The Radicalization of Young White Men:

Dominant Emotional Characteristics and Traits of Online Hate

By Colleen M. K. McCarthy

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Approved: Dr. Rachael Collins
Supervisor

Approved: Dr. Michele Byers
Reader

Approved: Dr. Alexa Dodge
External

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Abstract

On August 12, 2021, a tragic mass shooting occurred in Plymouth, England, starting the exploration into the roots of hatred and extremism, particularly among young white men. This investigates the intersectionality of white supremacy and toxic masculinity, focusing on the emotional characteristics leading individuals to online hate groups. Centered on three major groups – Incels, the Proud Boys, and America First and Canada First – the study addresses three key questions on the motivations for joining, dominant emotional characteristics, and the variations between the groups. Guided by A General Theories of Hate Crime, this research employs qualitative methodologies, analyzing the online free spaces for each group. The findings highlight the hate and anger each group possess, and feelings of isolation, sadness, and joy. The discussion chapter uses the identified themes and emotions linking them to theory and literature to provide a nuanced understanding of the motivations fueling online hate.

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Table of Contents

Introduction

"Hate is too great a burden to bear. It injures the hater more than it injures the hated."

- Coretta Scott King

On August 12, 2021, a shocking incident unfolded in Plymouth, England, as a 22-year-old man unleashed a wave of violence, leaving five people dead, two injured, and ultimately taking his own life (Morris, 2023). The brutality of this act, which included the murder of his mother and others in his neighbourhood, left me profoundly disturbed. This event intensified my fascination with human behaviour and the intricate forces shaping our decisions. It spurred a deep-seated curiosity about the roots of hatred, particularly within the context of the rising trend of extreme hate among young white men (Carr, 2022).

As I embarked on my academic journey to unravel the complexities of violent behaviour, the lens widened to encompass the alarming convergence of white supremacy and toxic masculinity in contemporary society. The link between these two toxic ideologies has become increasingly apparent, permeating various aspects of our lives. It is crucial to delve into the intersectionality of privilege, race, and gender within the North American context, as individuals wielding multiple layers of privilege find themselves drawn into the folds of online hate groups. The incidents of hate and violence that have transpired in recent years, such as the Plymouth shooting, the Capitol Riots in the United States, and the Canadian Convoy Occupation, are not isolated occurrences. Instead, they are symptomatic of a broader societal unhappiness and a festering discontent that is steadily gaining momentum. This thesis aims to shine a light on online hate and extremism within the framework of a white supremacist, patriarchal society, with

a particular focus on the emotional underpinnings that drive individuals, primarily young white men, towards these hate groups.

The young white men under scrutiny in this research wield multiple layers of privilege, yet they gravitate toward hate groups as an outlet for their anger. This phenomenon raises crucial questions about the emotional characteristics that underpin their motivations to join these online hate groups. This study is grounded in a critical examination of three prominent online hate groups: Involuntary Celibate (Incels), The Proud Boys, and America and Canada First (AC1). These groups serve as a sample, reflecting and amplifying the deep-seated issues within the broader societal fabric.

This thesis is guided by three central research questions that guide the inquiry:

1. Can evidence be gleaned from online forums to elucidate why some young men join online hate groups?
2. Is there evidence within online forums indicating the dominant emotional characteristics driving membership to these groups?
3. Do variations exist between online groups, and if so, what are these differences?

The exploration begins with a comprehensive discussion of the selected hate groups, offering historical context and outlining their relevance to the research objectives. To begin, I will be discussing the group known as Incels, or more formally, the Involuntary Celibate movement.

Incels – "It's over … And it never began."

The Incels group consists of young males who, at the most basic level, have a hatred for women (Labbaf, 2019). The Incel group was created in the late 1990s by a woman known as "Alana" (Labbaf, 2019); "Alana" started the group attempting to create a community for lonely

people. However, soon after "Alana" left, the community adopted a violent and extremely misogynistic hate-based ideology. In the years since "Alana" left, the group's membership has grown aggressively. Fugardi (2023) a writer for the Southern Poverty Law Center found that in the year 2022 alone one popular Incel forum saw a rise in over 4000 new members. And since the Isla Vista (Elliot Rodger) attack in 2014, there has been 100 deaths due to Incel ideology (Fugardi, 2023). Tomkinson, Harper, and Attwell (2020) found that Incels are predominantly young, heterosexual men who blame others for their lack of relationship status. A definition of *Incel members* is "a man who is not in a relationship nor has had sex in a significant amount of time, despite numerous attempts" (SergeantIncel, 2017, as cited in Tomkinson et al., 2020).

The beliefs and ideologies of the Incel community were recently analyzed by O'Malley, Holt, and Holt (2020) who examined incel forums and found five common beliefs among incel members: (1) females dominate the sexual market; (2) females are naturally evil, less evolved than males, and inherently manipulative; (3) Legitimizing masculinity and stereotypical gender relations, and holding the belief that males are aggressive and should dominate females; (4) male oppression, meaning the current feminist society currently oppresses males; and (5) legitimizing violence and revenge, and the support for calls of violence and revenge.

A common phrase in the incel community is "it's over … and it never began" (Squirrell, n.d.). This phrase refers to the idea that Incels believe they never stood a chance at happiness. Instead, suicide becomes a possible choice to end their suffering. Bates (2021) stated that the vast amount of suicide discussion and encouragement on incel forums highlights how unhappy these men are. A study by Rouda and Siegel (2021) further backs those findings with several of their studies. Rouda and Siegel (2021) reported that young men who experienced romantic

loneliness, rejection, and bullying are common characteristics that make up the membership of the Incel community.

Members of the Incel community globally link themselves to incidents of mass violence and attacks on women, perpetrated in the name of revenge and hate, as seen in the 2009 Collier Township shooting, the 2014 Isla Vista mass shooting, the 2018 Toronto van attack, and 2021 Plymouth mass shooting. A common phrase is known as *Going Sodini* or *Going ER* the first references the 2009 Collier Township shooting, where a man attacked women in the name of revenge, and the latter references the 2014 Isla Vista mass shooting which again was the murder of women in the name of Incel ideology (Rouda and Siegel, 2020; Vito, Admire, & Hughes, 2018).

The Proud Boys – "White men are not the problem."

Gavin McInnes officially founded The Proud Boys in 2016 in Brooklyn, New York (Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d. D). McInnes began his career by co-founding Vice magazine in 1994 in Montreal, Canada. In 2008, McInnes was pushed out of Vice magazine, citing creative differences (Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d. D), and following his departure, he began writing for an online magazine called Taki's Magazine between 2008-2017 (Gollner, 2021). Martin (2018), a writer for the Southern Poverty Law Center, identified Taki's Magazine as a paleoconservative website, meaning that it advocates for extreme conservativism and right-wing ideology. In 2015, McInnes connected with a Canadian right-wing online video channel called Rebel Media, where he began hosting his video talk show called "The Gavin McInnes Show" (Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d. D). The content McInnes promoted in his show included the superiority of Western culture, racism as a myth, liberalism is bad, Islam is a violent culture, and feminism is about women hating men (Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d. D), Kitts (2021) also

highlighted that for McInnes and the Proud Boys a central belief is that white men are not the problem in society. Fans of the show began meeting in Brooklyn with McInnes at dive bars to discuss the show's content. In September 2016, McInnes formally introduced the group by name in his weekly article in Taki's Magazine, entitled "Introducing the Proud Boys" (Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d. D).

Kitts (2021) stated that one aspect that connects the Proud Boys as a fraternity identity is their initiation ritual. The Proud Boys have a four-stage initiation ritual to become a member: first, they must publicly declare themselves as a Proud Boy. The Southern Poverty Law Center (n.d. D) stated that new members must declare the following statement: "I am a Western chauvinist, and I refuse to apologize for creating the modern world" (para. 28). Second, they must endure a beating from other members of the Proud Boys organization. The beating lasts until the new member can name five breakfast cereals (Kitts, 2021). Kitts (2021) explained how this stage is a metaphor for the attacks members will receive from society during their time defending Western society. In the third stage, new members must get a Proud Boys tattoo on either their forearms or chest and, in some cases, neck. The tattoo may have an image of a rooster or just the words "Proud Boys" (Kitts, 2021). The rooster is a popular symbol for the Proud Boys, as the image is often of a rooster standing on a weathervane pointing to the west because, in their words, west is best' (Bremner, 2021). Finally, Kitts (2021) stated that new members must engage in physical violence with members of the Antifa (members of the Antifascist Action group are left-wing and anti-racist; these acts of violence are a way for new members to serve the cause.

Following the Riots on January 6th, 2021, many members of the Proud Boys organization have faced arrests, charges, and convictions due to their involvement (Ryan, 2023). Ryan (2023)

a reporter discussed the current activity of the Proud Boys organization following the arrests and convictions of some of the leaders, she stated that although the national leaders have been arrested and convicted, the smaller city/state-based branches are ramping up their activity. Ryan (2023) pointed to protests in March of 2023, where Proud Boy members attacked Drag Storytellers (Drag queens reading to children). Wolfe (2023) also discussed the current activities of the Proud Boys since the January 6th riots, and Wolfe found that the group continued to grow since the riots. Wolfe also found that in 2022 there were 143 incidents of Proud Boys political violence or protest activity. This statistic fell slightly since 2021 (which had 166 incidents) but is higher than 2020 (which has 128 logged incidents).

America and Canada First (AC1) - "If you are a white male zoomer, remember that the people in power hate you"

In 2017, a young white man from Illinois, US, who is a self-proclaimed 'Gen Z-er' (the generation born between 1997 and 2012, also often called "Zoomer") named Nick Fuentes began hosting a live stream on YouTube called 'America First with Nick Fuentes.' He now has a podcast with the same name, and since being banned from YouTube, he hosts his livestream on a website called Cozy.TV. Fuentes began hosting America First during his first year as a student at Boston University. During Fuentes' first year as a student at Boston University, he began hosting America First. However, according to the ADL (2021), Fuentes had to leave Boston University based on his claims of receiving threats for his beliefs. This timeframe was also around when Fuentes began to gain notoriety for joining the deadly white supremacist rally known as Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville, Virginia (August 11-12, 2017). In November of 2022, Fuentes dinned with Donald Trump and Ye (formally known as Kanye West), and recently Fuentes has worked as a consultant in political campaigns (Downen, 2023).

Canada First is a new section of America First based in Canada. The two groups share the same beliefs and characteristics. Tyler L. Russell from Ontario, Canada, a Gen Z-er like Fuentes, leads Canada First. Russell also hosts a live stream called Canada First on YouTube and now on Cozy.TV (a live-streaming platform). Both boys host their own show where they each discuss protecting the white identity and Christianity and oppose the modern conservative movement and liberal ideals. Roback (2021) found that children as young as 14 were active on the Canada First Discord server. Similarly, America First also had a predominantly young membership; the ADL (2021) found that most of the Fuentes' following are young males in their teens to early twenties.

