

ANALYZING DISCUSSIONS OF POWER AND REVENGE
WITHIN A FEMCEL ONLINE
COMMUNITY

by

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ABSTRACT

Research on involuntary celibacy has overwhelmingly focused on men incels and their virtual communities, leaving a gap in research involving women involuntary celibates. The present study is one of the first known to rigorously examine the population of women who self-identify as involuntary celibates, femcels. Over 24,000 user posts across 3,461 discussion threads were collected from the online femcel discussion forum, ThePinkPill.co. In utilizing sexual frustration theory as the framework of this study, threads containing the word “power” or “revenge” were identified and qualitatively analyzed for prevalent patterns and themes. Findings from this study suggest femcels’ discussions involving power focused on men possessing most of the power in society and the power of beauty that some women hold, but that overall, women, and especially femcels, lack power in many ways. Femcels discussed revenge much less than power, but when they did, men were identified as their targets while others such as women, their parents, or society in general appeared less frequent. Femcels also engaged in thorough analysis and commentary about navigating societal norms, gender roles, and worries about finding an intimate partner while avoiding the dangerous threat often encountered from aggressive and violent men. In addition to including femcels within the research on incelism where they are typically left out, this study more broadly opens up the dialogue on women’s sexual desires, explores practical implications of negative emotions relating to sexual frustration and incelism, and urges for increased research dedicated to this population and their mental health struggles.

Keywords: involuntary celibacy, femcels, incels, sexual frustration theory

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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

Involuntary celibates, or incels, have become a growing topic of discussion in recent years, both in the media with the reporting of mass violence incidents committed by men who align themselves with incel ideology and in academia, with researchers rushing to try and understand the individuals who subscribe to radical incel beliefs (Ging, 2019; Jaki et al., 2019; Maxwell et al., 2020; O’Malley et al., 2020; Valkenburgh, 2018). These incidents result in journalist analysis and subsequent public perception of incels as socially inept, resentful, and angry men (Kay, 2022). Many know and have their own opinions about men who identify within the incel community, but an overshadowed and growing movement is the community of women who self-identify as incels (henceforth, femcels). The website that many in this subpopulation use, ThePinkPill.co, defines a femcel as “an adult woman who is below average in physical appearance (<4/10) or suffers a significant impediment that prevents her from securing a romantic relationship- NOT sex” (ThePinkPill.co, 2022). At the beginning of my examination into this community, this website had 431 registered members. About six months later, this website had 662 members. This growth of the online community of femcels is just one of the reasons that point to the need and significance of research into this understudied population. More broadly, research seems to point to women having less sex, as Ueda et al. (2020) report data from the 2016-2018 version of the General Social Survey that show approximately 20% of U.S. women aged 18-24 did not have sex the previous year, while data from the 2017-2019 version of the CDC’s National Survey of Family Growth displays that 13.5% of over 6,000 women taking the survey indicated that they never had sex (National Center for Health Statistics,

2020). Although a majority of these women would probably not identify as femcels, that does not necessarily mean that they desire to live a life of celibacy. Researching and writing about women's involuntary celibacy is taking a step in the direction for potentially transforming how society views and understands woman's sexuality as a whole. It opens up the conversation on the topic of women's sexual desires and disputes commonly held assumptions of women's sexual advantage.

The topic of femcel existence is a controversial one, as the larger men incel community debates whether women can even qualify as incels. Many men incels resent the concept of a woman possibly being involuntary celibate and therefore refute and disagree with the femcel identity and the movement entirely (Cottee, 2021; Farrell et al., 2019; Kay, 2022; Scotto di Carlo, 2022). These men claim that women who try and categorize themselves as incels are simply voluntarily celibate, as it is impossible for a woman to be an involuntary celibate due to the advantages they have over men in securing sexual relations.

Despite the attempted exclusion from men incels, many women do take on the femcel identity and use online communities such as ThePinkPill discussion forum to “use their social exclusion as the basis for forming homosocial bonds with one another” (Kay, 2022, p.37). The current study examines the experiences, feelings, and beliefs of people who self-define as femcels and addresses the gap in the literature where research on femcels is nonexistent. This study aims to provide insight into the understudied population of these self-proclaimed femcels through a review of applicable literature, a thematic analysis of the femcel online community, ThePinkPill.co, and a discussion of the findings and the implications they provide.

CHAPTER TWO – REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Origins of Incels

Although the term *incel* is now predominately associated with men and extremist ideologies, the term was coined by a woman to describe individuals of any gender who were encountering difficulties in developing romantic or sexual relationships. The first-reported use of the shortening of the word ‘involuntary celibacy’ was by a Canadian university student, Alana Boltwood. Her website, the first known online incel community, “*Alana’s Involuntary Celibacy Project*” was initially set up in 1997, and it served as a place that allowed men and women a space to discuss feelings of loneliness and frustrations over the lack of human connections (Cottee, 2021; Daly & Reed, 2021; Hoffman et al., 2020; Kay, 2022; Palma, 2019). In the infancy of the website, it did just that. Alana was able to post articles to the website and run a mailing list used as a support forum inclusive to all. It was through these posts and discussions that Alana shortened the phrase “involuntary celibate” to “invcel”, and later to “incel” because of a mailing list member’s suggestion for easier pronunciation (Taylor, 2018). By the early 2000s, Alana had moved on from the community, as other aspects of her life took focus, and her dating life was flourishing. She passed her website ownership onto someone else, and they expanded the online content into another larger website. From there, the incel movement began its evolution and further would process into something else altogether. The new forum website, along with others being created similar to it, shifted toward becoming a virtual space that promoted ideas of male solidarity, anti-feminism, and hate.

Manosphere

Online discussion communities enable individuals to have a shared space to congregate and express their ideas, feelings, and beliefs about myriad forms of behavior (Ging, 2019; Holt, 2007; Holt et al., 2019). These online spaces allow individuals to create a sense of community that may be absent in their real-world interactions with others and can foster these individuals to develop a shared value system (Holt, 2007; Holt et al., 2019). A popular type of online discussion group is web forums, which are comprised of threads that begin when a user creates a post by writing a body of text under a subject title. This allows for other individuals to comment below, responding with posts of their own, thus creating linked posts that function as threads (Sugiura et al., 2016).

The term manosphere is used to describe the broad online spaces and communities with connections to interests in concepts such as men's rights and anti-feminism. Many of these groups enable spaces for incels to connect and discuss topics related to their philosophy; examples include former Reddit groups such as r/TheRedPill, r/MGTOW (Men Going Their Own Way), and r/MensRants (Ging, 2019). Many examples of research into online men incel communities such as these have been completed in recent years.

Jaki et al. (2019) used the online community, Incels.me, to analyze the discourse within the forum and to gather more information on the overall nature of the incel movement, especially in terms of its tendency to engage in hateful rhetoric and forms of violent extremism. These researchers utilized both qualitative and quantitative techniques. They used Natural Language Processing and Machine Learning to analyze the rhetoric present within the online community, and then manually reviewed selected discussion threads for qualitative content analysis. In doing

so, researchers showed how users created in-group identity by using subcultural language centered around discussions of physical appearance, sexuality, and gender.

Another study looked at yet another banned incel online community, the subreddit r/Braincels. In utilizing a thematic content analysis, researchers found prevalent themes in discussions such as constructed tropes of women and hypocritical approaches to gender (Maxwell et al., 2020). Producing similar results through their inductive qualitative analysis of posts made in two different online incel communities, O'Malley et al. (2020) found five different normative orders that the communities were structured around, including the sexual market, women as naturally evil, legitimizing masculinity, male oppression, and violence. These researchers go on to discuss that these normative orders found on the forums serve as an outlet to propagate and reinforce anti-women beliefs, idealizations of violence, and belief of men's disenfranchisement. Further, they suggest that these harmful ideas being spread within these communities may serve as a process of radicalization and may contribute to offline violence committed by men incels. In pointing to the implications of their studies both Maxwell et al. (2020) and O'Malley et al. (2020) suggested the need for increased education regarding topics such as critical media engagement and healthier expression of anger or negative emotions. Critical media engagement is also addressed in research from Preston et al. (2021), where they examined comments made on the most popular men incel community website right now, Incels.co. Researchers argued that incels' interactions and engagements with technology reinforce essentialist views on gender, support ideas of men's domination, dehumanize women, and minimize incels' own misogyny. Additionally, all three articles suggested further research regarding incel identity.

Prior Theoretical Frameworks

Early research studies into the topic focused on life course theory in their analysis of involuntary celibacy. Donnelly et al. (2001), in using more of a deductive approach guided by previous sexuality literature and life course theory, recruited 82 (60 men and 22 women) involuntary celibates for their research study. They recruited individuals who were members of the previously mentioned first known online incel community, “*Alana’s Involuntary Celibacy Project*” (Palma, 2019). These researchers utilized an open-ended electronic questionnaire comprised of 71 measures to understand the process by which persons become and remain involuntarily celibate. Through their quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods, researchers found a common theme within participants’ responses of having difficulty with the timing and maintenance of normative sexual transitions. Consistent with the life course theoretical framework utilized in their study, they found that many of these individuals felt that they were different than their peers because they had missed out on important steps within their sexual development and in forming romantic interpersonal relationships. Researchers also noted that many participants reported patterns of depression, despair, frustration, and a lack of confidence; characteristics we see being reported from incels in current research on this population 20 years later (Maxwell et al., 2020; O’Malley et al., 2020; Speckhard et al., 2021).

