quantitative content analysis, linguistic analysis and toxicity analysis. Our assessments reveal that online misogyny is present in many spheres of the internet and uses disinhibited language to threaten and frighten women with the aim of exercising patriarchal forms of power.

One element connecting the qualitative and quantitative parts of this study is the realization that contradictory narratives, ideologies and expressions are associated with online misogyny. While fantasies of fundamental superiority exist that advocate the oppression of women and deny them a life of self-determination, at the same time, we also find inferiority complexes that usually translate into fantasies of revenge. The narratives and arguments of different scenes therefore prove to be quite different. However, they arrive at a common denominator in the degradation and objectification of women along with aggressive sexist expression.

Finally, we should note that misogynistic communication has increased over the past two years. This is being fueled by the visibility of misogynistic influencers, such as Andrew Tate, who normalize derogatory language and violent acts against women and seek to educate young men on becoming patriarchs through various coaching formats. At the same time, the trend is giving rise to an entire market of coaching packages that shape young men's perceptions of the role of women in democratic societies via impactful social media formats. The fact that this has so far gone unsanctioned also suggests that the consequences for participation in public discourse have been far too poorly understood by policy-makers thus far.

6.1. Recommendations

Raise awareness about the excesses of this issue: The endemic nature of misogynistic communication must be understood as an issue for society as a whole. The problem often only becomes visible when female politicians and women in public life are affected. However, misogynistic communication and attacks are part of the everyday lives of millions of women. It must be made clear that online misogyny has psychological and physical consequences for those affected and is a threat to democracy across the board.

Establish permanent monitoring: Anti-feminist trends must be better documented. The Amadeu Antonio Foundation's Anti-Feminism Reporting Office already has a monitoring method based on reports, which also records online incidents. However, there have been no approaches to date

using large databases for identifying trends and places on digital platforms where misogynistic dynamics are spreading. This requires greater data support as well as free access to platform interfaces via civil society interventions.

Expand international cooperation: As described in the report, we are dealing with transnational phenomena in these subcultures, which have so far been largely considered only in a nation-state context. Greater exchange is needed at both the judicial and research levels, which requires dedicated resources for maintaining networks and catalogs of expertise from relevant researchers – an aspect often neglected in day-to-day work.

Promote interdisciplinary cooperation: Online misogyny is a multifaceted phenomenon that, as described in the report, assumes many forms. To adequately describe these, experts are needed from the fields of language technology, linguistics, political science and more, with criminal law experts focusing on the legal implications and psychologists addressing the psychological effects of misogyny. Increasing cooperation among the various disciplines involved is highly desirable, especially to arrive at preventative actions in this complex field.

Make platforms more responsible: So far, no platform is tackling the problem of misogyny head-on, and it largely remains an externalized issue. Moreover, many misogynistic posts do not violate the Community Guidelines or the NetzDG as they are subtle and not criminally punishable. Despite that (or for this very reason) many platforms are not safe, acting as places where the privacy of women is invaded. This demands stronger protection programs.

Provide effective protection for those impacted: Studies show that those affected by misogyny often do not know how to behave when the targets of hate. While advice centers exist, those affected parties also know their rights as well as options for defending themselves. This rests on creating increased privacy protection for women, which can be resorted to when assaults or coordinated attacks strike. In addition, effective measures and instruments to support the women affected are needed, along with tools to ensure that these are made known to the widest possible public.

Attention to misogynistic expressions online by the National Coordinator of the DSA: Ensure that misogynistic expressions are one of the issues that the national coordinator for the DSA will focus on. One measure could include encouraging research into the extent and to what extent hatred against can be a women's part of systemic risk analyses. Also, by ensuring that the National Coordinator of Trusted Flagger organizations have gathered in the context around women, can help and report harmful expressions online.

Ensure that more knowledge of misogynistic expressions is spread within police services: The jargon of online misogyny needs literacy on codes and

specific slang. There is a greater chance of recognizing misogyny that is already being stirred up or inspired online if police officers are trained in recognizing the problem. For example, ensure that the online behavior of perpetrators of domestic violence against women is also included in research into violence against women in a safe environment.