Fuentes and Russell are known for their racist, homophobic, transphobic, misogynistic, and antisemitic content. The core of America and Canada First (AC1) can be summed up in a tweet Fuentes made in the summer of 2021, "If you are a white male zoomer, remember that the people in power hate you and your unborn children and they will try to genocide you in your lifetime." The tweet is no longer available to view (since Fuentes' Twitter account (now known as X) was banned), but the ADL (2021) quoted the tweet. Three main concepts are illustrated through the tweet: first, being a young white male means the world hates you; second, the people in power (who are often also white males) hate young white males; and third, a genocide is occurring against white males in America. Fuentes and Russell call their followers and AC1 group members' groypers' or the 'groyper army'; this name comes from a meme that emerged in 2017. The meme is a cartoon of a toad resting his chin on interlocked fingers. The groyper movement adopted this meme as it became popular with alt-right movements (ADL, 2020).

AC1 has carved out a unique space between distancing themselves from the mainstream conservative movement and emphasizing central themes of the white supremacist movement like

racism, the belief that whites are under attack, and a desire for a lost golden age (ADL, 2021). The Southern Poverty Law Center (n.d. C) discussed the importance of whiteness and Christianity with AC1. Fuentes has stated his disdain for Judaism and his support for Christianity. The ADL (2021) stated that America First and Fuentes have aligned themselves with an extreme ideology of Christianity and traditional values.

The next section provides a review of past research on the typology of online hate, which looks at the four classifications: religious, racial, political, and gendered hate. The literature review then delves into the connections between masculinity, aggression, and hate groups, exploring the role of toxic masculinity as a driving force behind extremist group membership. It finishes with a discussion of whiteness and the pervasive influence of a white supremacist society.

To guide this exploration, I adopted Walters' (2010) theoretical framework, A General Theories of Hate Crime, which integrates Agnew's (1992) strain theory, Perry's (2001) doing difference, and Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) general theory of crime. This integrated theoretical approach serves as a robust foundation for understanding the motivations behind joining online hate groups.

The data, sourced from two prominent social media websites, undergoes analysis employing both context and thematic methodologies, offering a nuanced perspective on the intricate tapestry of online hate and extremism within our contemporary societal landscape. The primary objective of this study was to delve into the emotional and motivational language prevalent within three distinct online hate groups: Incels, The Proud Boys, and America and Canada First. I achieved this goal by employing qualitative methodologies; this study uses an observational analysis of

social media posts using secondary data extracted from two websites. The chosen groups met specific criteria based on their activity on various social media platforms, media recognition for problematic behaviour, involvement in real-life instances of violence, and a predominantly male membership. Drawing inspiration from Simi and Futrell's (2010) ethnographic approach to studying white power movements, this research wanted to understand the emotional language and themes within the discourses of these hate groups by immersing themselves in their online "free spaces." Focusing on social media, particularly Incel-specific forums Incels.is and the versatile Gab.com; this study aims to uncover the complexities of group dynamics and expressions within these online platforms, offering insights into the unique digital environments that foster and amplify hate speech.

Following the chapter on methodologies, I provide a discussion of the key findings. Following the discussion of the key findings, I transition onto the discussion chapter. This chapter will provide a deep analysis, drawing connections between the observed emotional language and themes and the guiding research questions. The findings are connected to the guiding theoretical framework and the past literature to understand and make complete sense of the findings. I address each guiding research question at the conclusion of the discussion. The discussion section examines the identified themes within the hate groups' discourse and evaluates the themes within the context of past literature and theory. By establishing these connections, the research seeks to deepen the understanding of the motivations and emotional underpinnings that drive the members of these online hate groups.

Chapter 1 – Literature

This section provides a detailed overview of past literature on the topic of online hate, masculinity, extremism, and whiteness. This overview helps further understand the desires for young men to join online hate, as well as providing an understanding of what online hate looks like, what masculinity and extremism have in common, and what it means to live in a white supremist society. These topics are discussed later in this thesis when answering the guiding research questions. I first discuss the four types of online hate found in the literature, next I outline important aspects of masculinity and the connection to extremist groups. The literature review concludes with a discussion of whiteness and the white identity in society today.

The Characteristics of Online Hate

In the section below I outline a few of the different forms of online hate such as religious, racial, political, and gendered hate. This section is important to the overall study as it provides a basic understanding of the relevant and common forms of online hate on social media. This discussion provides an understanding of the different forms of online hate speech and how online hate speech targets different groups. This section will be helpful in future studies that analyze why some young men join one online hate group over another.

Social media is a recent form of human connection; a way to connect with a vast amount of people across the world without needing in person interaction. Roose, Flood, Grieg, Alfano, and Copland (2022) analysed online violent extremism and masculinity, and during their study they state that research is behind in understanding the new systems of communication. The authors found that communication has never been easier in all of humanity, and that social media has made human connection possible without leaving home. However, social media has also increased the accessibility to provocative material, violence, and new communities. Roose et al.,

(2022) stated that not enough research has been done to understand online communities, and especially extremist online communities. Castaño-Pulgarín, Suárez-Betancur, Vega, and López (2021) conducted a systematic review of online hate and found four main types of online hate: (1) online religious hate speech, (2) online racism, (3) political online hate, and (4) gendered online hate.

Online religious hate speech is targeted posts and comments that use inflammatory and sectarian language to promote hate and violence against a specific religious group (Castaño-Pulgarín et al., 2021). This form of online hate speech often targets minority religious communities like the Muslim community or the Jewish communities. Olteanu, Castillo, Boy, and Varshney, (2018) examined social media reactions following violence perpetrated by extremist Muslims and also violence targeting Muslims (so both when Muslims are the perpetrators, and also when they are victims). The authors found that there is an increase in hate speech targeting Muslims after Islamic extremist attacks. However, the opposite was found when Muslims are the victims of violent attacks; online hate speech decreased after these incidents and more support for the communities and victims was found online.

Ozalp, Williams, Burnap, Lie, and Mostafa (2020) conducted a comprehensive study on online antisemitism in the United Kingdom between 2015-2016. Ozalp et al., (2020) found that \ times of antisemitic hate offline (e.g. during a political fight) could trigger an increase of antisemitism hate online. Although there was a rise in antisemitic hate speech online, the researcher saw a decrease in the amount of likes and retweets those posts gathered. Burke, Diba, and Antonopoulos (2020) also conducted a study on antisemitic and Islamophobic discussions on social media; the authors found that far-right extremist groups commonly target hate speech towards religious minorities. Burke et al., (2020) stated that there are three main strategies used

to promote Islamophobia and antisemitic beliefs online. The first is the construction of 'sickness' and 'filth'; the authors claim this strategy is used to 'other' Muslims and Jewish individuals by portraying them as 'sick', 'filthy', and less than. The second strategy is 'Nazism', which is claiming Muslims as 'the new Nazis' because they are immigrating to new countries and changing that society. Nazism also praises and supports Hitler, Nazis, and the Holocaust (1993-1945). The final strategy is called the 'devictimizing the victim', and this occurs when the victims are told they are not victims. The authors provided the example of the denial of the Holocaust as a way to devictimize the victim.

Similarly, the ADL (2021) stated that Fuentes and AC1 often 'jokes' about the Holocaust, domestic violence, and racism. Smith (2023) writes for the Canadian Anti-hate network and discussed a concept called "irony poisoning", which is a term "that describes the process by which individuals become entangled in layers of irony and the distinction between offensive (and often hateful) humour and sincere belief becomes blurred or non-existent altogether" (para. 1). Smith stated that for some the concept of irony poisoning is too simplistic; however, it is important to note that AC1 routinely hide their hateful beliefs behind so-called 'jokes'. Smith continued by stating irony poisoning can be a step in the process of radicalization, as the 'joke' becomes sincere belief. Somos (2022) discussed the issues surrounding the use of humour with these hate groups. She claimed that humour hides hateful rhetoric, and assists pushing a person further into the group and into beliefs of hate, white supremacy, and violence. For Somos (2022) irony poisoning may be a less aggressive form of radicalization, but it often has the same outcome.

Castaño-Pulgarín et al., (2021) second form of online hate focuses on racism, and the ways social media tends to amplify racism. Ozduzen, Korkut, and Ozduzen (2021) stated that

online groups and individuals who promote hate, and racism are some of the most highly followed profiles. Racism on social media can appear in many different forms, Castaño-Pulgarín et al., (2021) found that most tend to focus on white identity and the perceived injustices. Perceived injustices often occur when white people believe that minorities are asking for too much, and get more resources over white people. Roose et al., (2022) discussed how many online extremist groups believe in a theory known as 'The Great Replacement' theory, which refers to how the European white majority is being replaced by North, and sub-Saharan African immigrants, who are mainly Muslim. Berger (2016) conducted a study on white nationalists in the United States and their use of the social media platform Twitter (now X). Berger found that white nationalists believe in a concept known as the 'White Genocide'; which is similar to the 'Great Replacement' and believes that the "white race is directly endangered by the increasing diversity of society" (p.3). Stern (2019) pinpoints the 1960s as the turning point for American Society. Stern highlighted the 1965 and earlier is the alt-rights' 'fantasy land'; as the white population made up about 90 percent of American society, desegregation was in its infancy, minimal immigration, and it was a time before feminism, multiculturalism, and globalism. Stern stated that in the eyes of the alt-right movements like the Proud Boys, 1965 is when the world turned for the worst and thus began the white genocide.

The third form of online hate as discussed by Castaño-Pulgarín et al., (2021) is political online hate. This form of hate is often started through a difference in political opinions that showcases intolerance between individuals and groups. The authors claimed that this version of online hate stems from a belief that individuals can change the opinions of others. For instance, political movements can elicit online hate, such as the Brexit movement and other political campaigns. In the United States with Donald Trump's campaign and presidency, many hateful

ideologies like anti-immigration, racism, and white nationalist movements rose (Castaño-Pulgarín et al., 2021). McInnes and the Proud Boys idolized Trump and saw him as the way to revive the white culture in America. McInnes was particularly fond of the slogan "Make America Great Again" and he often wrote articles and discussed on his show how America needed to revert toward conservatism and leave liberal ideals behind (Balleck, 2019; Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d. D). Hitkul et al., (2021) analyzed social media in relation to the Capitol Riots that occurred on January 6th, 2021, in the United States; when right-wing conservatives stormed the United States Capitol after anger following the "lost" election. Hitkul et al., (2021) found that narratives found on platforms with relaxed rules on censorship were more likely to encourage hate speech and violence.

Another way political hate is perpetrated online is through discussions and idolizations of historically horrible people. Roback (2021) discussed how in Canada First chat rooms, members often discussed and heroized fascist leaders, and mass killers like Adolf Hitler (leader of Nazi party in Germany, and killed 10s of millions during the Holocaust), Benito Mussolini (fascist leader in Italy), Oswald Mosley (fascist politician in England), Dylann Roof (White supremacist mass shooter of the Charleston church shooting), and Anders Breivik (Norwegian domestic terrorist). Similarly, Incels also often celebrate and idolize mass killers in their community; a popular concept among incel members that showcases the desire for violence is called *'Going Sodini'* (Rouda & Siegel, 2020). This concept refers to George Sodini, a mass killer who attacked a fitness studio in 2009 for revenge against women. When members use the phrase *'Going Sodini'* it is a call for violence, or a want for revenge. The community idolizes what Sodini did, and for many it is a goal to replicate (Rouda & Siegel, 2020).