Another popular theoretical framework utilized by researchers in this area is the concept of hegemonic masculinity. First proposed by Connell in 1987 and expanded on in more recent versions (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Messerschmidt, 2018), this theory suggests that a hierarchical structure exists within society, in which dominant individuals that hold masculine traits, such as being strong, assertive, or leaders, are located at the top; while subordinate, marginalized, and complicit individuals are at the bottom of the hierarchy. In later reformations

of the theory, Messerschmidt distinguishes “hegemonic masculinities” and “dominant masculinities”, suggesting that the latter “are not always associated with and linked to gender hegemony but refer to (locally, regionally, and globally) the most celebrated, common, or current form of masculinity in a particular social setting” (Messerschmidt & Messner, 2018, p. 42). Real-world examples that illustrate this concept include popular young men on the football team in high school or men who are wealthy and successful in their careers. These types of individuals possess traits that are opposite of ones commonly held by incels (Scaptura & Boyle, 2020), and may result in these men feeling a threat or challenge to their masculinity. Thus, this concept has provided researchers with a theoretical lens through which incelism can be analyzed.

Valkenburgh (2018) utilized this framework as he explored the now-banned subreddit, r/TheRedPill. Through his content analysis of the subreddit’s purpose and underlying ideology, he concluded that this community is an outward expression of hegemonic masculinity and additionally includes neoliberal and scientific discourse (Valkenburgh, 2018). He exhibited how the men on the forum regard and treat women as economic commodities and reject emotional vulnerability, which further showcased the participants’ embracement of concepts from hegemonic masculinity theory. The theme of hegemonic masculinity is seen again in Ging’s (2019) broader and more systematic analysis of the manosphere, as she found while views of antifeminism remain, many new toxic assemblages seem to appear and “complicate the orthodox alignment of power and dominance with hegemonic masculinity” (Ging, 2019, p. 638). While Daly and Reed (2021), agreed with the utilization of hegemonic masculinity as the theoretical framework for these studies, they also argued that they overlook the more nuanced nature of hegemonic masculinity, such as studies omitting the relational aspects of hegemonic masculinity which legitimate unequal gender relationships. Researchers claimed that updated models of this

theory (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Messerschmidt, 2018) would be relied on, along with accounting for the relational and legitimating aspects of these processes, and accounting for how they function within different levels of society more can be learned in utilizing this theoretical framework (Daly & Reed, 2021).

Current Theoretical Framework: Sexual Frustration Theory

A recently proposed theory provides itself useful as the theoretical lens through which this study can be viewed. Sexual frustration theory (Lankford, 2021) builds upon prior theories that cover topics such as frustration and aggression, strain, self-control, and sexual selection. This theory proposes that three different types of sexual frustration, unfulfilled desires to have sex, unavailable partners, and unsatisfying sexual activities, seem to increase risks of aggression, violence, and crime. Additionally, this theory proposes four categories that sexually frustrated individuals are likely to fall into based on the consequences of their sexual frustration: sexual relief-seeking, power-seeking, revenge-seeking, and displaced frustration. Seeking desires for sexual relief may manifest itself in ways that include greater interest in risky sexual behavior or participation in illegal sexual acts. The second proposed consequence of sexual frustration, power-seeking, focuses on the power and control that a sexually frustrated individual might lack. In this category, an individual may seek to gain power in ways such as improving their social status and/or physical appearance or perpetrating violence over others. The third identified consequence of sexual frustration centers around revenge-seeking behaviors towards people or groups that they may blame for their sufferings. The last category, displaced frustration, is categorized as when a sexually frustrated individual acts against a target or targets with seemingly no direct connections to their circumstances.

Incel Terminology

An important area to touch on, as much of the prior literature revolving around inceldom does, is the presence of neologisms within the online community. While exploring group dynamics within the Incels.me website, Jaki et al. (2019) discussed the subcultural language used by members of the community. The authors grouped the terms into three distinct categories: designations for themselves, their targets, and incel ideology. The first category was comprised of terms that serve as designations for themselves; usually, different word formations including the suffix *-cel*. A relevant example would be a *femcel*- a woman who identifies herself as an incel (Kay, 2022). Other examples that fell into this category are *mentalcels*, which are incels that attribute their inceldom to neurological differences or mental health disorders, and *volcels*, a term used by men incels to classify women incels as voluntarily celibate and simply overly picky (Hintz & Baker, 2021; Jaki et al., 2019; Kay, 2022).

The second category that Jaki et al. (2019) proposed includes terms that serve as designations for their targets. Across the incelosphere, *Chad* is a term to describe high-status men who embody a strong form of masculinity. Likewise, the term *Stacy* is used to describe a physically attractive, sexually successful woman (Cottee, 2021; Daly & Reed, 2021; Hintz & Baker, 2021; Jaki et al., 2019; Kay, 2022; Maxwell et al., 2020). Subordinate to a *Stacy* in looks and status; the term *Becky* is used to describe women who are average or relatively attractive (Menzie, 2020). The term *femoid* is a dehumanizing term used by men incels in place of the word woman or female to construct women as objects. (Cottee, 2021; Kay, 2022; Preston et al., 2021). Anyone who is of average looks or is outside of the incel community and does not understand the challenges of inceldom are categorized as *normies* (Cottee, 2021; Daly & Reed, 2021; Jaki et al., 2019; Menzie, 2020; Preston et al., 2021).

The third group was comprised of terms associated with overall incel ideology. A central component of incel ideology revolves around an analogy based upon the red pill/blue pill choice in the 1999 film *The Matrix*. In the film, individuals who take the blue pill are described as living in a world of blissful disillusion, whereas those who take the red pill are said to be enlightened to the bleak, fundamental truths about the world. Following along with this logic, incels that are said to be *red-pilled* have come to the realization that we live in a society where men are socially oppressed, and women are inherently favored over men. On the opposing side, to be *blue-pilled* is to live a life without truly knowing men's social marginalization and oppression (Ging, 2019; Hintz & Baker, 2021; Jaki et al., 2019; O'Malley et al., 2020; Preston et al., 2020; Valkenburgh, 2018). A third term derived from this is the *black pill*. The *Blackpill* philosophy supports a harsher and more nihilistic view of the world, where based on evolutionary biology influences women will only choose partners based on a particular set of physical characteristics, and men who do not possess these characteristics will fail to have sexual and intimate relationships with women. (Ging, 2019; Hintz & Baker, 2021; Jaki et al., 2019; O'Malley et al., 2020; Preston et al., 2020; Valkenburgh, 2018).

Many of these terms translate over to the femcelosphere and femcels utilize them. Additionally, some terms are altered slightly or included in the inverse form. For example, as the men incels use the dehumanizing term *femoid* to refer to women; the term *moid* has been adopted in response to refer to men (Kay, 2022). Likewise, as many men incels subscribe to the *red pill* philosophy, femcels often refer to the *pink pill* philosophy, "a similarly desolate understanding of human nature in which sexually undesirable women are the victims of society's in-built 'lookism', an immovable prejudice based on physical appearance" (Kay, 2022, p. 36).

Involuntary Singlehood Research

Although academic research on femcels is sparse, there are a few publications that include the participation of women in exploring the topic of involuntary singlehood. Perhaps one of the earliest scholars to research extensively on the topic of singleness within the field of sociology is Dr. Peter J. Stein. Within his work, Stein put forward four categories that single adults can be placed in which are, voluntary temporary, voluntary stable, involuntary temporary, and involuntary stable (Stein, 1981). Present-day femcels would likely fall into the typology of involuntary stable singles, which he defines as individuals who want to find a partner to marry, but have come to consider themselves permanently single (Stein, 1981). However, both Stein and subsequent researchers profess that the classification is one that is fluid. The typology that Stein proposed became the basis for more recent studies on the topic of singleness. Reynolds et al. (2007) explained that there is fluidity in the membership of the four categories, and there is also variability in individuals' responses to their membership within each category. Additionally, in exploring single women's perceptions of their singlehood, researchers found that when participants would frame their singleness by choice rather than by chance, it was associated with different outcomes (Reynolds et al., 2007). More recently exploring this premise, Adamczyk's (2017) results showcased that voluntarily single young adults reported a lower level of romantic loneliness compared to involuntarily single young adults. Notably a weak, but still present, association between indicators of mental health illness and involuntary singlehood existed. Additionally, in terms of gender differences within the sample, the single women reported greater romantic loneliness than the single men, but they did not differ in areas of positive mental health and mental health illness (Adamczyk, 2017). Producing similar results, Apostolou et al. explored involuntary singlehood and its impact on emotional well-being and life satisfaction in a

sample of 431 women and 304 men from Greek-speaking countries. Results of this study indicated that “...participants who were involuntarily single experienced more negative emotions, such as loneliness, and less positive emotions, such as happiness, while they experienced lower life satisfaction than those who were single by choice or in an intimate relationship” (Apostolou et al., 2019, p. 423).