Work to identify criminal expressions of hatred against women in order to help police forces enforce legislation: For example, if (violent) threats are part of the expressions, how much is it punishable? Give the police services the opportunity to learn and provide them with tools to actually follow this up. Also ensure more capacity in (emergency) aid and police services of people specialized in detecting hate expressions against women online. For example, by taking proactive action to identify abuses against women online.

Investigate to what extent and why the manosphere and the overarching alt right sphere pose a threat to women. These two communities are increasingly intertwined and it should be explored in more detail in the future.

Deeper investigation into the following: Continuous monitoring of violent speech and threats in Incel communities and investigate a possible correlation to real-life events. Explore the potential of generative AI in automating counter-narratives. Investigate misogyny in dating apps, websites and forums. How and by whom are misogynistic narratives pushed on a political level? Are bots and lifestyle influencers (tradwives, …) being used to push narratives, and if so, how? Are the narratives tied to anti-western sentiments? If influence is shown, determine where the financing comes from.

6.2. Outlook

Due to limited time and resources, this study was only able to provide initial insights into the dynamics of online misogyny. Further research is needed to develop better prevention and intervention measures. These include:

A focus on intersectionality: Misogyny often occurs together with the devaluation of other groups. In this sense, intersectional dynamics must also be taken into account and investigated. Further research is needed into how different forms of devaluation are interrelated to better grasp which groups are specifically affected by misogyny.

Researching diffusion dynamics: There is a need for a better understanding of how marginalized actors and narratives spread in the digital mainstream and which resonance surfaces they encounter, such as in the area

of right-wing extremism. Methods of cross-platform tracing of narratives and networks must be tested here to shed light on the structure of the respective scenes.

Testing transnational comparative designs: The study revealed quantitative differences in the prevalence of misogyny across different country contexts. The underlying causes of these differences, as well as the places where similar patterns prevail, require further detailed investigation. This calls for in-depth case analyses using transnational comparisons that can highlight more clearly the dynamics unfolding in German-speaking countries in contrast to other countries.

Appendix

Data sources

URL	Language
GeenStijl	Dutch
/r/jerkbudsNLlllllllll (Reddit)	Dutch
/r/tokkiefeesboek (Reddit)	Dutch
/r/cirkeltrek (Reddit)	Dutch
/r/Ik_ihe (Reddit)	Dutch
/r/Meerderheidnederland (Reddit)	Dutch
https://www.facebook.com/nietoptv/	Dutch
4chan	Dutch
https://incels.is/	English
https://www.reddit.com/r/BanFemaleHateSubs	English
https://www.facebook.com/thanksfeminism/	English
Exposing the truth about Feminism (reddit.com)	English
Where Are All The Good Men? (reddit.com)	English
Toxic Femininity (reddit.com)	English
https://reddit.com/r/mensrights	English
https://looksmax.org	English
https://www.facebook.com/TraditionalWest	English
https://theistsunited.quora.com/	English
https://hypocrisyoffeminism.quora.com/	English
https://www.facebook.com/theadvancedmanfb	English
https://www.facebook.com/TheMasculineRenaissance	English
https://www.forums.red/	English
https://lestroisetendards.com	French
https://lobservateur.site/blog/	French
https://www.aimeles.net/	French

URL	Language
https://www.jeuxvideo.com/forums/0-51-0-1-0-1-0-blabla-18-25-ans.htm	French
https://www.deveniralpha.net	French
https://mgtow-france.fr/	French
https://maennerboard.de/index.php	German
https://manndat.de/	German
https://8chan.moe/kohlchan/	German
https://www.pickupforum.de/	German
WikiMANNia	German
https://t.me/lukreta	German
https://t.me/s/CharlotteCordayTelegram	German
https://www.facebook.com/dasbleibtmaennersache	German
https://www.deveniralpha.net/articles.html	German
https://rotepilleblog.wordpress.com/	German
https://mgtowdeutsch.wordpress.com/	German
https://lollipops4equality.wordpress.com/	German
https://das-maennermagazin.com/	German
https://masculinebehaviour.wordpress.com/	German
http://www.theredpill.cz/	Slovak
https://www.seduction.sk/index.php/blog-ako-zbalit-zvadzat	Slovak

Further literature on this topic that was used for this study can be found here:
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Imprint

Tracing Online Misogyny

**An analysis of misogynist ideologies and practices
from a German-international perspective**

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