The last form of online hate outlined by Castaño-Pulgarín et al., (2021) is gendered online hate, and the authors claim that this form is growing exponentially. Gendered online hate is also known as misogyny and occurs as attacks and hate directed at women. Bates (2021) discussed one of the most infamous groups that falls within the online gendered hate which is the manosphere. The manosphere is a collection of "fringe anti-feminist sub-groups" (Labbaf, 2019, p.17). This online world encompasses multiple groups (like Incels, Pick-up Artists, and Men's Rights Activists) that all fight against what they see as the *feminist movement* (Rouda, & Siegel, 2021; Bates, 2021). Social science researchers from the University of Western Australia have identified three common 'manosphere' beliefs: (1) feminine values dominate society; (2) society is controlled by feminist beliefs and political correctness; and (3) men need to fight against the misandry (the hatred of men) (Tomkinson et al., 2020).

Dragiewicz et al., (2018) discussed the relationship between social media and domestic abuse, and the authors claim that social media has inherent misogynistic characteristics. Dragiewicz et al., (2018) also found that women experiencing intimate partner violence often experience violence carrying over to social media; in the form of stalking, revenge porn (non-consensual sharing of intimate images), and humiliation. Bates (2021) found that women who speak out for feminism or against the patriarchy are often attacked, threatened, and assaulted. Dragiewicz et al., (2018) discussed how social media can create groups that reinforce misogynistic beliefs; they looked back at the Gamergate controversy where a highly organized misogynistic attack occurred on women in the gaming industry, which included threats, harassment, and doxing (sharing personal information like address, full name, workplace, and family relations of victims).

Castaño-Pulgarín et al., (2021) began to mention, but lacked a strong discussion of online hate targeting people based on their sexual orientation and gender identity. When discussing the findings of gendered online hate, the authors briefly mention the rise in online hate against non-heterosexuals. Martinez-Bacaicoa, Alonso-Fernadez, Wachs, and Gamez-Guadix (2023) found that online hate speech targeting women and LGBTQ people is common, and often takes the form of hateful writings and degrading images. Vogels (2021) found that in the United States queer adult individuals are more likely to face online harassment compared to straight adults. It was found that around seven in ten queer adults have faced online harassment, and about five in ten queer adults have been targeted for more severe forms of online hate. For comparison only about four in ten straight adults have experienced online harassment (Vogels, 2021). Abreu and Kenny (2018) conducted a systematic review on cyberbullying and LGBTQ+ youth. The authors found that LGBTQ+ youth are more likely to experience cyberbullying compared to their straight and cis-gendered peers. Antjoule (2016) conducted a study on hate crime against queer individuals in the UK, and the findings showed that one in three LGBT+ people have experienced online hate due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. This statistic is even higher for trans individuals, as 44% surveyed stated they have experienced online hate due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity (Antjoule, 2016).

Martins (2023) examined homophobia in South American online football forums. The author states that traditional and heteronormative masculinity is deeply ingrained into the athletic world. He claims that there is often the belief that men must prove their masculinity by being homophobic to show they are not gay. Pascoe and Diefendorf (2018) studied a similar topic; the researchers examined the use of the homophobic epithet “no homo”. Pascoe and Diefendorf explained that homophobia is central to the masculine identity, and that homophobia is a tool to

reinforce gender norms. Both Martins (2023) and Pascoe and Diefendorf (2018) found that for traditional masculinity to be enforced there must be an adoption of homophobia, which devalues femininity to prove their manhood.

Understanding the types of online hate speech is helpful for determining the differences between the three different hate groups examined in this study. The remaining sections of this literature review will discuss the connection between masculinity and extremism, the issue with the concept of toxic masculinity, and the root issue of whiteness and society. These discussions will help highlight the problems with extremism in society and help understand why some young men decide to join and participate in online hate groups.

Masculinity, Extremism, and Aggression

During the extensive literature review, many articles and books connected online hate and extremism to toxic and hegemonic masculinity. Roose et al., (2022) looked at past examples of extremism (such as the 9/11 terrorist attack, and Elliot Rodger's Incel mass shooting), and current examples of extremism in Australia. The authors set out to understand the connection between masculinity and violent extremism. This section will pull from multiple sources to understand the connection between masculinity, hate, and aggression.

This research studied online hate groups through the lenses of white supremacy and the patriarchy. Ortner (2022) defines patriarchy as:

> "The patriarchy is more than just 'sexism'. It is a social formation of male-gendered power with a particular structure that can be found with striking regularity in many different arenas of social life, from small-scale contexts like the family, kin groups, and gangs, up through larger institutional contexts like the police, the military, organized sports, the state and more" (p. 308).

Ortner (2022) went on to state that the patriarchy is built on a society that gives unearned power to men in society. She pointed to traditional family structures, where fathers/husbands are the authority and leaders in the family as examples of the patriarchy. Ortner (2022) did acknowledge that there are layers of oppression within the patriarchal system in society. Collins (2017) stated that "oppressions underpin systems of domination" (p. 19), meaning that systems like the patriarchy are not as straightforward when other instances of oppression are occurring at the same time. So, a black male, queer male, or another marginalized male does not have the same power that a white, straight, wealthy, cis-gendered male would have, even in a system like the patriarchy that puts men above women. This discussion is quite nuanced and outside the scope of this research, but it is important to acknowledge that not all face power and oppression equally within the patriarchal system.

Roose et al., (2022) examined the connection between masculinity and violent extremism; claiming that recruitment and membership to extremist groups is tied to masculinity. The authors define masculinity as the "social expectations of what it is to be a man" (p.1). Since extremist groups are often made up of males, and extremism is on the rise Roose et al., (2022) claimed that masculinity and shifting masculinities are key in understanding the motivation to support these groups. Following Elliot Rodger's (Incel mass shooter) attack in 2014, his manifesto was analyzed by Vito et al., (2018) who identified themes about Rodger and his connection to his own masculinity. Roose et al., (2022) identified five themes to explain the connection between masculinity and recruitment to extremist groups; (1) psychology and identity crisis, (2) culture and male alienation, (3) governance and protest masculinity, (4) political economy and aggrieved entitlement, and (5) toxic masculinity.

Roose's et al., (2022) first identified theme is what they called "psychology and identity crisis", the authors state that this recruitment tool is often used on males who are in the stage of life and masculinity when they are between boyhood and manhood. In the stage of life between boyhood and manhood there is often a desire to rebel and seek excitement (Roose et al., 2022). Bartlett, Bridwell, and King (2010) examined radical extremism, and discussed this stressful period in a young man's life, which they called the problem of the "angry young men" (p. 37). Both Roose et al., (2022) and Bartlett et al., (2010) discussed how this time of rebellion and anger is often combined with the desire of doing something cool and adventurous and can help recruitment. However, Roose et al., (2022) stated that identity crisis is not singularly applied to young males, but also men who are facing major life changes that attack their masculinity (for example economic or social loss). Vito et al., (2018) saw that Rodger in his manifesto went through a similar crisis in his own masculinity, often feeling the need to prove his masculinity due to his size (around 5 foot nine inches) and appearance. Roose et al., (2022) identified what is often called the "bunch of guys thesis" (p.17) which states that groups provide men in identify crisis support and connection with likeminded individuals. The authors also highlight that during an identity crisis it can be easy to fuse personal identity with group identity; meaning that an individual's identity is dependent on the group.

The second theme Roose et al., (2022) identified from the literature is culture and male alienation. This second theme arrived from academic literature which claimed that males who experience alienation or discrimination are more likely to become radicalized. The authors stated feelings of disconnection from their culture and society drives the desire for community. The authors also found that the desire for community is tied with the desire to express their sense of injustice. Vito et al., (2018) also saw in Rodger's manifesto, an intense dislike of himself, and

that Rodger felt his masculinity was being challenged and often faced rejection. As a result, Rodger routinely began to target his growing anger toward women and lower status men, often racial minorities.

The third theme links masculinity and recruitment to poor governance (Roose et al., 2022). Roose et al., (2022) called this theme "governance and protest masculinity", which links a distrust in the government and concept of protest masculinity. The authors found that political action is tied to reclaiming masculinity and claimed that there is often a 'tipping point' when the government goes too far. The idea of protest masculinity is thought of as a way to reclaim manhood through the protest of injustice. When the government is seen as going too far, men must stand up and fight against it (Roose et al., 2022). Kitts (2021) stated that the Proud Boys were upset with the current political world in America, and he highlighted the mission of the group is to create and foster the ideal masculine identity, with a desire to 'save' America. Nguyen and Gokhale (2022) examined Twitter (now known as X) posts following Proud Boy protests and attacks. The authors discussed how the Proud Boys engaged in many politically motivated conflicts and protests, one of the most infamous being the 2021 January 6th Capitol Riots in Washington, DC. As well violence is one of the core beliefs in the Proud Boys, as Kitts (2021) discussed their four-stage initiation ritual where two stages involve violence. The second stage occurs when current Proud Boy members beat the recruit, which symbolizes the beatings they will need to endure from society. The fourth stage encourages new members to start physical brawls with members of the Antifa (an anti-fascist protest movement).

Rothbart and Stebbins (2022) examined speeches made by leaders of the Proud Boys organization before, during, and after the Capitol Riots on January 6th, 2021. During this, they discussed a concept called 'Righteous Rage.' *Righteous rage* is an intense emotion defined as "a

special form of anger that is conjoined with feelings of indignation directed at another person or group, presumably for having committed an offense" (Lewis, 1992, p. 153). This form of rage often intersects with disdain, bitterness, and contempt. Righteous rage can be psychologically pleasing and exciting (Rothbart & Stebbins, 2022). According to Rothbart and Stebbins (2022), the pleasure comes from "enhanced self-esteem from positioning oneself as the source of moral insight, the fount of wisdom, and the catalyst for necessary action" (p. 2).

Violence and anger are a core concept for the Proud Boys. Rothbart and Stebbins (2022), found that righteous rage was apparent on the Proud Boys social media prior to, during, and following the January 6th attack on the United States Capitol building. The authors continued by stating that righteous rage is an emotion that tightly connects individuals to their group while further distancing themselves from outsiders, and enforcing a belief that outsiders are the enemy. This means that for the Proud Boys when the emotion of righteous rage occurs it strongly ties them as a group. AC1 have been involved in rallies and protests against their governments. Russell was a significant supporter and advocate for the Trucker's Occupation in early 2022 in Ottawa, Canada (Roback, 2021). Fuentes attended the deadly unite the right rally in 2017. He was a VIP at the January 6th Capitol Riots (although he never went inside the building). He attended multiple stop-the-steal (a far-right political campaign that promoted the ideology that Trump’s loss was due to electoral fraud) rallies following Donald Trump's loss (ADL, 2021). Both leaders have encouraged their followers to attend these rallies and protests.

The fourth theme identified links political economy and aggrieved entitlement to extremist group recruitment (Roose et al., 2022). Roose et al., (2022) claimed that poor economic conditions often cause a crisis in expectations of manhood, as males may struggle to provide adequately. This frustration with failing to live up to a societal version of manhood can

lead to feelings of being emasculated and anger towards the state. Aggrieved entitlement is the feeling of a perceived loss of something an individual was entitled to or deserved (Roose et al., 2022). Vito et al., (2018) discussed how in Rodger's manifesto he routinely discussed his anger at not being the ideal male, and in his mind that meant tall, white, and muscular. The authors found that after Rodger's failed attempts to shift his masculinity and shift the views of his own masculinity; he resorted to violence. Allison and Klein (2021) had similar findings in their research on anti-homeless bias homicides. The authors found that in some cases the killings of homeless men occurred due to the victims not adequately performing manhood by not being providers.