Femcelosphere

As demonstrated, research into the men’s incel identity and their online communities has been abundantly addressed in recent years (Daly & Reed, 2021; Ging, 2019; Menzie, 2020; Valkenburgh, 2018). However, a notable gap in the research is the lack of women incel online communities being examined, the femcelosphere. The femcelosphere is the term used to describe the complex ecology of online forums where women’s involuntary celibacy is articulated and discussed (Kay, 2022). One of the most prominent forums within the femcelosphere was a subreddit known as r/Trufemcels. It originated in April 2018, and it allowed a space for women to discuss their involuntary celibacy and the issues that result from it. However, r/Trufemcels was banned in January 2021 for violating a rule from Reddit against promoting hate (Schofield, 2021). Echoes of responses of confusion, anger, and disagreement from the subreddit users concerning the ban led one of the members of the now-extinct subreddit, Giga, to create a new online space for the femcel community (Aronowitz, 2021). This website, ThePinkPill.co was created in May of 2021, as a website devoted to discussions of involuntary celibacy experienced by women. Giga remains the moderator of the overall site. It is assumed that many of the members of ThePinkPill forum were once users of the banned subreddit r/Trufemcels, which was once flourishing on Reddit. At the end of data collection, ThePinkPill.co had 209 different subforums located within the site (ThePinkPill.co, 2022).

A limitation of the current study is the lack of literature on the population of femcels, especially in peer-reviewed publications. This study will be the first known of its kind to academically examine femceldom and its members' participation in the paired online community. Although in recent years a small amount of media attention has been given to the population (Chester, 2018; Samuelson, 2021; Schofield, 2021), the only academic writing that goes in-depth on this population is found in a chapter of a book, *Imagining "We" in the Age of "I"*. In her chapter, author Kay "considers the illegibility of the "femcel" identity against a broader backdrop in which white male anger, dispossession and loneliness are hyper-visible and worried over, but where women's psychic suffering, exclusions and humiliations are not countenanced as political problems" (Kay, 2022, p. 30).

In doing so, she first examined how and why the white man incel identity has been taken up in mainstream media discourse, and why women's involuntary celibacy has not received the same notoriety and conversation. Secondly, she explored the challenged position of women who identify as incels and that use the online platform r/Trufemcel, a subreddit that has been banned since the production of her chapter. Lastly, Kay considered why the concept of the femcel seems so difficult to imagine as a valid identity as opposed to the man incel. Cottee (2021) represents this identified counterargument in his writing, as he denounced the existence of women incels, a sentiment that many men incels agree with. He argued that because none of these women have sought to mobilize politically against men or subject men to gender-based harassment or violence, there are no women incels. Another claim he makes in his article is that incels are exclusively heterosexual. However, he does clarify that women can suffer pains of sexual frustration and loneliness, and although there might be women or individuals of the LGBTQ+ community that may experience struggle due to their celibacy, "they do not construct a militant,

rejectionist identity around their sexual miseries” (Cottee, 2021, p. 94). Along the same lines, although many men incels would and do agree with that assertion, as research progresses more into this area, results show otherwise. In what they identify as the largest primary data-based study of incels, Speckhard et al. (2021), distributed an online survey throughout an incel web forum. The authors then analyzed responses from 272 self-identified incels. Within this sample, participants were mostly heterosexual (93.8%), but 6.2% indicated that they identified as having a sexual orientation other than heterosexual. Furthermore, as the survey explored the topic of what defines an incel, 25% of participants indicated that incels were not exclusively heterosexual and interestingly enough, about 10% of participants indicated that incels were not exclusively male (Speckhard et al. 2021).

As previously mentioned, in recent years research that explores men’s incel online web forums has been abundant, while research on women’s incel forums has been vastly neglected. One of the only articles that do include a women incel web forum in their analysis is Farrell et al. (2019). However, the Reddit community, r/Trufemcels, was examined in only a small scope of their overall exploration into other men-centric incel communities. Researchers examined seven online communities that revolved around topics associated with incel ideology, and constructed nine lexicons that captured specific misogynistic rhetoric: “Physical Violence, Sexual Violence, Hostility, Patriarchy, Stoicism, Racism, Homophobia, Belittling, and Flipped Narrative” (Farrell et al., 2019, pg. 87). Compared against the six other incel communities examined such as r/MGTOW, r/Braincels, and r/IncelsInAction; r/Trufemcels showed the highest percentages in the categories of belittling and racism. High levels of stoicism were also revealed within this online community. As defined earlier in the article, stoicism “encapsulates terms and expressions of endurance of pain or hardship because of the lack of intimacy or beauty” (Farrell et al., 2019,

p. 91). However, despite these findings, authors noted multiple times that r/Trufemcels is a community difficult to interpret because of the regular harassment this group receives from men incels. The admission that the analysis of femcel postings was contaminated by some men incels' postings on the forum may point to the results not reflecting an accurate representation of the women participating on the Reddit forum, r/TruFemcels (Farrell et al., 2019).

Due to a substantial amount of research examining the population of men incels and their online communities, but few that exist on the population of women incels, this study analyzes this vastly understudied population using a qualitative method of thematic analysis of the online forum website ThePinkPill.co. This study examines postings from ThePinkPill subforums for themes and patterns consistent with prior literature through a thematic analysis process. The main aim of this study is to shed light on the vastly understudied population and to address the main research question: Within ThePinkPill.co virtual community, what are members specifically discussing concerning the topics of power and revenge?

CHAPTER THREE – METHODOLOGY

The Current Study

In examining posts and comments within ThePinkPill.co website, the current study focuses on the two theorized consequences of sexual frustration theory (Lankford, 2021); instances of revenge and instances of power. A purposive sampling technique was used in this study to select the posts from the data corpus that would be chosen for in-depth analysis. Additionally, I used Strauss' (1987) four basic guidelines for open coding as a starting point in conducting the qualitative analysis of the posts. Due to a marked lack of research on the population of femcels, the present exploratory study is less concerned with testing any particular hypothesis and is instead focused on producing inductive and data-driven qualitative analysis. This qualitative approach will provide meaningful analyses of the content of ThePinkPill.co, and in doing so, will answer the research questions posed within this study, and further our understanding of femcel online communities.

Unit of Analysis and Sampling Methods

The unit of analysis of this study will be the posts by self-proclaimed femcels on the femcel online community, ThePinkPill.co. In October 2022, this website had 662 members, a number that increased by 53.6%, since the beginning of my examination into this community, where in October 2021 there were only 431 users.¹ This increased growth in the user base of the

¹ A Google search in January 2023 indicated that ThePinkPill.co website is not available for user posts and displays the following message on its home page: "ThePinkPill.co will be right back."

website, along with the opportunity to bring attention and spark discourse in the public sphere related to women's sexuality, sexual desires, and, at times, sexual exclusion points to the importance of studying this population. I used QSR International's NVivo 12 software to collect and analyze thousands of posts included on ThePinkPill website in approximately the first year of the website's lifespan, postings from May 2021 to May 2022.

In terms of sampling procedures, I utilized a purposive sampling method. First, I selected the ThePinkPill website for analysis from informed research and Google searches, which provided the sampling frame for the study. I then collected postings from the top 5 subforums, in terms of subscribed users, within the first year of the website's existence. The decision to examine the threads that were created in the first year of the website was chosen in part to provide the most relevant and up-to-date results. Utilizing this purposive design is useful for examining complex data sets to find exact incidences of the phenomenon under study, the subpopulation who are self-proclaimed to be femcels (Webb & Wang, 2014). Additionally, this sampling strategy is one that many qualitative studies implement, as it serves the purpose of illuminating the range of ideas and experiences available within a given social group (Carpenter, 2002).

Data Collection

For data collection from the website, signing up as a member was not required to view the posts. However, if an individual wanted to comment or create a post themselves, signing up as a member would be required. Thus, the data used within this study was publicly accessible. As previously mentioned, I collected threads located within the 5 most subscribed subforums on ThePinkPill.co. At the time of data collection in the spring and summer 2022, the subforum that had the most subscribed members was titled +TruFemcels, with 529 members involved. The next

most subscribed subforum was titled +General with 432 members, followed by +ThePinkPill subforum with 386 members, followed by the subforum titled +PinkPillFeminism which includes 316 members. The fifth most subscribed subforum was titled +GenderCritical and included 281 members. The decision to collect and analyze posts and comments from the top 5 subforums served multiple purposes. First, it allowed for an adequate and reasonable workload to be conducted for a master’s thesis. Secondly, it allowed for the greatest degree of member engagement to be analyzed throughout the website. I then imported the posts and subsequent comments in each of the 5 subforums into NVivo, which allowed for data cleaning and data analysis. At the end of the data collection process, I had collected and imported 24,525 user posts across 3,461 discussion threads. Table 1 illustrates each of the subforums with the number of threads, comments, and members subscribed to each one at the time of data collection (See Table 1).

Table 1

Number of Threads and Posts from Top 5 Subforums on ThePinkPill.co

<u>Subforum</u>	<u>Threads</u>	<u>Posts</u>	<u>Members</u>
+General	1,674	11, 318	432
+TruFemcels	1,188	10,294	529
+ThePinkPill	403	806	386
+GenderCritical	141	548	281
+PinkPillFeminism	55	246	316
Totals	3,461	24,525	529

Data Analysis

In focusing on the two theorized consequences of revenge-seeking behavior and power-seeking behavior, I used the text-search tool in the NVivo application to search the complete data

corpus of 3,000+ threads for all references to “revenge” and stemmed words, and “power” and stemmed words (e.g., powerful, powers, etc.). The final sample resulted in the mention of "revenge" 35 times and the mention of "power" 439 times. Once these posts were identified, I then conducted a qualitative analysis of these postings with the specific goal of answering the research question: determining what these femcels are actually discussing about revenge and power and whom it pertains to.