The final theme identified by Roose et al., (2022) is toxic masculinities. Toxic masculinity is a hot topic ongoing in the current society, and according to Roose et al., (2022) a significant portion of the literature on extremism claims males join extremist groups due to a toxic version of masculinity. Kupersp (2005) defined toxic masculinity as "the constellation of socially regressive male traits that serve to foster domination, the devaluation of women, homophobia, and wanton violence. Toxic masculinity also includes a strong measure of the male proclivities that lead to resistance in psychotherapy" (p. 714). Parent, Gobble, and Rochlen (2019) examined the connection between social media, toxic masculinity, and depression; and they state toxic masculinity "is characterized by a drive to dominate, and by endorsement of misogynistic and homophobic views" (p. 278).

Many argue that there is no agreed upon concept of toxic masculinity, and instead "Hegemonic Masculinity" should be used. Scaptura, Hayes, Gruenewald, Parkin, and Protas (2023) stated that hegemonic masculinity is socially constructed and not based on biological sex. Connell (1987) claimed "hegemonic masculinity embodied the currently most honored way of

being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men" (p. 832). Bates (2021) claimed that traditional masculinity is psychologically harmful to young men. Bates continued by stating that traditional ways of suppressing ones' emotions to be 'masculine' is determinantal to the emotional development of young males. Allison and Klein (2021) stated that hegemonic masculinity is the dominant or preferred form of masculinity. Connell and Messerschmidt (2006) claimed that hegemonic masculinity is distinct from and superior to other forms of masculinities. In the Incel community hegemonic masculinity is often seen as the desired form of masculinity; Elliot Rodger discussed his displeasure over not being an alpha male in both physical appearance and personality (Vito et al., 2018). Like any group the Incel community has its own slang language, and the most desired (and hated) form of masculinity in the group is known as "Chads". Chads are the most alpha, stereotypical popular male; who the community hates for stealing the women, but also aspires to be (Furl, 2022).

Roose et al., (2022) claimed that the concept of toxic masculinity is often generalized and blamed for male extremism without actually explaining how and why toxic masculinity is to blame. Aggression is a key factor in the definition of toxic masculinity according to Harrington (2021), so although there is controversy over the concept of toxic masculinity, aggression is at the root. Whether toxic masculinity is to blame for the wrongs in the world or not; toxic masculinity is the result of needing to prove one's manhood. Being a hero, aggression, fighting, and finding groups are all examples from the other four themes identified by Roose et al., (2022), so behaviours and acts associated with toxic masculinity are also associated with recruitment to extremist groups in other ways.

This section highlighted the connection between masculinity and hate group membership. The online hate groups studied in this research mostly consist of males, and looking at topics like hegemonic masculinity and aggression can help showcase why the groups have such large male membership. In the next sections other characteristics around hate and masculinity will be examined; the next section examines whiteness and the concept of the white identity.

White Supremacy and Hate

One of the central topics found in the discourse of the three groups was about race; whether that analyzed their racist rhetoric and content, or the idea of white privilege, racial issues are a prominent theme. This section discusses the idea of whiteness, what it means to be white, and anger tied with whiteness. First, I speak about two theoretical frameworks that have studied whiteness: critical race theory and critical whiteness theory. Understanding theoretical frameworks will be helpful when discussing the concept of whiteness and the white identity. The following section also explores the idea of whiteness as invisible and the opposite of whiteness as highly visible. The discussion of whiteness is tied in with the beliefs, and content from the three groups who use their whiteness to perpetrate white supremacy.

The theoretical frameworks that have been studying whiteness and the white identity are Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies. Delgado and Stefancic (2017) wrote on Critical Race Theory and highlighted the framework's three basic tenets, first that racism is ordinary or normal, second that society is structured to benefit the dominant white group, and third that race is a social construction. The first tenet that racism is ordinary or normal refers to how racism is always ongoing, however it is difficult to address due to the dominant white group's failure to notice and acknowledge racism. The "invisibility of whiteness" and colour-blindness will be discussed in following paragraphs due to the high relevancy to the three hate

groups this research studies. The second tenet of Critical Race Theory is that racism benefits the dominate white group; this is through racism suppressing marginalized groups and uplifting the white group (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The final tenet is the idea that races are socially constructed; Delgado and Stefancic (2017) stated that the traits, characteristics, and identity that people place on different races have no biological component, and that instead these beliefs are socially constructed and manipulated when convenient. Nayak (2007) highlighted three common beliefs of Critical Whiteness Studies; first the whiteness is a modern invention that has changed over time, second that whiteness is a social norm tied to many unnamed privileges, and third that the bonds of whiteness can be deconstructed which will benefit society. Critical Whiteness Studies focuses on deconstructing, and rethinking what whiteness is and the idea of the white identity.

Ferber (2007) explained privilege as what "exists when one group has something of value that is denied to others simply because of the groups they belong to" (p. 266). This definition of privilege illustrates the connection between privilege and whiteness as seen earlier with Nayak's (2007) definition the core of whiteness is having privilege and benefiting because of belonging to the white group. Opposite to privilege is oppression which is explained as a system of forces and structures that hold people down and keep them from pursing a good life (Feber, 2017). Privilege can only occur when a different group is being oppressed; this is due to privilege giving something of value to one group while an oppressed group does not. Feber (2017), claimed that privilege is closely tied with power, dominance, resources, and rewards. But importantly privilege is not something earned through achievement or other actions, but instead something given on the basis of belonging to a specific group.

Matias and Newlove (2017) examined whiteness in the context of the United States and state that American society is a white supremacist society. The authors defined white supremacy as "beyond the prejudiced belief of one individual and into large-scale institutional systematic benefits that are given to whites over people of Colour" (p. 317). Matias and Newlove (2017) were clear that white supremacy does not stop at the hands of organized groups like the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) or Neo-Nazis, but that it is a systematic societal level issue. Belew and Gutierrez (2021) agreed with Matias and Newlove (2017) and go further to outline how structures of privilege like patriarchy combine with privileges like whiteness which reinforces white men as the people in power. Belew and Gutierrez (2021) continued by stating that this system of white supremacy and the patriarchy is what created space for groups like the KKK and continue to do so by electing former US President Donald Trump. Thus, reinforcing these systems of white supremacy and patriarchy to thrive. Garner (2007) stated that white supremacy implies that the existing system that provides the privilege is also run by whites for the benefit of whites.

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) (n.d. A) stated that the alt-right (short for alternative right) was created in 2008 by Richard B. Spencer, the head of a white nationalist think tank called the National Policy Institute. The SPLC stated the term alt-right is used to "describe a loose set of far-right ideals centered on "white identity" and the preservation of "Western civilization" (para. 10). Hawley (2018) argued that many academics urge for the term alt-right to be replaced with "white supremacist" because the latter term highlights the inherent racism as opposed to the former term which can hide or underplay racism. Like Garner (2007) who stated that white supremacy highlights the systems and structures that keeps whites in power; at its core the alt-right wants to keep the white identity alive in America (Hawley, 2018).

Hawley (2018) stated that there are multiple groups and movements under the white supremist umbrella; from Neo-Nazis who look to Fascism and the Third Reich as examples of a desired society. Stern (2019) discussed the concept of an ethnostate which is a proposed state that limits citizenship/residence to whites, and anyone outside of that definition of white would be unable to reside/have citizenship in the nation; and she claimed that goal is common within white supremacist groups. However, Hawley (2018) and Stern (2019) claimed that the concept of ethnostate is a chilling, yet unpractical goal for less radical groups in the white supremist movement. Hawley (2018) instead stated that the modest and long-term goals center around: ending mass immigration, ending political correctness, accepting, and elevating the white identity in politics, and moving away from feminism.

A larger movement within the white supremist groups is a return to traditional family structures and the opposition of feminism (Stern, 2019). Hawley (2018) stated the anti-feminism ideology comes with a belief in a patriarchal society, and the promotion of *sex realism*, which is the belief "that men and women have biological differences that make them suited to different social roles" (p. 17). Traditional families are popular and encouraged in the white power movements that Simi and Futrell (2010) studied. The authors claimed that the family dynamics kept women at home with the children and the men were the patriarchal leaders in the home. Stern (2019) examined the alt-right and looked at the role of women in these groups. She found that women are meant to promote the traditional life (TradLife) and traditional wife (TradWife) duties. Stern found that the women are often used as social media influencers to try and recruit young women into the lifestyle.

The Visibility of Whiteness

As mentioned earlier the visibility of whiteness is a core issue in Critical Race and Critical Whiteness studies; because it looks at how white people see whiteness and how they view race. Garner (2007) discussed the concept of whiteness as invisible, and that "whiteness has come to be represented as humanness" (p.34). Garner (2007) explained that whiteness is the norm in society, and everything else is deviant. So, whiteness is the framing position, and everything else is defined by how it relates to whiteness. McDermott and Ferguson (2022) state that many white people view race as anything but white, and that whiteness is a neutral category that they do not see themselves as being racialized. Torkelson and Hartmann (2021) explained the idea of whiteness as invisible, they stated that white people do not see their own privilege and power, and they are blind to the benefits they have due to their membership to the dominant white group.

The idea of being blind to realities in society connects to a concept that Garner (2007) and Ferber (2007) called *colour-blindness,* which is the idea that white people believe that racism is no longer a problem (because things like lynching, and segregation are no longer overtly occurring). However, colour-blind racism is the failure to see smaller forms of racism (like microaggressions) and the overall white supremacist society that grants the unearned privileges to white group. McDermott and Ferguson (2022) stated that colour-blindness led to the denial of racial inequality, thus leading to a lack of societal change. Garner (2007) called colour-blindness *willful not-seeing* because to not see race, racism, and their own privilege is of benefit to whites.

There is a second view of whiteness and its visibility, and that is whiteness as highly visible. Garner (2007) stated that to non-white people, whiteness is extremely visible. This perspective on whiteness comes from the oppressed groups (non-white groups), these are the

groups that face racism and oppression due to white supremacy. To the non-white group whiteness is highly visible. Garner (2007) explained this process of shifting from invisible to visible is when whiteness is challenged. When whiteness is challenged it can cause emotional reactions like denial, which can take two distinct forms. The first form is white people will argue that racism is exaggerated and not as bad as people claim, or that racism is an individual prejudice that they do not share but they also ignore their privilege. The second form of denial is by claiming that whiteness is detrimental in society, and they are the oppressed ones. Often the oppression of whites is called reverse racism. For example, Kitts (2021) touched on the Proud Boys' claim that white men are not at fault for the problems in society, and instead globalism and multiculturalism is to blame. Affirmative action is also seen as a form of reverse racism, as white people believe they are being punished for historical oppression (Garner, 2007). So, not only do white people often fail to see racism and their own privilege, but when shown the realities of it they experience denial and in some instances anger.

Whiteness and Anger

Matias and Newlove (2017) stated that whites are among the angriest of all racial groups. The authors discuss the reasons behind this statement; stating that organizations like Fox News (conservative news) argue this anger is due to things like 'reverse racism' and the discrimination of white males in the work force. However, Matias and Newlove (2017) argued that the anger is due to a defense mechanism used to prevent feeling a deep level of shame for not seeing race, racism, and white privilege. Garner (2007) also found that when whites are faced with their own whiteness along with denial emotions like anger are common. West (2005) stated that when whites attempt to defend or protect something it stems from anxieties and fear. Similarly, Isom, Mikell, and Boehme (2021) studied alt-right movements in the United States, and they state that

whites seek to protect the status quo, which is their position in power, they also fear a white race extinction. Simi and Futrell (2010) found that members of white supremacists' groups have a view that white people in society are always getting the 'short end of the stick' and have common beliefs of some injustice towards whites. This is a common belief among the AC1 group, they believe that a white genocide is occurring, and that white men specifically are being targeted and unjustly treated (ADL, 2021). Isom-Scott and Stevens-Andersen (2020) found that perceptions of anti-white bias are a significant strain for white youths (particularly males) and is associated with violence; highlighting the anger and violence that can stem from calling into question whiteness and white privilege.

Isom, Mikell, and Boehme (2021) stated that the perceived threat towards whiteness fosters feelings for a return to the 'good ole days' through the stability of a societal white supremacy. Simi and Futrell (2010) conducted an ethnographic study on white supremacy groups in the early 2000s. The groups the authors followed promoted the white power movement (WPM), which the authors define as "the ideology that the white race is genetically and culturally superior to all non-white races and deserves to rule over them" (p. 2). Simi and Futrell (2010) found that the white supremacist group they studied idolized traditional male lead and dominated families, who had a goal of creating an all-white world. The authors also found that high level of emotions like rage, intense hatred, anger, and frustration were commonly found in the beliefs in the group, but also more positive emotions like pride, solidarity, loyalty, love, and affection were common in group members when around other members or while discussing their conviction to the group.

Isom-Scott and Stevens-Andersen (2020) conducted a study to find the beliefs of alt-right groups, and they found three common themes; the threat against white people, a wish to return to

the good ole days, and connection with faux news. The first theme was commonly seen as how alt-right members perceived threats towards themselves, typically issues like immigration, globalization, and the government being too strong (around their constitutional rights) in some areas but too lax in other (immigration). The authors also saw that alt-right members do not see themselves as racist, instead they believe in protecting white rights. The second theme wishes to return to a good ole day, meaning bringing America back to a white Christian society (Isom-Scott & Stevens-Andersen, 2020). The final theme called faux news; the authors discuss how alt-right members feel that mass media is controlled by the Jewish and liberal population, and that the mass media presents white supremacists in a bad light (Isom-Scott & Stevens-Andersen, 2020).

Kitts (2021) had similar findings, arguing that the beliefs held by the Proud Boys are not unique, rather the Proud Boys hold similar beliefs of other nationalist groups (past and present) from Europe and America. The groups Kitts identified that hold similar beliefs are 'Five Star Movement' (Italy) and 'AfD (Alternative for Germany)' in Europe, and the many Neo-Nazi movements in the United States. Kitts (2021) continued by illustrating the three common features that nationalist groups share: (1) a yearning or desire for a lost 'golden age'; (2) the lionization of a hero; and (3) the repulsion of their culture being diluted due to globalization.

Kitts (2021) provided examples of ways the Proud Boys fit into each category; for the first category the leader, McInnes and Donald Trump both wish to "Make America Great Again", this shows a desire to return to a better or greater time in American history. Kitts (2021) stated that McInnes wished to return to the era when "men were men, and girls were girls" (p. 24). Balleck (2019), highlighted some concerning points in McInnes' ideology meant to save America. His plan included ten steps; abolish prisons, give all Americans guns, legalize drugs, end the welfare state, close borders to prohibit illegal immigration, outlaw censorship, return to

traditional family values and reinforce the housewife, encourage entrepreneurship, shut down the government, and finally declare the West as best.

Whiteness and Christianity

Whiteness intersects with many different forms of identity but one that is often discussed through the groups is Christianity. As shown previously, AC1 have a very central Christian ideology along with their core identity of being young white males. McDermott and Ferguson (2022) argued that Christianity is similar to whiteness as both are seen as the norm or the invisible identity in society. As discussed earlier, whiteness is seen as the standard in society and any race outside of that is the 'other'; the same can be said for Christianity - it is seen as the standard religion. Thus, like whiteness, Christianity is a privileged position.

Simi and Futrell (2010) found that Christianity was a popular factor within the white supremacists' groups they studied. The authors found that bible groups, church, and Christian based homeschooling were common ways for members to meetup and strengthen group ties. The beliefs that occur in these faith-based meetups are still often fueled by anger; Simi and Futrell (2010) state that non-whites and non-Christians are viewed as evil, and 'God' has made them lower species.

Perry and Scriven (2016) discussed that antisemitism and racist beliefs are characteristics of many hate groups due to the theocratic principle known as "Christian Identity". The ADL (2017) defined Christian Identity as:

> "a religious ideology popular in extreme right-wing circles. Adherents believes that whites of European descent can be traced back to the "Lost Tribes of Israel." Many consider Jews to be the Satanic offspring of Eve and the Serpent, while non-whites are "mud peoples" created before Adam and Eve" (para.1).

AC1 and their followers have carved out a unique space between distancing themselves from the mainstream conservative movement but emphasizing central themes of the white supremacist movement like racism, the belief that whites are under attack, and a desire for a lost golden age (ADL, 2021). AC1 has chosen to distance themselves from mainstream conservatism, as they believe that current conservative parties have moved away from true Christian values, and thus do not reflect the group's core values (ADL, 2021).

This literature review provided a deeper understanding of the larger societal issues with online hate groups. The first section explained the four types of online hate speech: religious, political, racial, and gendered. The second section connected masculinity with extremism, as well as a discussion of hegemonic masculinity. And finally, the last section provided an understanding of whiteness, and how that concept intersects with the issues of online hate. These topics provided a more nuanced discussion of online hate and extremism and help to explain why some young men join online hate groups, and why they choose one over another.

Chapter 2 - Theoretical Framework

In this section, I discuss the theoretical framework guiding this research. The overarching goal of this thesis is to understand why young males join online hate groups and what are the dominant characteristics and emotions of the individual members and the groups themselves. To do this, I started by looking at the main theories used in the past to explain hate crimes, as the premise is similar. I believe that the General Theories of Hate Crime introduced by Mark Walters (2010), which uses macro and micro perspectives to understand why hate crimes occur, is best suited to this research. As stated, this research is not attempting to understand hate crime but rather what motivates people to join online hate groups. Walters' 2010 theory does an excellent job of rationalizing motivation, which can be framed through the motivation to join online hate groups.

General Theories of Hate Crime

Mark Austin Walters (2010) introduced A General Theories of Hate Crime as an attempt to explain hate crime and to do this, Walter combined three criminological theories that have been used in the past to understand why hate crimes occur. The three theories Walter combined are Strain Theory (1938), Doing Difference (2001), and A General Theory of Crime (1984). He argued that each theory independently does not adequality explain why hate crime occurs. So, instead, Walter combined the three theories into what he calls A General Theories of Hate Crime.

This research's goal is to understand who belongs to the three online hate-based groups (Incels, The Proud Boys, and America & Canada First) and what the groups and members' emotional characteristics are. To do this, Walters' (2010) General Theories of Hate Crime is used to understand the motivations of the four online groups and the characteristics of the groups and their members.

Walters (2010) stated that hate crime research is limited, and he claims that the criminological theories used in the past are not complete and are lacking in many important areas. Walters used a theoretical integration approach to combing theories. Using these three criminological theories Walters (2010) attempted to explain hate crime as socio-cultural and socio-economic conditions that are combined with individual characteristics that trigger hate-motivated violence.

Strain Theory

Walters (2010) explained that Strain Theory has been a popular theory to explain hate crimes. Robert Merton, an American Sociologist developed Strain Theory in the 1930s, claiming that criminal behaviour results from society's pressures to achieve goals, but individuals do not have the means to achieve those goals. Often the inability to achieve the goals is due to a lack of education, finances, and individual capacity. To Merton, these strains are barriers to gaining the high-value goals in society, such as individual success; so, to achieve their goals, individuals must resort to crime (Walters, 2010). Agnew (1992) expanded on Merton's Strain Theory and added three specific types of strains: "other individuals may (1) prevent one from achieving positively valued goals; (2) remove or threaten to remove positively valued stimuli that one possesses; or (3) present or threaten to present one with noxious or negatively valued stimuli (Agnew, 1992, p.50).

Agnew's (1992) first strain is the prevention of achieving positively valued goals. This first strain is often connected to the example of the American dreams (like acquiring wealth, or having a home and car), and the inability for many individuals to achieve that dream. When goals are not met crime and delinquency occurs to try and achieve those goals. This first strain has three sub-strains: (1) the disjunction between an individual's aspirations or ideal goals and

their expectations; (2) the disjunction between someone's expectations and what they actually achieve; and (3) the disjunction between just/fair outcomes and the actual outcomes.

The first sub-strain is the disjunction between an individual's aspirations and the expected outcomes. Which Agnew's (1992) claimed mean someone's goal does not match what they expect to achieve. Agnew provided the example of lower-class individuals who are often told to achieve the American dream without having the means to do it, and therefore the aspiration does not meet the expected outcome. The second sub-strain Agnew (1992) explained is the disjunction between someone's expectations and what they actually achieve. Strain theories often focus on ideal goals and the inability to achieve those goals; but with this sub-strain the strain is the difference between what people expected and what the reality is. Agnew claimed that when expectations are not met, this can lead to emotions like anger, resentment, rage, unhappiness, and disappointment; he also stated that people are highly motivated to reduce the gap between expectations and actual achievement, and which is when deviance can occur.

Finally, the third sub-strain is the disjunction between just/fair outcomes and the actual outcomes; this strain examines how individuals have certain expectations of how resources are distributed (Agnew, 1992). The world and society have a set amount of resources that can be given out, and when people expected to receive more, but do not, that is when people can act out (Agnew, 1992). Agnew (1992) stated that people act out in four ways: (1) they increase their outcomes (often done by theft); (2) they lower their outputs (making their efforts match the rewards); (3) they lower the outcomes of others (taking the resources from others); or (4) they increase the inputs of others, (making others work harder so the division of resources appears more fair).

The second strain Agnew (1992) discussed is the removal or threatened removal of a positively valued stimului. Agnew provided the example of a child who had their toy taken by another child, the one who lost the toy tends to act out aggressively. Agnew referred to past literature on aggression from Bandura and Zillman which led him to this strain; he saw that aggression often came from the removal (or threatened removal) of a positively valued stimuli. The example of the child losing (removal) their toy (positive stimuli), and the child acts out in anger. Agnew stated that stressful life events (like job loss or death) can also fall under this strain as there are numerous examples of positive stimuli being lost.

The final strain that Agnew (1992) offered is the presentation of negative stimuli. Negative or noxious stimuli are things people do not like (for example physical pain or bullying) that are being introduced into their life. Again, Agnew looked towards aggression literature to see how noxious stimuli lead to aggressive behaviours. He saw that when youth are faced with a noxious stimulus, they either: (1) avoided it; (2) terminated or reduced the negative stimuli; (3) sought revenge against the source; or (4) partook in illicit substance use to minimize or manage effects of the negative stimuli.