I first sorted threads into categories based on if the users of ThePinkPill.co were discussing women, men, gender unspecified, or other in relation to power or revenge. Table 2 provides examples of quotes that were found in each category. Threads were placed in the “Women and Power/Revenge” group if the thread was centered around a discussion of women or femcels and an aspect of power or revenge. Likewise, threads were placed in the “Men and Power/Revenge” group if the thread was centered around a discussion of men or incels and an aspect of power or revenge. It is important to note that this research was focused on examining gender, not biological sex; thus, references to the power of transwomen were coded as “Women and Power/Revenge,” and references to the power of transmen were coded as “Men and Power/Revenge”. Concerning the distinction between the gender unspecified category and the other category; threads were placed in the “Gender Unspecified” category if a person’s power/revenge was discussed, but it was not clear or specified if the user was speaking about men, women, or both. The “Other” category was used to place references to power/revenge that did not have a gendered element at all. Lastly, because some threads included multiple times that the term power or revenge was used, some threads were coded into multiple themes or categories when necessary. Some themes were present through multiple categories of Men and Power, Women and Power, and/or Other and Gender Unspecified, as well. The mention of supernatural

powers is a good example of this. When discussing women’s fictional characters’ superpowers, this was coded as supernatural and placed in the Women and Power category. An example that illustrates this is within the thread titled “Any Movies That Have to do With the Femcel Experience?”. In response to this question, a user responds, “Carrie. I always related to her. Wish I had that kind of power lol.” When threads were discussing men’s superpowers, this was coded as supernatural and placed in the Men and Power category; as this was the case for the thread titled “Watch Out For Spiritual Men Using Black Magick to Get Women Into His Bed AND MORE.” Mentions of supernatural power that did not have a gendered element were placed in the “Other” category. This is also the case with the theme of moderator powers. When a thread was discussing a moderator of ThePinkPill website, it was placed into the Women Power category. A thread that mentioned another website with “power mods which are usually male” was placed in the Men Power category. Mentions of moderator power that either did not specify what gender the moderators were, or it could not be gleaned from the context what gender the moderator identified as, were placed in the Gender Unspecified category.

Table 2

Categories of Threads on ThePinkPill.co

Categories	Illustrative Quote Examples
Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Btw you could say in the same manner that women hold actual power regardless of any social structures by the virtue of having a crucial role in reproduction - women create life and have absolute power over an infant." • “She even tried to get revenge by trying to make one of my friends' boyfriend to break up with her by making false accusations about her.”

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| Men | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Shows you how utterly patriarchal this society is when men can be this lazy and uneducated and still have a stranglehold on social, political, and economic power.” • “Angry at a world that had sold them a promise of alpha males and perfect relationships, only to grow up and realise they were completely unattainable, incels had come together to discuss ways to exact revenge.” |
| Gender | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Cops are given a lot of power and little oversight.” |
| Unspecified | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I really feel like they're letting people revenge report and blacklisting based on that” • "This was a case of a someone with more social power harassing someone with less social power. Male or female, bullies will only stop when the victim makes the bully's life worse" |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “But we're we to herald a new age of environmental friendly yet profitable packaging, fuels and power, etc. things will definitely change.” • “A lot of genre's are great but the raw power of metal always draws me back. Enjoy the journey!” |

I conducted the qualitative analysis by adhering to an open-coding process (also known as initial coding) that allowed me to “reflect deeply on the contents and nuances of the data” (Saldana, 2013, p.100). Within Saldana’s section on initial coding processes, he references Strauss (1987) and Strauss & Corbin, (1990), which I found useful as a starting point for the qualitative analysis of this study. This was in part due to his guidelines being used in studies with similar types and sized online data sets (O’Malley et al., 2020; Subrahmanyam et al., 2009). Additionally, Saldana points out that the use of initial/open coding is appropriate and useful “particularly for beginning qualitative researchers learning how to code data” (Saldana, 2013,

p.101), and I would have to agree with this assertion because having a guideline of a step-by-step process was helpful as a starting point into the thematic analysis of the data for this study.

The first phase of open coding that Strauss suggests is asking a specific and constant set of questions concerning the data. In this step, I was able to read and re-read the data within the sample with the specific goal of understanding what femcels are specifically discussing about revenge and power. Next, I followed the second and third guidelines that Strauss proposes which are analyzing the data minutely, and frequently interrupting the coding to write down theoretical notes concerning the unit of analysis. Lastly, I made sure to heed the fourth and final recommendation from Strauss which is not to assume the analytic relevance of any traditional variable until the data shows it to be relevant (Strauss, 1987, as cited in Lune & Berg, 2017, pp. 192-193). Following these recommendations paved the way for me to produce a scholarly report of the analysis; in which I selected illustrating and compelling examples to use in the findings section and related the analysis back to the research question and prior literature in the discussion and conclusion section.

CHAPTER FOUR – FINDINGS

Revenge

Of the 35 references that included the word revenge, most were speaking about men or incels seeking revenge ($n = 22$) rather than instances of women or femcels seeking revenge ($n = 13$). Unlike the “power” references, none fell into the “Gender Unspecified” category or “Other” category. Table 3 displays the themes concerning revenge and how many times each one appeared.

Table 3

Themes Generated From Femcels’ Discussions of Revenge

Themes	Number of Occurrences
Revenge by Women	
Against Men	7
Against Women	2
Femcels Purposely Not Seeking Revenge	2
Against Their Parents	1
Against Everyone	1
Revenge by Men	
Against Women Involving a Sexual Element	12
Against Women in Other Ways	7
Against Women by Sabotaging Their Websites	2
Against Their Parents	1

Revenge by Women

Of the posts and comments that regard women or femcels seeking revenge ($n = 13$), most indicate their targets to be men ($n = 7$). Many do not elaborate on what form of revenge they are seeking, or what that might look like. For example, in a thread asking users why they want to

date men, a user simply replies, “To get revenge.” Similarly, in a post titled “Any Dark Triad Women on Here?” one user writes,

I grew up as almost a stereotyped “good girl” in a small town. A job relocation took me to a huge metro area that’s a big tech/finance hub. It’s crawling with wealthy men who feel their power entitles them to abuse women in countless ways. They think they’re fully entitled to sex with any women they want. I’m working on shedding my “good girl” scruples and adopting a totally Dark Triad approach to getting what I want out of these guys (and revenge).

In both examples, the authors do not specifically illustrate how or by what means they plan on seeking revenge on men, only that they intend to. In other posts, however, some users are more pointed in why or how they plan to take out revenge on the men they date. In discussing the difficulty of dating younger men, one user reflects:

So, I don't think it would be difficult dating younger men as long as the woman still has her looks. And even if looks are lost, can always use money to lure some young hot struggling guy like men do. That's what I plan on doing in future if I still retain my attraction to moids. Revenge for years of being treated as an object.

Along these same lines, in a different thread, a user shares a striking opinion speaking about men in general, “It would be good if they all went extinct but i want revenge first. I want the roles to be reversed.” In both of these instances, the users stress that they want revenge on men because of the ways that they have been treated by men in the past. Although revenge porn, “a type of nonconsensual pornography that results when an individual uploads a nude or seminude photograph or video of another individual online, often times as a form of revenge after a relationship has ended” (Bates, 2017), is predominantly posted by men, women can also serve as perpetrators of revenge porn (Short et al., 2017). In one thread, there was a user that posted a link to a TikTok that describes an incident where a woman threatens her son with revenge porn.

In other comments referencing femcels seeking revenge, the target is not necessarily men. Two posts referenced external stories of other women seeking or conducting revenge on other women ($n = 2$). Other postings referenced femcels seeking revenge on their parents ($n = 1$), or on society in general ($n = 1$). In a post inquiring of users if they constantly think about suicide, among the ten other comments that report that they do think about suicide all the time, one user replies:

No. But sometimes I wish I've never being born at all and I get resentful that my mom did this horrible thing to me. And if I ever told my mom that I hate my life, hate being female, hate everything and everyone then she will start crying and get emotional and really My revenge is that I'm not giving my parents grandchildren - they both fucked my life and their "legacy" or whatever shouldn't be passed. I hope she can somehow guess it because I can't be honest with her in anyway.

In this specific example, the user focuses and directs her revenge-seeking behavior on her parents rather than a significant other. Lastly, another user responds to an original post titled “I’m a femcel but I have NPD [narcissistic personality disorder] I think,” a user explains:

So I'm aware that I'm ugly and it hurts all the more bc deep down I'm a narcissist who constantly wants validation and supply but can't get any. I think I've narcissistic rage too over perceived slights and basically go mental. I'm in my teenage years and I honestly think it's settling in. I get sooo angry over perceived insults that I start making plans to fuck that person over and sometimes even take action. I'm so angry, I feel so so hurt and wronged and constantly like a victim. I'm constantly jealous of other people who have it better than me. I think if I was prettier, I would probably put out a more charming exterior but deep down, I'd want to harm people and use my looks to abuse others/get away with whatever I can. I constantly dream of having some sort of power. It's so sad.

In reply to this original textpost, another user relates, commenting:

I think you may be onto something, my dad also has NPD or at least narcissistic tendencies, and I do catch myself acting like him sometimes. I have been questioning myself ever since I've heard about narcissism. I also want to ascend to kind of take revenge on everyone, honestly. I feel similar to you.

In this thread and the resulting comment, the two users connect with one another based on their previous experiences and shared family history of mental disorders. Alarming, they both

express sentiments of seeking revenge on others because of the situations they are finding themselves in.

However, there were also references that suggested femcels or women purposely do not seek revenge. In one thread a user retells a narrative where a man private messaged her on the website Reddit to try and change her mind about men's behaviors and patterns. In reply to this thread, a user comments:

Typical of manipulative people to pretend to be victims and then turn around and be aggressors BUT men also try and pretend to be aggressors to get people to comply, and they do it ALL THE TIME, while saying they've got dealt worse cards and they are the "real victims". Women don't try to intimidate random strangers like that (maybe on an individual level, but not as a class attack) , women say "be glad we don't want revenge" and not "we're gonna fuck you over and destroy every man's life" the same way these fuckers do.

Another post that fell into this category was a repost of an outside article titled “The Future is Femcel” from *The Blue and White*, a Columbia University undergraduate monthly magazine. In this article, the author states, “The revenge femcels fantasize about is a nose job, not a mass shooting” (Gottlieb, 2017).

Revenge by Men

Of the posts and comments that regard men or incels seeking revenge ($n = 22$), some users of ThePinkPill.co express the idea that vengeance against women many times involves a sexual element ($n = 12$). For example, in distinguishing between how men and women view sexual interactions, one user explains:

There's an implicit element of hate in male sexuality that we need to realize. For men, sex is an act of conquer. At worst, it's an act of revenge for the hatred they have towards women for gatekeeping sex. For women, it's an act of vulnerability and a form of submission to a stronger being. We don't associate sexual pleasure with hatred like males do.

In a separate thread discussion regarding why men make sexual comments to women online, another user shares their take on the matter:

I know why they do this. It's a power play- they're weaponising their sexuality against women. They're not doing it to turn you on, they want to scare and traumatise you. It's some weird incel revenge plot. They see sex as degrading, this is a "fuck you" but with stalker vibes. Deeply disturbing...

Both of these users suggest men view sex as a degrading act of revenge that men take out towards women.

There were many times on the forum that users centered their discussion of revenge-seeking behavior by men on ones involving sexual violence. One user asserts, "Men love to fantasize about hate-fucking women, revenge-fucking. They have whole subs about raping female politicians they disagree with. Men turn sex into a degrading, humiliating, punishing act and then wonder why we are repulsed by them." A different user on a separate thread shares their opinion when it comes to men online: "If you treat them even a fraction of how they treat women and tell them you don't care about their problems, they start fantasizing about revenge raping you online." In another thread discussing sexually transmitted diseases one user writes, "jesus fucking christ men are really not afraid of catching fucking HIV or other stds huh." Another user responds to this comment replying, "you'd be surprised, most of the men that get it go out of their way to give to other women as revenge too, there's no end to scrote sadism." Lastly within other threads, users comment on the ease that men have in the ability to harm women with posting revenge pornography on the internet. One user writes, "And just think... in a moid's mind, it's okay to ruin women's lives with revenge porn." Another user shares a website that allows users to create and download AI-generated faces that appear similar to the user in order to protect their identity online. The user shares the link to the website with the commentary, "Privacy is big a concern. Women are often threatened with the use of their own images to do

harm (revenge porn, stalking, doxxing, etc.) so altering your images so you are unrecognizable is a good.”

Other references where femcels discussed revenge-seeking behaviors perpetrated by men did not involve a sexual element. One user posts, “it's not that only guys who don't have options are cruel to women as a revenge. guys who have options also commonly choose to be cruel to women.” In this example, although the user does not describe the exact way that men act cruelly to women as a form of revenge, she does assert that both men who have options and men who do not have options (presumably incels) both treat women in this way. Similarly, another member suggested that men incels “come together to discuss ways to exact revenge”, due to the way they are treated by society.

Lastly, two posts specifically cited ways in which men did take revenge on women: by sabotaging their online spaces. In one comment a user writes, “I'm more worried about scrotes [men] infiltrating and spamming us with child porn. Apparently they have done it on lolcow.farm.” Another user replies to this comment and explains the behavior a little more in-depth:

They often do it for some sort of revenge or to get platforms they don't like shut down. This what the moderator, called Bardfinn, who controls the subreddit AgainstHateSubs, will often orchestrate a spamming of childporn against "transphobic" or feminism subreddits.

Power

Of the 439 times that “power” and stemmed words relating to “power” were referenced, most involved discussions about women and power ($n = 194$). This was then followed by instances of men or incels seeking power ($n = 138$), and lastly, posts that fell into the category of power gender unspecified ($n = 55$) or other ($n = 54$). Table 4 displays the themes that were extracted concerning power and how many times each one appeared.

Table 4*Themes Generated From Femcels' Discussions of Power*

Themes	Number of Occurrences
Power and Women	
Power of Beauty	46
Women Having Power	46
Women Lacking Power	42
Women Needing to Take Back Power	18
Women Having Reproductive Power	8
Supernatural Powers	8
Power in Occupations	3
Moderator Powers	2
Other Women Power	21
Power and Men	
Men Having Financial, Political, or Institutional Power	49
Men Having Power Associated with Violence/Physical Strength	43
Men Only Having Power Because of Women	11
Men Lacking or Losing Power	6
Men are Unworthy to Have Power	6
Power of Beauty for Men	6
Supernatural Powers	4
Moderator Powers	1
Power in Occupations	1
Other Men Power	11
Power Gender Unspecified	
Power of Bullies	13
Power in Occupations	4
Moderator Powers	4
Power of Police	2
Other	32
Other Power Mentions	
Institutions Holding Powers	12
Electrical Power	10
Supernatural Powers	7
Other	25

Women and Power

Many of the threads concerning women and power regard women or femcels lacking power ($n = 42$). In some of these threads, lack of power is discussed in more of a macro way, with users speaking of all women lacking power. For example, one user writes:

What is our fucking point? Our curse? It all seems like suffering. We have no power to change this world. The modern world is not so different from the savagery and rape we were born into. Why try if your daughters will suffer too? Just venting.

Speaking about femcels specifically lacking power, another user comments on a thread about a statement included in a YouTube video, "Femcels entire mission is to force society to find them attractive." This user replies weighing in on the statement:

Literally WHO? Literally WHICH femcel is trying to force other people to find them attractive? We have no power to change society. The majority of us want to be left alone, and a minority of us want to RE-SHAPE our FACES in order to fit in.

Others speak of lacking power on more of an individual level. In an original textpost of a user explaining the experience she has had in her life she reports, "I am not part of anything meaningful, and have no power. Now I understand why adults are so angry at life, in a way I didn't in my teens, and not even in my 20s." This same user reiterates this feeling of powerless in a separate original textpost stating:

I'm not actually that old (probably older than most of you) but I'm so ashamed to be this way in my 30s - dependent on parents financially, in a shitty, dead end job - not a career - in pretty bad health after two bad surgeries (both elective - I have to live with that, even though the second was not cosmetic; both have had horrible long term consequences on my stamina and overall ability to function, and led to chronic problems). But I feel like I'm fucking fifty years old. I have no power over my life or my happiness.

Other postings ($n = 18$) include somewhat of a call to action for women or femcels to take back the power that they do not hold. One user comments, "Women should stop wasting their time & instead invest into female-only communities and work on getting money & power. Then men will be forced to adapt via societal osmosis." In another thread, the user focuses the

entire post on femcels reclaiming their power, titling the post “Hot take: loving yourself as an ugly woman means taking back our power”. Lastly, another user expresses this sentiment by simply providing the comment, “FEMCEL POWER UNITE”.

In terms of posts regarding women actually having power ($n = 46$), there are some members that do believe women hold power in society in some ways. A common theme that appears in some of the threads were about women possessing reproductive power ($n = 8$). In one original textpost titled “Men Trying to Take Credit in Life Making”, a user asserts the following:

Sperm isn't life nor takes the pain and effort to make life. To them it's like they're the main focus when it's the other way around, since people depend on women and do realize that making somebody into the world is a power.

Another thread discusses Cristiano Ronaldo, a famous Portuguese soccer player, and his partner's decision to go with a surrogate mother to carry their child. The original poster writes:

So the situation with Cristiano Ronaldo has been on my mind for some time. I was shocked when he had his son out of nowhere via surrogacy. Why a man like him cannot simply impregnate a woman and have her mother their child is beyond me.

Replying to this post, a user comments about the situation saying, “He clearly hates women. If he had his child with a partner, she'd have some power over him and the child. This way he can do whatever he wants. I've no idea how surrogacy can be legal.” With this statement, this user views biological motherhood as a form of power that a woman would have over both the partner and the offspring.

Another user views the power that women have with reproduction as both contributing to their oppression and a form of empowerment that they should utilize. This user explains, “the very core of women's oppression is their power of reproduction and child-raising, and women should weaponize that to the maximum extent.”

Other instances where members on the website believe that women have power over men when it comes to dating and attracting men. One user presents the statement, “Never forget that men want us far more than we want them. That gives us all the power when it comes to dating.” On more of an individual level, another user shares a narrative of a situation she had with a man she liked:

We never actually dated (just a mutual crush) but suddenly he went cold on me and went to chase a stacy. After she moved away he came back crawling and I, like the dumbass, continued to talk to him. He started playing hot-and-cold again so I ghosted him and never heard from him again. Tbh I never felt more powerful than having the last say and actively choosing to never entertain him again. If a man ever does this again to me it's an automatic ghost/block.

In this story, the user explains that the action she took in choosing not to speak to the man made her feel as if she was the one holding the power. She reflects on this incident in a positive way and states that it will influence her interactions if she finds herself in a similar situation in the future.