Agnew (1992) argued that each strain is distinct and unique from the other, but the three main strains can overlap. Agnew gives the example of insults from a teacher, stating that the insults interfere with the student's goals for academic success (and thus the first strain is experienced), the insults can be perceived as unjust and may be unequally distributed (the second strain), and finally, the insults can be perceived as a noxious stimulus (the third strain). Although each strain differs from the next, they can coincide as all three or a mixture of the three.

Agnew (1992) linked the strains with delinquency, claiming that when strains increase, so does the likelihood of negative emotions. The emotions most seen are disappointment,

depression, fear, and, most importantly, anger. To Agnew, anger is the most important emotional reaction for General Strain Theory, "because it increases the individual's level of felt injury, creates a desire for retaliation/ revenge, energizes the individual for action, and lowers inhibitions, in part because individuals believe that others will feel their aggression is justified" (Agnew, 1992 pp. 59-60).

Agnew (1992) added that anger is a distinct emotion that often leads to individuals wanting to take corrective steps; one means is delinquency. Some of the coping strategies that Agnew listed include vengeful behaviours. Agnew, Brezina, Wright, and Cullen (2002) stated that anger is conductive to delinquency and crime because anger energizes the individual. The new energy also leads to higher wants for action and revenge and can lead to lower inhibitions that would normally prevent the delinquency. Agnew (1992) identified some behavioural characteristics and individual traits that make coping easier, such as temperament, intelligence, creativity, interpersonal skills, self-efficacy, and high self-esteem. Countering individual traits, Agnew also discussed how groups can benefit and create barriers to coping. Depending on the group, some relationships can create healthy coping skills to overcome the strains. However, certain social groups can make it difficult to cope with the strains in a nondelinquent way. Agnew et al., (2002) found that when strains lead to negative emotions these individuals are not pleasant people and often elicit negative reactions from others. They also found that individuals high in negative emotions tend to ostracize themselves from positive relations and seek out negative environments like delinquent peer groups.

Allison and Klein (2021) conducted a study combining research on hegemonic masculinity and general strain theory to explain anti-homeless bias homicides. The authors claimed that masculinity itself can be seen as a strain, as hegemonic masculinity represents a

positively valued stimulus. When someone is unable to pursue legitimate ways of hegemonic masculinity (like through sports and body performances, or sexualized language or behaviour), that is Agnew's (1992) first strain occurring, because they are not able to perform their gender (Allison & Klein, 2021). Allison and Klein (2021) saw examples of violent attacks on homeless individuals when males felt their own masculinity was being threatened, and this was heightened when it occurred in front of other males. Often Agnew's (1992) second strain occurred when the perpetrators' masculinity was challenged, and to reaffirm their manhood turned to aggression and violence (Allison & Klein, 2021). Allison and Klein (2021) stated that men hold other men accountable to correctly perform their gender, and when they cannot perform it, or their masculinity is threatened they must "save face" and overcome those strains in masculinity by turning to aggression and violence. Similarly, when Vito et al., (2018) studied Elliot Rodger's manifesto following his mass shooting they identified a theme they called the *misdirection of anger*. This theme was identified through passages of Rodger feeling his masculinity was challenged or targeted, and he directed his anger toward people who he considered to be part of a lower social hierarchy.

Walters (2010) explained how Agnew's (1992) adaption of General Strain Theory has been used in past literature to explain hate crimes. The three forms of strains explained by Agnew are used to show how specific demographic populations are considered strains to the overall white majority population. Walters (2010) gave examples of racialized groups and immigrants being used as scapegoats for the unhappiness of the dominant members of society. In the United States, immigrants from Mexico and other parts of Central America are often blamed for taking American jobs, similar to the second strain discussed above. Walter also provided the example that there are often rumours that minority groups receive extra benefits from the

government, which is perceived as unfair to the majority population; this is similar to the first strain that Agnew (1992) discussed. These strains go through the process Agnew discussed above; with a lack of coping skills and unhealthy group environments, people result in feelings of anger and want for vengeance. Thus, showing how General Strain Theory has been used in the past to explain hate crimes and why they might occur.

Doing Difference

Another criminological theory used to explain why hate crimes occur comes from Barbara Perry's instrumental work on hate crimes and the book "In the Name of Hate: Understanding Hate Crimes" (2001). Walters (2010) connected Doing Difference, as used by Perry, with Strain Theory to elevate the understanding of why hate crimes occur. Perry (2001) argues that strain theory does not account for hate crimes perpetrated by economically, socially, and politically powerful people in society. Strain Theory, in some way, does account for this; however, not to the same level as Perry's theory.

Doing difference is based on structured action theory, developed by James Messerschmidt in 1993. Structured action theory attempts to understand the relationship among gender, race, class, and crime (Messerschmidt, 2014) Messerschmidt (2014) believed that social structures such as gender, race, and class are constructed and reinforced through everyday interaction. He believes understanding the power dynamics of gender, race, and class and how they intersect are important for understanding crime. Messerschmidt's influential book discussed the idea of 'doing' race or 'doing' gender, claiming that people act in ways to reaffirm their gender/race against others. Like the study done by Allison and Klein (2021) found that men committed anti-homeless bias crimes as a way to correctly perform hegemonic masculinity. That in society there are norms of how to correctly do sex and race, and Allison and Klein found that

in some cases men turn to violence to perform their sex. Messerschmidt (2014) talked about the volatile time period of black men gaining more rights in society, called the Southern Reconstruction, and he pointed out that the power differences between white and black men slightly changed because of the new freedoms black men gained. Messerschmidt claims that white men bonded together in tight groups due to feeling threatened, and so they attacked through racist lynching. Messerschmidt claimed that the lynching is a result of black men 'doing' white men activities (like voting and owning property).

Perry's (2001) theory of doing difference extends from Messerschmidt's structured action theory. For Perry (2001), power dynamics between the victims of hate violence and the perpetrators is the best way to explain hate crimes. The idea of 'difference' comes from the typical western norm - white, male, cis-gendered, heterosexual, Christian, and finically secure. Anyone who falls outside of this boundary is seen as the Other or different. Perry continued by stating that "not only is the Other different; by definition, s/he is also aberrant, deviant, and inferior" (2001, p.47). Walters (2010) claimed this creates an in-group mentality, where the norm group focuses on finding the Others (the person outside of the norm group). People deemed to be different are feared; based on a fear that the Others will trespass and control the in-group (like in Messerschmidt (2014) example of the Southern Reconstruction). Thus, this can create feelings of helplessness and insecurity for members of the in-group (Walters, 2010).

Perry (2001) emphasized the importance of understanding power imbalances and the structure of oppression. The people who belong to the norm/in-group are those in powerful positions; economically, socially, and politically. Those in positions of power rule the structures of oppression and these structures are built based on hierarchies and through a set of binaries. When people deviate from the set norms, it makes those in power uncomfortable; to those in

power, this deviation is a challenge or threat to the sociocultural arrangement. The sociocultural arrangement is based on a patriarchal white supremist society. Looking back at the discussion on whiteness and colour-blindness, Delgado and Stefancic (2017) stated that that society is structured to benefit the dominant white group, and Connell (1987) stated that hegemonic masculinity legitimates the subordination of women to men. Society is structured with a hierarchy of white hegemonic men at the top, and everyone else is subordinate to them (Belew & Gutierrez 2021). Looking at the concept of colour-blindness only further highlights the hierarchy, because whiteness is the norm and what everything else is defined by, and thus inherently puts whiteness at the top of the hierarchy. The same is said for hegemonic masculinity, Connell (1987) stated that all types of masculinities are compared and based on the relation to hegemonic masculinity, and thus again showing the top of the hierarchy. Perry (2001) theorizes that hate crimes can be used as a way to commit to the social hierarchies and reinforce the social boundaries between what it means to be white and what it means to be male. In doing difference the goal in hate crimes is to continue the social hierarchy and the subordination of non-whites and non-males (Farrell & Lockwood, 2023). Perry and Scrivens (2018) stated that the degradation of the Other is at the root of hate crimes, especially when the Other does not respect the social hierarchies by trespassing on the norm group.

Looking back at Messerschmidt's (2014) example of the racist lynchers during the Southern Reconstruction; the white lynchers are the men in power, and the black men are the ones deviating from the norm by gaining rights. These rights were once only held by white men and thus the role of the white men. Black men gaining rights was seen as encroaching on the white man role, and thus the black man is stepping outside of their role what Perry (2001) would call doing difference. The lynching of the black male is what Perry (2001) sees as the message to

the group, as Perry claimed that hate and bias crimes occur as a way to victimize an entire group and not just the victim of the crime. The hate crime itself is a message to the victim group, telling them to stay in their group and not encroach on the roles of the norm. Farrell and Lockwood (2023) state that with doing difference, hate crimes occur to instill fear in the victim group and to continue the subordinate identity of the group.

Walters (2010) gives the example of a homosexual couple who displays affection in public; this is a deviation from the standard heterosexual norms in society. This display of affection from the homosexual couple is threatening to the norm and thus will be suppressed by the majority group out of fear that this 'abnormal' display of affection will encroach on the 'normal' sexual identity of society. Walters continues by stating that some people will go as far as to fear that public displays of affection from a homosexual couple will cause their children to partake in that lifestyle. This is ongoing today with Florida's Governor Ron DeSantis 'Don't Say Gay Bill' in the United States, which prevents educators from discussing sexual and gender orientations besides the norms in society (i.e., heterosexual and cisgender) (Branigin, 2022).

Scaptura, et al., (2023) conducted a similar study to Allison and Klein (2021), as both connected extremism and masculinity. Scaptura et al., (2023) examined violence against women by extremist men and found similar results with masculinity and strains in these bias crimes. However, Scaptura et al., (2023) also connected Perry's (2001) doing difference theory and identified themes that showcase the connection between doing difference, masculinity, and extremism. In one example, Scaptura et al., (2023) found that a far-right extremist members expect their wives to be "perfect Aryan housewives" meaning taking on a traditional subservient role by raising children, tending to the house, and only associating with white friends. By upholding traditional gender roles and reinforcing white supremacy both the husbands and wives

were correctly doing their gender and race. In two examples when the wives of far-right extremist perpetrators wished for divorces, the far-right extremist perpetrators either killed his wife and children or killed the wife's extended family. These examples can be seen as punishment for the wives not correctly doing the gender (by no longer being traditional subservient housewives), and the extremist perpetrators correctly doing their gender (by controlling their wives) (Scaptura et al., 2023).

Understanding the system and structures of oppression is essential to understanding how the Doing Difference leads to hate crimes. Perry (2001) discussed how when people step out of the boundaries of the norm and showcase their differences or 'Other' status (such as in the previous example), they break the rules or 'forget their place.' When these actions occur is when hate and violence can occur. As discussed by Walters (2010), the dominant group is uncomfortable, and they feel threatened when the 'Other' highlights their differences in society. Perry (2001) stated that hate crimes emerge as a means of responding to the threat. According to Perry, the power imbalance is important here, as the perpetrator of the hate crime feels their power to being restored while the victim loses their power.

A General Theory of Crime

Even after connecting the two theories, Strain (1934) and Doing Difference (2001), Walters (2010) still felt like something was missing. At the most basic of each theory, neither one can explain why certain individuals commit hate crimes, and other people who face the same strains and hegemonic constructions of identity do not commit hate crimes. Meaning both theories explain hate crime from a more macro perspective rather than focusing on the micro or individual perspectives. To combat this issue, Walters included the Theory of Self Control from Gottfredson and Hirschi's book A General Theory of Crime (1990).

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), believed that to understand crime, researchers need to ask why people do not commit crimes, instead of asking why they do commit crimes. A General Theory of Crime is also known as the self-control theory, and that is because Gottfredson and Hirschi believe that the reason most people do not commit crimes is due to having self-control. Walters (2010) stated that the self-control theory claims that most people can control their actions and therefore do not commit crimes. So, people commit crimes because they lack self-control, a skill many individuals learn in childhood.

Valasik (2014) defined *self-control* as "the propensity to refrain from acts whose long-term cost outweigh their immediate advantages" (p.1). For Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), self-control is a personal attribute or characteristic made up of several elements like impulsivity, preference for risky behaviours, self-centredness, short-sightedness, and a low threshold for other people. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argued that low levels of self-control can manifest in many ways, including noncriminal activities, like accidents, smoking, and alcohol use.

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) identified six elements of self-control, and how it leads to crimes. The authors state that crimes offer immediate gratification; meaning desires can be fulfilled partially or fully in quick means through crime. People with low levels of self-control are more likely to use crime to get the immediate gratification, and people with high levels of self-control are more likely to deter the gratification until legitimate means can be taken. The second element of self-control is that crime allows for easy access to gratification, and people with high levels of self-control are more likely to put in more work to earn their desires as opposed to people with low self-control who are more likely to use criminal means. The third element is crime is exciting, and people who are lacking self-control are more likely to be adventurous, versus people high in self-control who are more likely to cautions. People who are

low in self-control are less likely to care about and work towards long term goals. Gottfredson and Hirschi's fourth element states that most crimes provide little long-term benefits, making them ideal for people with low self-control. Connected to the fourth element is the fifth which states that crimes require little skills and planning. People low in self-control do not possess long-term planning abilities, and crimes often do not require large cognitive requirements. The final sixth element claims that crimes often result in pain and suffering to the victims, and people low in self-control are often self-centered and insensitive to the needs and suffering of others. In sum, people who have low levels of self-control tend to be impulsive, short-sighted, insensitive, and more prone to risk-taking. These six elements highlight the relationship between crime and the traits that accompany low levels of self-control.

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) were also interested in why some people have self-control and some people do not. They argued that children who are raised with appropriate socialization, monitoring, and punishment will have self-control skills and be able to resist instant gratification and temptations in adolescence and adulthood. Walters (2010) stated that inadequate parenting, like withholding punishment, can lead to failure later in life. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) state that children are more likely to learn self-control when good parenting and positive socialization occurs in childhood. Gottfredson and Hirschi claimed for good levels of self-control to occur parents must (1) supervise their child; (2) identify deviant behaviour when it occurs; and (3) punish the deviant behaviour as it is occurring. When these three steps adequately occur, the child is more likely to delay gratification, become more sensitive to others, play independently, be more willing to accept restraints in life, and will be more unlikely to use force and violence. To sum up, parenting is one of the crucial factors in developing appropriate

levels of self-control, and to fail to learn self-control early will lead to traits that often accompany crime.

Bernatzky, Costello, and Hawdon (2022) conducted a study on levels of self-control and the production of cyberhate. The authors turned to Gottfredson and Hirschi's Theory of Self-Control, to find if self-control and cyberhate are connected. The authors found a positive connection between people with lower levels of self-control and the production of cyberhate. The authors suggest that impulsivity can cause the production of cyberhate due to the feelings of temporary adrenaline that comes with the liked and retweet posts can earn. People with low self-control also often underplayed the negative consequences of cyberhate (Bernatzky et al., 2022).

Walters (2010) included Gottfredson and Hirschi's Theory of Self-Control because he believes it helps explain how individuals become involved in hate and commit violent hate-based crimes. Both Strain Theory and Perry's (2001) Doing Difference are more macro, societal level explanations of hate. The combination of the three theories for Walters (2010) explains both the macro (societal) and the micro (individual) while still considering issues outside of the typical binary. The two macro-based theories – Strain and Doing Difference – offer different perspectives on the societal influences of hate.

This integrated theory created by Walters (2010) will help explain the motivations and behavioural characteristics of people who belong to these hate groups and the general behavioural characteristics of the different groups. This General Theories of Hate Crimes will be used as a theoretical framework to guide the research, questions, and methodological choices to understand not why people commit hate crimes but instead who the people in online hate groups are and why they join.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

The guiding questions in this research are: 1) can evidence be gathered from online forums to explain why some young men join online hate groups; 2) Is there evidence within online forums regarding the dominant emotional characteristics driving membership to these groups; And 3) Is there evidence that differences exist between the online groups and if so, what are these differences? The overarching goal of this research is to understand the progression to membership in online hate groups; to do this the research focuses on the emotional and motivational language from posts and comments to understand why some young men join online hate groups. This research was conducted through a textual analysis of social media posts on multiple social media platforms. Two analyses occurred on every post: first a content analysis using Plutchik's wheel-of-emotions chart, and secondly a thematic analysis. The thematic analysis helped to identify patterns in the groups of their dominant characteristics. The content analysis helped to identify the emotional characteristics the posters had at the time of posting. The combination of the two analyses provided a clear insight into the dominant emotional characteristics as well as the dominant themes in the groups.

Data Source

The primary purpose of this research is to identify the themes around the emotional, and motivational language used within three different online hate groups. My research follows qualitative methodologies as an observational study of social media posts. I used secondary data, in the form of social media posts and comments from two different websites.

To achieve the research goal, I chose three online hate groups (Incels, The Proud Boys, and America and Canada First). Each group met specific characteristics during the initial phase of the investigation between January 2022 - June 2022. The characteristics were: (1) Currently

active on various social media websites; (2) Has been recognized for problematic behaviour in the media (such as racism, Covid-19 denial, sexism); (3) Has been involved in real-life instances of violence or violent behaviour, (such as mass shootings or violent political protests); and (4) Membership must be made up mainly (or only) of males.

To understand the emotional language and themes in the discourses of the three groups, I had to research them in their own setting with their own words. Simi and Futrell (2010) conducted an ethnographic study on the white power movements in the United States during the late 90s to early 2000s. Simi and Futrell (2010) discussed the importance of meeting the groups at their level. The authors connected with members of white power groups, and they began working with the participants, who invited them to meetings, parties, hangouts, festivals, and religious ceremonies. The authors called these events and places “free spaces”, which they defined as "a metaphor social scientists use to describe settings where marginalized groups feel some degree of freedom to express oppositional ties and beliefs that challenge mainstream ideas" (pp. 2-3). Free spaces are generally used to nurture group ideals and overcome feelings of isolation and alienation (Simi & Futrell, 2010). Simi and Futrell (2010) mainly used in-person events (like parties and meetings) that only members attended; this allowed the group to act freely and openly with one another. Although the authors attended physical in-person free spaces, they also discussed how social media is a significant free space for groups, as it allows for socialization for worldwide members and increases connection to the group. The current thesis focused on the free space of social media, with group-specific areas.

I chose to collect data from two websites. The first is an Incel specific forum called *Incels.is*, this website has a similar layout to Reddit as it allows for an original post, and users to comment on the post and to each other. The second website chosen was *Gab.com*, which is very

similar to Twitter, now X but boasts of being "a social network that champions free speech, individual liberty, and the free flow of information online." *Gab.com* is a free space for many groups and people, as it allows them to connect and share ideas and beliefs that may not be appropriate or allowed in public spaces. For the two other groups (The Proud Boys and America and Canada First), I used *Gab.com* to collect their data; both groups have multiple accounts on *Gab.com*, and users can interact with each other. I chose only one website for two groups due to a lack of public social media websites and *Gab.com's* goal of allowing all forms of speech that other social media platforms disallow.

Ethical Considerations

Hunter et al., (2018) discussed the ethical considerations of using social media for public health research. My thesis is not within the medical or public health field; however, it is important to acknowledge the ethical issues of research using social media. The authors' argument centered around four issues (1) privacy, (2) anonymity and confidentiality, (3) authenticity, and (4) the rapidly changing global environment. Regarding, privacy, the authors argued that social media lives in a complex world of being both public and private, and although many social media websites and accounts are public, the users may view them as private. This argument has helped inform the websites chosen for data collection; for example, Facebook, a popular social media website, was removed due to privacy concerns. The two websites being used in this study are public, and anyone is able (at the time of this research) to see all the information without creating an account. I did not create any accounts to prevent any chance of interacting with the groups (following, liking, commenting) and for my own personal safety.

For anonymity and confidentiality, Hunter et al., (2018) discussed how with social media, most people use their real identities on their accounts. The authors stress the importance of

protecting those identities. However, they acknowledge that it can be very difficult if direct quotes or other specific information is used in finished papers. This concern is not an issue for the first website *Incels.is* as all profiles use fake images and names, with minimal personal information that would make it impossible to identify accurately. *Gab.com* does have some users who use names and photos that would identify themselves, mainly public figures like politicians or group leaders.

The third issue that Hunter et al., (2018) identified is the issue of authenticity. The authors argue that social media is full of fake accounts, automated bots (especially on Twitter, now X), trolls and astroturfing – "in which individuals are employed to adopt false identities and establish a false sense of group consensus" (p. 344). I considered this issue when choosing the websites, so I removed platforms like Reddit and X. *Incels.is* is a somewhat private (but still public) website that takes some searching. *Incels.is* also has rules about posting and creating accounts if users are not members of the Incel community, meaning that anyone could face a permanent ban if they break the rules. For *Gab.com*, which boasts about being a place for free speech and being conservative, there is less fear of fake profiles or automated bots. The website is also relatively new and not quite mainstream yet, adding protection against fake profiles or trolls.

Hunter et al's., (2018) fourth identified ethical concern is the rapidly changing global environment. Social media platforms are constantly changing, as is how people interact with social media. The authors also identified the risk around the global nature of social media, and how different countries have different laws. I did not interact with any posts or account, and nothing I did could be seen as crossing a line or illegal. The bigger concern for me was how quickly social media platforms evolve, but because data was collected over a short period the

risk was minimal. With the constant changing of the online world and social media trends was a limitation for this research. I must point out that my thesis is only a snapshot of this rapidly changing world, groups and platforms have evolved and emerged since the data was collected. These limitations do limit the generalizability of this research and the effect on future ability to identify risk. However, these limitations also point out the need for evolving research in social media and for online extremism.

The final ethical consideration is my own. Since this research falls under secondary research, no ethical approval from the Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board was required. No interaction with any users or websites beyond just viewing occurred. I also want to mention the importance of research position and reflexivity in research. Berger (2015) discussed the research position and reflexivity and highlights three cases of different research reflexivity. The first is when researchers share experiences with the group being studied; the second is when researchers move from an outsider to an insider during the study process; and finally, a researcher who has no personal experience with what is being studied. For Berger (2015), researcher positioning is when a researcher includes their own personal identity (gender, age, affiliation, and personal experiences, to name a few), as these can shape the way in which research is done. For myself, as a young mid-20s intersectional feminist female, the groups I am studying are very much so on the opposite side of me and my views. Acknowledging my background is important as it interested me in these groups, and informed my research choices. My standpoint on this research topic is a limitation, as I can only use the words from the posts and the group members are unable to speak in present time for themselves. However, I attempted to reduce my bias by acknowledging it, and through my research methods which will be explained below.