Interestingly, the power imbalance discussed on ThePinkPill.co does not only exist in the realm of men vs. women. Many references ($n = 46$), center around the theme deemed the ‘Power of Beauty’, in which users discuss lookism, the belief that society “subordinates those who do not meet the physical and social standards put forth by society” (Daly & Reed, 2021, p.10). One quote from a thread illustrates this clearly, “us having to be judged by our physical appearance attractiveness, age. And our whole life, status, power and mental health depends on that as a result.” Other users reflect this sentiment by sharing they feel powerless because of their physical appearance. One user writes, “I realized something - being ugly gives people power over you, wherever you are in the world.” Another user shares her experience with this, “even women have expressed subtle disgust about me, more than once - I hate knowing how much power being ugly gives enemies.”

As for who the users of ThePinkPill website believe holds the power when it comes to beauty, they point toward Stacy, a neologism used within incel communities to portray a physically attractive, sexually successful woman (Cottee, 2021; Daly & Reed, 2021; Hintz & Baker, 2021; Jaki et al., 2019; Kay, 2022; Maxwell et al., 2020). Some users directly use this term to describe the power held by them. For example, this user writes, “Stacy still has too much power in patriarchy.” Some users go a step further and posit that these women are aware of their privilege and use this to their advantage. One user states, “Stacys know that they are hot, and they know that this gives them power and money, so they want to maximize their power.” A different user explains, “I love evil stacys. They hold so much power and use it correctly.” Other times users do not use the actual term “stacy” but do refer to the ones holding the power when it comes to beauty as the attractive women of the world. One user expresses this idea in this way, “In fact, the less people who can be "beautiful", the more powerful the beauty is. Because it's signals upper echelon, good breeding, great genes .. all that stuff. A luxury that isn't for the peons who adore from afar.” Additionally, other users profess that they yearn for the power that attractive women have. In a thread discussing an actress in the Netflix series *The Witcher*, the original poster of the thread ends her post with, “It's not about just beauty from the objective point, it's about the what you gain with beauty. I want that. That power.” In the comment section of this thread, another user agrees by replying, “Yeah I would also give up my womb (not my ovaries tho because I wouldnt want to go through menopause early) to be beautiful and powerful like her.” In a separate thread, a user writes,

I'm glad I moved cities tbh, the people who used to know me will be probably be shocked after my final hardmaxx hahaha... but also, they will recognize the power I hopefully possess by then and fear me. Because damn, if I were a full blown stacy, I would have used that to my advantage in every aspect possible.

In this posting, the user mentions the term “hardmaxx”. Within the incel community, words ending with the suffix -maxx, indicate a change in physical appearance in order to maximize chances when it comes to relationships or other life factors (Farrell et al., 2019). This individual makes use of this term in a way that she hopes to gain power from her improved physical appearance. At the end of her comment, she also reports that if she was a Stacy she would fully use the privilege and power to the fullest.

Men and Power

A very prevalent theme within the threads discussing men and power includes discussions about men using physical strength or violence regarding their power ($n = 43$). Some threads focus broadly on pairing violence with patriarchy and masculinity. For example, in one original textpost a user discusses what we know as the gender gap of violent crimes as she writes, “despite men being the ones to commit like 98% of ALL crime, we either don't really hear about in the mainstream, or if we do, it's literally excused.” Another user replies to this thread explaining her take on this matter, “The male hierarchy is built upon power and violence.” In a separate text post titled “Root Cause of Misogyny and Harsh Truths About Men,” another user explores, and questions ideas of masculinity related to violence. One of her bullet points explains the following:

Hate how being masculine in a patriarchal sense is defined as "how many women can you oppress and subjugate to show that you have some form of power to other men". They also want to have lots of casual sex just so they can brag to other men and make them jealous like some kind of sick flex. Why do they like to see other men envy and feel bad? Why is masculinity also defined as "getting the most power even while hurting other men in the hierarchy"?

Other threads focusing on men using violence as a form of power center around sexual violence toward women. In one instance a user comments, “But I realized any female with varying characteristics can be raped. I believe most rape is about the power trip a person gets out

of it.” Some users point the discussion toward men perpetrating sexual violence toward children. An example of this is illustrated within an original text post with the user titling it “Men acting disgusted by what Epstein did,” the user continues on writing, “When most of them would act exactly how him and his friends did. They would SA minors and attractive young women too if they had the power those wealthy men do.” In reply to this original textpost, another user agrees, commenting:

So many men in power and male celebrities have been linked to Epstein that it's hard to believe that not all men. Not all men have opportunities, but if they had, they would assault and rape with no shame. And if they don't have opportunities to do that in their home countries, they'll either join the army or go for vacation and assault women in third world countries.

In another thread, a different user gives their opinion that men target children in these violent acts due to the power they have over them, “Men are attracted to the lack of experience and knowledge, attracted to the power they have over CHILDREN and their own sick disgusting pornofied fantasies.”

Other themes that appear within the threads discussing men and power have to do with men holding financial, political, and institutional power ($n = 49$). In discussing the power men hold when it comes to finances, one user asserts, “Remember males are the dominating class in all corporate and global power. Unless they're willing to change, nothing will change. They hold the money and power to control the people (i.e. women).” In another thread a user echoes the same concept, “Scrotes unfortunately lead in every industry. They have the power and money.” In terms of institutional power, the discussion of the gender gap of violent crimes appears again when a user comments, “Cis men are the ones that commit 90% of the crimes, murders and make up the majority of the institutional power.” Another thread mentions the political power that men hold when the user claims,

These guys can't handle seeing one single article that points out the reality of war, but we also need to be reminded these men aren't a minority of men. Men like these have actual political power, whereas we have none.

There is also discourse on the website surrounding the sentiment that men should not have the power they do, this was coded as “Men are Unworthy to Have Power”. An example of this is within a thread where the original poster relays an experience of being yelled at by a youth pastor who was a man. Responding to this story a user expresses sympathy by commenting,

So disturbing. I'd suggest either you or your sister report him to someone in the church you trust, if you feel safe doing so. That behavior is absolutely reprehensible and imo [in my opinion] no males should be in positions of power and control over groups of young girls and women.

As displayed above, most of the conversations about men and power center around discussions of men having the power. Although, some users believe that men are beginning to lack and lose power ($n = 6$), or that they only have power because of women ($n = 11$). For example, in a thread discussing women feeling incomplete without a man in their life, one user comments,

We, as women, are completely whole as we are. We don't need a man. Researches show that women who are not married actually live happier and have more means and education than the married woman. While unmarried men are more prone to diseases and alcohol, and have less earning power and lower education. Well this is the proof that if anything it's the men who need women, not the other way around.

Other users express the idea that the only reason men have power is because of women and their actions. In reply to a comment about women needing to strive to be better than men a user responds, “Women have less capacity for physical violence, but it doesn't mean they are more moral. And men wouldn't have as much power in the society if women weren't complicit.” Likewise, found in another thread a user expresses, “Sure, men have actual power, but patriarchy wouldn't be possible without complacency of women”. Lastly, as seen included as a theme present in the women category, femcels make sure to point out that the “Power of Beauty” exists

with men also. Illustrating this thought, one user simply states, "Seriously, attractive white males have so much power." Within another thread, a different user echoes this same point, however, she does this by using a neologism common within the incel community: "The true power of gigachad is so scary." This user chooses the prefix "giga-", to portray an advanced version of a "chad", a term previously touched on within the literature section indicating a high-status, masculine man.

Power Gender Unspecified

As mentioned in the methodology section, threads were placed in the "Gender Unspecified" category if a person's power was discussed but it was not clear or specified if the user was speaking about men, women, or both. The most common theme within this category was the power that bullies hold ($n = 13$). For example, a thread about whether performative femininity brings more respect from people or unwanted attention, one user comments, "People that are validated or that can bully at will hold power. The meekness of unattractive people is learned because that's how they get by, just hoping one of those aggro [aggressive individuals] won't set their sights on them." This sentiment appears again in another thread when a user asserts within their comment, "It's a human desire to feel powerful. Most people express it through abusing those they deem weaker than them." Although the two above threads center around people bullying others in person, another thread discusses cyberbullying on the popular app Tik Tok. In this thread, one user gives their viewpoint on the people on the internet who do this and on the idea of anonymity commenting,

People go on the internet to post the c*ntiest shit they possibly can to be provocative. It means nothing to them and it gives them power to be horrible b/c the opportunity is there. It frightens, me actually. I swear to God, 50% of people in a city would probably torture someone to death if given the opportunity, or at least watch and laugh. Most people's morality esp. changes when they're anonymous (including me, at this point, I am enraged all the time and say things to strangers I never would IRL) or in a group.

Another theme that became apparent was power in certain occupations ($n = 4$), the two most common of which being medical care professionals or teachers. One user explains the power of plastic surgeons, when writing,

Don't get me wrong, I can't imagine having so much power over a human being's life and having to be responsible for fucking up their faces, but in the last ten years of reading horrible reviews, a lot of them are careless creeps.

In another thread titled “Should I Even go to Therapy,” among the few positive responses from other members, a user shares her experience warning, “Be careful though. The therapist I went to in my naive days, ended up causing me more trauma due to victim-blaming. Many of them are in it to earn money and feel powerful and superior.” In a thread asking about users’ experiences of treatment by teachers in schools and universities, there was a mixture of responses varying from positive, to negative, to indifferent. However, in sharing her negative experience with college professors she comments, “In university, the professors didn't trust me at all with anything and enjoyed humiliating me in class. Overall I think teachers are awful people and only get this job to hold power over others and abuse them.”

Lastly, the theme of police holding power was present in two threads within this category. In one of the most engaged discussion threads which had 59 individual comments and is titled “I Feel Like It’s Impossible to be a Feminist If You Are a Femcel,” the conversation shifts to the criminal justice system and policing. One user comments, “Feminists aren't against cops so much as they recognize that police and the justice system weighs heavily against women... and that cops are given a lot of power and little oversight.” In another thread focusing on police intervention within the Black Lives Matter protests, a user shares a more positive tone in discussing what she would like to see in the future, “I want better police; I want the police to

be accountable for the power they hold; I want police to be less chauvinistic and less motivated by perverse incentives to arrest/harass people to fill quotas.”

Other Power

As mentioned in the methodology section, threads were placed in the “Other” category when references to power did not have a gendered element at all. Example of this include the theme of electrical power ($n = 10$) or supernatural powers ($n = 7$). However, the most prevalent theme that appears within the “Other” category is the power of institutions ($n = 12$). In one thread a user poses a question as an original textpost asking “if anyone has any theories as to why Catholics aside from Mormons seem to have most nationwide scandalous stories out of all the denominations within Christianity.” The first commenter puts it simply by stating Catholicism is the “biggest most powerful institution of all. Most Christians are Catholics globally & all take orders from the Vatican.” Within a self-proclaimed rant thread titled “The World Shouldn't Be Like This - Living in a Late Capitalist Hell [Rant],” the original poster ends her tirade by writing, “there's so much that can be said and honestly i get pretty gloomy thinking about how our lives pass us by and how big and powerful the system is that will probably get worse before it gets better.”

CHAPTER FIVE – DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Research into the population of femcels and their related femcelosphere has shown to have been largely ignored within academic research. As Kay suggests in her chapter, “a key form of engagement might be to divert some of our intellectual and political energies away from the incel, and instead to start to listen properly to the femcel” (Kay, 2022, p. 44). Following her recommendation, this study aimed to address the concerning gap in the literature by examining the subpopulation of femcels. Through qualitative methods and thematic analysis of their online forum website ThePinkPill.co, this study was the first known to explore topics present within a femcel discussion forum. The research conducted allowed for light to be shed on the inner workings and dynamics of their community; and in doing so, illustrates the experiences, feelings, and musing of femcels on the topics concerning power and revenge. In the following section, I elaborate on what the qualitative findings suggest, consider the implications of the research, and discuss future research avenues that would be useful in exploring this topic further.

Power

In terms of power, although there were limited explicitly stated discussions of women needing to seek or gain power, there was much discussion that implied that femcels do care about having power and they feel disempowered by their looks. For example, consider the prevalent theme of the power of beauty. Mentioned previously, these women expressed frustration about lookism and the way that the societal standards of beauty severely disadvantage and place a burden on them in many different ways. It is evident that within their postings they communicate exasperation that conventional beauty standards are defined by society in a way

that leaves them powerless to achieve what they desire—an intimate relationship with a partner. Sexual frustration theory posits that sexual power can be gained in a multitude of ways and gives the example that this could be achieved by improving one's social status or appearance, rather than partaking in physical force or criminal activities (Lankford, 2021). There was much evidence on the forum proving this to be consistent with the theory, for both improving physical appearance and aiming for a higher social status. Many conversations revolved around these femcels changing or trying to upgrade their appearance to achieve a higher social status. This is such an integral part of the incel community that they have even dubbed a term for this practice: “looksmaxxing” (Daly & Reed, 2021; Jaki et al., 2019; Kay, 2022). Many discussions throughout the subforums centered around topics such as desires for plastic surgery, sharing weight-loss strategies, and requesting makeup tips. Not only does this provide evidence for being consistent with part of sexual frustration theory on improving physical appearance for a higher social status, but it also serves as a way that these individuals might be coping with their lack of structural power. Because these women are living in a patriarchal society where they do not hold power due to their gender, “looksmaxxing” might be their way of trying to enact individual power since they are unable to disestablish men’s power in society.

This pairs well with the finding that there was much discussion about men’s power and the concern that women in general and, femcels specifically, suffer due to men having more power in society. When they did discuss men holding the power, they many times pointed towards the tendency of some men to abuse their positions of power by exhibiting violent fantasies and/or behaviors. It was also evident that they expressed anger and resentment when they are describing that men are the ones that do hold the financial, political, or institutional

power in society. This implicitly suggests these women do want more power and is, again, consistent with sexual frustration theory.

Additionally, this can tie back into the literature concerning hegemonic masculinity. The disgust towards men's power that these femcels are expressing can be directed toward men taking part in three types of toxic masculinities illustrated in expanded versions of the theory: hegemonic masculinities, dominant masculinities, and dominating masculinities (Messerschmidt & Messner, 2018). Not only are these women discussing the hegemonic masculinity they see perpetrated in a society where they face gender inequality in the workforce or politics, but they are also criticizing the traits and performance of dominant masculinities and dominating masculinities. Digging deeper, we can see that they are not only upset about the unequal treatment they face as women, but they also resent how other men celebrate and reinforce dominant masculinities and dominating masculinities, referring to men "commanding and controlling particular interactions, exercising power and control over people and events" (Messerschmidt & Messner, 2018, p. 42). Not only do femcels feel oppressed by the gender inequalities in society and the conventional beauty standards that they do not measure up to, but they are also navigating such feelings while living in a world where they feel threatened by men asserting their strength and power in violent ways and fear being a target of this.

Sexual frustration theory also suggests that individuals lacking sexual power may try to gain this by seizing it through force or defeating same-sex competitors (Lankford, 2021). Although there was not much evidence of femcels discussing seizing power through force, as this might point to a gender difference between men incels and femcels that should be investigated in future research, there was much discussion from femcels about their opinions of other women. As previously stated, there were many times that the femcels talked about

attractive women they call “Stacy” and the power that these women hold. The femcels on this site utilize the figure of “Stacy” to depict their opinions concerning the socially constructed ideal example of femininity identity. They frequently point to how their treatment in the world is so much different and inferior compared to how “Stacy” is treated. This again illustrates another example of their frustration with lookism. Their conversations continuously point to the idea that they simultaneously hate and envy “Stacy” because of the power she holds. Within these discussions, they express distaste for the attention she receives from men, but, at the same time, they yearn to hold the physical beauty she possesses in order to secure a romantic or sexual relationship. This discordance seems to potentially duplicate how the patriarchy views standards of femininity. Instead of challenging the patriarchy, they are acting in a way that actually reproduces it. On one hand, they express sharp disapproval of how women are oppressed in this way but also seem to play into it within their discussions of the women they refer to as “Stacy” and also in their participation in conforming to patriarchal views of women’s gender expectations.

Revenge

In terms of revenge-seeking, there was some discussion of women and femcels seeking revenge found within the forum, making it consistent with sexual frustration theory. When examining who the femcels targets of revenge were, we see that they are most often discussing seeking revenge against men rather than women, their parents, or society in general, which further supports the part of the theory that suggests revenge-seeking may be aimed at “specific targets that perpetrators were frustrated with sexually, or frustrated about being unable to have sex with” (Lankford, 2021, p. 7). Although these instances of femcels seeking revenge are less numerous than the times they discuss being worried about being the targets of men or men

incels' revenge, I believe it is worth looking into if the users' discussions are ways of expressing their fantasy of revenge or if they are discussing actually pursuing their revenge through behavior or actions. As other researchers have pointed out with their analysis of men's incel forums (Hoffman et al., 2020; Scotto di Carlo, 2022;) it is difficult to assess or distinguish what may constitute a real threat, rather than just venting or expressing their dark thoughts behind the guise of anonymity. Despite this, femcels sentiments of revenge or potential for perpetrating violence should not merely be tossed aside or ignored, as past researchers have warned against gender bias when it comes to women's possible perpetration of violence (Allen & Bradley, 2018; Van Der Veer, 2020) and shown that there is a connection between fantasies of violence and going through with acts of violence, especially with past mass violence committed by men who identified with incel ideology (Murray, 2017; O'Donnell, 2021; Scaptura & Boyle, 2020).

Although misandry was not systematically explored in this study, "hatred or contempt for men" (American Psychological Association, n.d.) was found in many instances on this website. There were many times that femcels made distinct overgeneralizations about men's desires or behavior. Additionally, when performing a search on the postings using the term "all men are...", the word tree illustrates common endings of that phrase to be "trash", "shit", "obsessed with teenagers", and "rapists". This is what engaging in misandry without holding any structural power in society looks like, assembling on an anonymous discussion forum where they feel safe in sharing their disdain and complaints about men and their behavior. Although closely analyzing this concept within the forum was beyond the scope of the current study, it would be interesting to examine how misandry on femcel forums might present differently or similar to other online women's spaces, or the misogyny prevalent on many men's incel forums.

As shown in the findings section, much more discussion on this topic centered around discussions of revenge by men and the threat that this may pose to women and femcels. In other words, although some femcels did express their desire for revenge, there were many more times that they were discussing and worried about being targets or victims of male revenge. This was something that was not anticipated in this study, as sexual frustration theory would suggest revenge-seeking behavior would appear more prevalent due to the sexual frustration experienced by femcels (Lankford, 2021). However, this finding does make sense in hindsight. Like similarly seen with their discussions of men holding power, a common fear detailed within the threads was ending up as a target of men's revenge fantasies or actions—thus the need for more discussions regarding men seeking or perpetrating revenge rather than their own desires for revenge. Although femcels noted that men do take their revenge out on women in other general ways such as being emotionally abusive or purposely sabotaging online women's spaces, it was much more commonly discussed that men take their revenge out on women in ways that involve a sexual element. Further, femcels did recognize that revenge-seeking behavior by men --and especially men incels-- is sometimes driven by sexual frustration. In an interesting way, this indirectly does support the theorized relationship between sexual frustration and revenge.

In thinking through other reasons that might explain why there were so few calls for revenge or action found within the femcel discussion forum despite revenge being commonplace in men incel forums (Cottee, 2021; Ging, 2019; Hoffman et al., 2020; O'Malley et al., 2020), research may benefit from exploring gender differences of internalizing symptoms and externalizing symptoms between the two groups. Literature broadly on this topic suggests that when faced with negative life events women seem to display more internalizing symptoms in response such as self-directed aggression and depression (Mendez et al., 2021; Oquendo et al.,

2007; Vanden & Hermans, 2019); while men display externalizing symptoms as a response to these circumstances such as external aggression and risk-taking behavior (Eaton et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2013; Mendez et al., 2021). I believe this is what we see at play when making a distinction between men and women incel forums. Research shows that men on incel forums commonly place the blame for their involuntarily celibacy on external factors such as women or society (Adamczyk, 2017; Helm et al., 2022; Williams & Arntfield, 2020). However, despite the rare instances of femcels expressing external blame, my analysis into ThePinkPill website revealed that femcels directed much more of the hate and blame about their situation onto their selves. Discussions on mental health topics such as anxiety and depression were a common place on this site. There were also many instances of self-loathing, self-harm, and suicidal ideations found on the forums, as with past research on men's incel forums (O'Malley et al., 2020; Speckhard et al., 2021; Daly, & Laskovtsov, 2021). The prevalence of these types of discussions on both women and men incel websites, points towards the need for a shift in focus when it comes to research on incels. By examining and treating the underlying mental health symptoms that this population face as a result of their sexual frustration and inceldom may serve as a protective measure and as a route to reducing the extreme violence perpetration by some of the members that identify with this community.

Incel Discussion Forums: Helpful or Harmful?

Past research has overwhelmingly categorized men incels' participation in their discussion forums as harmful, pointing to it providing a platform to legitimize violence and foster hateful anti-woman sentiments (O'Malley et al., 2020) and facilitate radicalization and extremism (Hoffman et al., 2020). Although notable exceptions do exist, such as Scotto di Carlo's (2022) analysis of the way men incels use their forums to create fraternal bonds or Speckhard et al.,

(2021) finding that the incels they surveyed generally reported that participation on the forum was more helpful than harmful to them, many researchers fail to explore or get into a discussion on how participating in these forums may serve as a helpful tool in the lives of incels. This in turn begs the question, is femcels participation on ThePinkPill.co helpful or harmful? In mulling over this question throughout the duration of this study, I have come to agree with the response Cottee (2021) gives to this question in his analysis of men's incel online spaces: perhaps both. This website does serve as a space for like-minded women that are experiencing some of the same things to come together and commiserate the struggles of inceldom. There are many examples from the forum where the femcels express gratitude for the moderators of the site allowing a space that they are able to have to share their experiences and hardships. Additionally, many times throughout the forum, these women are thanking each other for the listening ear, connections, and social support that this community provides. In many ways, the discussions and conversations these women are having on ThePinkPill.co do provide an important perspective on the discourse of women's sexual desires and sexuality. The amount of in-depth, thought-provoking analysis and commentary from femcels concerning the examination of societal norms, gender roles, and living their lives in a patriarchal society was an unanticipated finding. However, at times, they do seem to participate in and replicate the exact things they are criticizing—lookism, misogyny, and patriarchal standards of beauty.

Limitations and Future Research

As with all empirical research, it is important to note and be transparent about the limitations of the current study. An aspect that interestingly may have served as both a limitation and an advantage of this research study is anonymity. The anonymity of the forum provides users a way for them to speak freely in on the forum without fear that their words may be tied back to

them personally. Not only does this aspect benefit me as a researcher in trying to protect participants' identities and avoid the social desirability effect that is present in many other forms of data collection, but it also benefits the users and allows them to be more comfortable discussing and disclosing their thoughts about sexual topics in a non-censored way. However, anonymity also serves as a limitation for this study because there is no way to discern if the posts and comments are truly originating from women who identify as femcels, and secondly there is a lack of demographic data that can be collected from the users. Because of the lack of knowledge available about these women's demographics, intersectionality could not have been adequately explored within this study. Additionally, although this study aimed to use the online community with the largest femcel presence for analysis, it is important to note that there might be other smaller online femcel communities operating outside of this specific website or femcels who do not use the internet at all, in which their discussions on power and revenge could not be illustrated in this study. Lastly, I did want to acknowledge the possibility of coders' bias being present in this qualitative study. Although many procedures were adhered to through all stages of this study to ensure that this effect is diminished as possible, such as frequent discussions between the two coders until we felt confident in the definitions for each code and refining operational definitions of the codes when we did not.

In terms of future research avenues, due to the small amount of research that currently exists on this population, many aspects of femcel life have yet to be explored. Because of the inability to pick up on the verbal cues, facial expressions, or tone of voice of the users through their virtual comments, an opportunity to extend the research on this population could be through conducting interviews with women incels as other researchers have accomplished with men incels (Daly & Reed, 2021). Additionally, collecting quantitative data from these women is

needed, as it would serve as an important research route that could help better understand and generalize results to the femcel population.

As indicated in many of the postings on ThePinkPill.co, it is apparent that many members of this group express concerning signs of mental health issues, including but not limited to, symptoms of depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and personality disorders. These symptoms of psychological distress should be explored more in this population and in terms of how the members of this community cope, both individually and as a group in utilizing online support forums such as ThePinkPill.co. Another topic of future research that would provide value would be examining the similarities and differences between men incel communities and femcel incel communities. Doing so could reveal important gender differences between the two groups in many different aspects of their incelhood, including how they cope with their daily struggles, in what ways they adhere to incel ideology, and what topics they specifically discuss concerning incelhood. Even more crucial, it could potentially give insight towards answers to the question of why some men from the incel community have taken out their disgruntlement with their situations by conducting mass violence, while we have not seen such incidences from the femcel community. Even more broadly, the women and men who may be suffering from sexual frustration or lack of sexual activity and that do not identify as an incel may benefit as well. As mentioned earlier, although the number of individuals participating in virtual incel communities is a small subset of the entire population, research shows that an increasing number of young men and women are having less frequent or sexual interactions or none at all (National Center for Health Statistics, 2020; Ueda et al., 2020). Access to resources for negative emotions caused by sexual frustration would be beneficial for all experiencing this, not just individuals that associate themselves with the incel movement.

Conclusions

Much of the prior research on incelism has been dedicated to men incels and their online community and discussions, completely ignoring the existence of women who identify as femcels. This study addresses this gap in the literature and urges for increased research dedicated to this population. I believe that research into this area will not only benefit the members of the femcel community but could also lead to increased visibility of this population, as this could be an effective route to begin challenging adult virginity stigma and allow for educational and clinical interventions (Fuller et al., 2019). Some of the practical implications discussed in prior literature regarding men incels include the development of incel-based mental health resources (Daly & Reed, 2021; Sparks et al., 2022), transformational communication practices (Hintz & Baker, 2021), and the creation of healthy and safe therapeutic spaces for people experiencing involuntary celibacy (Fuller et al., 2019; Maxwell et al., 2020; Speckhard et al., 2021). I believe these approaches could be translated over into treatment options for femcels, however with a specific focus on gender differences that exists between the two groups of self-defined incels. Additionally, with future research investigating the femcel identity and communities and then expanding on this topic by noting similarities and differences to the men incel communities, researchers and practitioners could get a better sense of how these populations differ in terms of their unique therapeutic needs relating to their involuntary singleness and/or involuntarily celibacy. Overall, this study aims to be the first to deeply venture into the topic of femcelism within an academic research setting; and in doing, so will contribute to the literature and potentially provide guidance for practical implications by offering insight into femcels' experiences, self-perceptions, and outlooks discussed through their postings and interactions on their online community.

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APPENDIX: IRB APPROVAL LETTER



September 16, 2022

To: Hannah Evans
Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice
College of Arts & Sciences
The University of Alabama
Box 870320

From: Carpantato T. Myles, MSM, CIM, CIP
Director & Research Compliance Officer

Re: **Notice of Approval**
IRB Application #: 22-08-5875
Project Title: "Involuntary Celibacy Comparison Study"
Submission Type: New
Approval Date: September 16, 2022
Expiration Date: September 15, 2023
Funding Source: None
Review Category: Exempt
Approved Documents: Waiver

Dear Ms. Evans:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research. Therefore, your application has been approved according to 45 CFR part 46.104(d)(4) as outlined below:

(4) Secondary research for which consent is not required: Secondary research uses of identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens, if: (i) The identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens are publicly available.

The approval for your application will lapse, as noted above. If your research will continue beyond this date, please submit the Continuing Review to the IRB as University policy requires before the lapse. Please note any modifications made in research design, methodology, or procedures must be submitted to and approved by the IRB before implementation. Please submit a final report form when the study is complete.

Please use reproductions of the stamped IRB-approved informed consent/assent form to obtain consent from your participants.

All the best with your research.