Data Collection

The data was collected over two days, one week apart. The first phase of data collection started on October 25th, 2022, and the second phase occurred on November 1st, 2022. Each of the three groups was given one hour per day (two hours total) for data collection. The table below shows the number of posts and comments collected for each of the two days, as well as the total amount of posts and comments for the collection period. The table is also spilt between the three groups to showcase the amounts of posts and comments per day. A post what starts a new discussion or topic, and a comment is a response to a post. See table 1.1 above the appendixes for data collection table.

Content Analysis

The first analysis that occurred on the data was a content analysis. The primary goal of the second research question asks, is there evidence within online forums regarding the dominant emotional characteristics driving membership to these groups? To answer this question, I conducted a content analysis. Content analysis is a process for analyzing content (written, spoken, visual) (Kondracki, Wellman, & Amundson, 2002). A content analysis can be defined as "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (Berelson, 1952, p. 18). Kondracki et al., (2002) stated that content analyses are "used to develop objective inferences about a subject of interest in any type of communication" (p. 224). Hsieh and Shannon (2005) stated that content analysis "is a flexible method for analyzing text data" (p.1277). The flexibility and the ability to analyze the words and latent meaning in the posts of the Incels, the Proud Boys, and America and Canada First is why content analysis was chosen.

I followed Bengtsson's (2016) four stages to conduct a content analysis, which begins with the first stage called decontextualization. The first stage in any content analysis begins with the researcher familiarizing themselves with the data. Bos and Tarnai (1999) claim that content analyses take a hermeneutic approach to analyzing communication. The word hermeneutic is derived from a Greek verb, and means a way to interpret, translate, or explain. Bos and Tarnai state that for a researcher to understand the content they must understand the whole background; this prevents parts being taken out of context. This context analysis was done by one researcher (me), who spent time understanding the beliefs, core values, and the dimensions of the three hate groups. As well I also made sure to read all the posts before beginning to analyze them individually.

There are many different approaches to context analysis, but this research most closely follows a summative content analysis. Summative content analyses look at both the manifest and latent content from the text. Kondracki et al., (2002) defined manifest content as "the visible at the surface level or literally present" (p. 225). At the most basic level manifest is the words that are said/written; often this type of content analysis is done quantitively and done by simply counting the number of times a word/phrase appears. Latent content is defined as "having a deeper meaning implied in the text" (p. 225). So, latent content is the meaning hidden beneath the words that the researcher has to identify. A summative analysis covers both manifest and the latent content. In this study I identified the emotional characteristics in the posts, and both manifest and latent content were found. An example of a manifest content is when a poster directly said their emotion (I am sad today). An example of latent content is when a poster did not use emotional words but through tone, context, and wording showed their emotional meaning.

The next step in a content analysis is the coding stage. Coding refers to taking out the important and relevant information in a text (Namazi & Taak, 2022). Bengtsson (2016) states that this process of coding can be done inductively or deductively. My research took a deductive approach, meaning that the coding list and rules were created before the analysis began. I began the analysis with a list of code words created, as the goal of this content analysis was to find the dominant emotional characteristics per group from the social media post, to do this a list of core emotions were used as the coding terms. The list of emotions was derived The Wheel of Emotion chart created by Plutchik in 1980.

The coding process was done without computer software, and instead was conducted by hand and on an excel spreadsheet. Each post was read twice before coding and underwent two rounds of coding. The first round of coding only looked for the manifest terms (the overt emotion words). The second round of coding looked for the latent emotion, this round was not as clearly defined as the first. The hidden emotions could be identified through word choice, phrasing and tone, and overall message. Once a coding term was identified it was tallied on an excel spreadsheet to track the overall emotions of the posts from each online hate group.

The Wheel of Emotion chart (see Appendix A) was developed by American psychologist Robert Plutchik in 1980 to give a visual and graphic representation of his psycho-evolutionary theory. In his theory, Plutchik identified eight primary emotions and placed them into opposite pairs. (1) Joy versus sadness; (2) trust versus disgust; (3) fear versus anger; and (4) anticipation versus surprise (Mulder, 2018). Plutchik's research found around 34,000 different emotions, but he claimed it to be impossible to understand all 34,000 emotions. Instead, Plutchik simplified it down to eight primary emotions that can rise in intensity or reduce (Mulder, 2018).

Bengtsson's (2016) second phase is called the recontextualization phase. This phase involves the relevant and important content and ignoring/removing the unrelated (dross) texts. Bengtsson stated that often everything seems important, but that it is crucial for a researcher to take a step back and allow the important information to come forward and ignore the information that does not add anything to the study. This stage was straightforward as I began this content analysis with set goals and a coding list, so although there was other important information that could be gathered from the data, I had a plan and goal that allowed me some distance and the ability to remove the dross text.

The third stage of Bengtsson's (2016) content analysis guide is the categorization stage. This stage combines similar related codes and creates a shared category or theme. For this stage the categories were the eight core emotions; joy, sadness, trust, disgust, anger, fear, surprise, and anticipation. Each of the eight categories had a list of sub-emotions that differed in terms of intensity. The final stage of Bengtsson's (2016) guide is the compilation stage, which refers to after the analysis is complete and a reasonable conclusion is reached. Once the final stage is met the process of writing the report is taken.

One of the benefits of using a deductive approach to coding is that there is higher chance of reliability when the codes are pre-chosen (Bengtsson, 2016). Reliability is particularly important when there is only one researcher doing the codes, as it was in this case. Kondracki et al., (2002) stated that there are two main concerns with research reliability in content analysis: intercoder and intracoder. The first concern encourages using multiple coders, so that there is reproducible between the different coders. I was unable to have a second coder; however, since I used a deductive approach the rules and codes were already set so no major decisions needed to be made. The second concern of intracoder reliability encourages the coder to redo a subset of

the data to ensure that they did not change their coding methods. I followed this step, of 15 random posts per online hate group, and no major issues were found that I could identify. Validity is always a concern in research, and Bengtsson (2016) also discussed this and also encourages second researchers to help with validity concerns. Again, having a second coder was not possible, however, Bengtsson also stated having an independent colleague involved in the study can help with validity. This is a master's thesis, and multiple outside sources like supervisors and secondary readers will help the validity of the research.

Plutchik's Wheel-of-Emotions was used to help the analysis of the social media posts to understand the posters' emotional state. Knowing the emotional state of the post and therefore the emotional state of the person who made the post can clarify the emotional motivation of joining the three online hate groups. As well the dominant emotional characteristics for the three hate groups are helpful for looking at the differences and similarities between the three hate groups.

Thematic Analysis

I conducted a thematic analysis to help answer the first and last research questions: can evidence be gathered from online forums to explain why some young men join online hate groups; and is there evidence that differences exist between the online forums and if so, what are these differences? The goal of this thematic analysis is to identify the common dominant characteristics that posters and commenters discuss in the groups, as well as compare the common content between the three groups. Braun and Clarke (2006) defined thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p.79). Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017) argued that thematic analysis can be used for various epistemologies and research questions, thus making thematic analysis a valuable and

diverse skill in research. Clarke and Braun (2013) continued this discussion by explaining the flexibility of thematic analysis, meaning that thematic analysis can be used with most theoretical frameworks. Therefore, a thematic analysis is independent of any set framework and available for a wide array of qualitative research.

There are many ways to conduct a thematic analysis, but one of the most common is Braun and Clarke's (2006) guide. This guide has six-phases; (1) familiarizing yourself with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. The authors state that the phases of thematic analysis are not set rules that must be followed exactly, because they need to be flexible to the research questions and the data found. Braun and Clarke (2006) stated these phases are not strictly linear but instead is recursive; this implies that researchers can go back and forth and take away or add to each step as needed. Thus, each step is not bound to the completion of the previous.

Before beginning the analysis, I created six themes (anger, hate, entitlement, isolation, humiliation, and privilege) from past research of online extremism, online hate speech, and the three groups. Creating the six themes prior to analyzing the data allowed me to go through the large amounts of data more quickly, as well allowed for the focus of the analysis on the six already created themes. Nowell, et al., (2017) claimed coming to the data with themes already designed is called a deductive approach. Braun and Clarke (2006) stated this form of thematic analysis focuses more on answering and being guided by the research question than an inductive approach which does not follow as strictly to any guides.

Braun and Clarke's (2006) guide begins by familiarizing yourself with the data. I followed this step by reading over all the posts and comments first. Braun and Clarke (2006)

state this step allows the researcher to see what they have and start to create codes and themes. I started the analysis with themes already created from the academic literature review, and this stage helped the creation of the codes.

The second step according to Braun and Clarke's (2006) guide is generating initial codes. Braun and Clarke state that codes are features of the data that are interesting to the researcher and are often referred to as the most basic element of the data. So, for example, if a post discussed not having a girlfriend, and blamed acne and shortness; some of the codes would be romantic loneliness, loneliness, rejection, self-hate. Since I already had the themes created, the codes were smaller pieces of the overall theme. For example, the theme hate's codes were the different kinds of hate such as misogyny, racism, political, and religious like Castaño-Pulgarín et al's., (2021) article on types of hate speech. Six themes (hate, anger, entitlement, isolation, humiliation, and privilege) were chosen through an extensive literature search on Incels, the Proud Boys, and America and Canada First.

Phase three begins with searching for themes once all the relevant data is coded and identified. This stage of the analysis involves taking the codes and sorting them into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This phase was the most different from Braun and Clarke's to my research; as my themes were set prior to analysis began. However, themes and codes did change and grow as the analysis progressed.

Braun and Clarke's (2006) fourth phase review the themes identified in the previous step and reviews and redefines those themes. The authors claim that themes often absorb other themes into one big theme, sometimes, a theme is too big and broken into smaller subthemes, and some themes are deemed unimportant or are not actually a theme. Nowell et al. (2017) stated that this stage that looks at the validity of each theme. Braun and Clarke (2006) claimed that this validity

check involves two stages; the first is reviewing the coded data extracts. This means all codes in a theme need to form a pattern. The next stage involves checking the validity of the themes to the whole data set. The fourth stage followed similar steps, because I began the analysis with the six themes chosen it was essential to check the themes and the codes making sure they fit together, splitting themes into sub-themes, and all the themes not seen in the data are all discussed in the findings section. The final two themes; naming the themes and writing the report, both occurred. Naming the themes happened at the beginning of the research and the writing of the report occurred at the end once the analysis was finished.

The goal of the thematic analysis was to answer two of the research questions; 1) can evidence be gathered from online forums to explain why some young men join online hate groups? And 3) Is there evidence that differences exist between the online forums and if so, what are these differences? Conducting a thematic analysis identified patterns from the data that showed the common discussions and topics within the three hate groups. The first question asks about motivation for joining online hate groups, and the thematic analysis identified common goals from the members of the groups. As well the common traits were identified which helps to explain why some young men join one group over another, and the differences between the three groups.

The Six Themes

The first theme is anger, which Xie and Xie (2019) defined as “a tendency to irritable, it is not simply an emotional state, but a personality trait by which individuals evaluate emotional situations” (p.1). Vito et al., (2018) discussed how anger has manifested in the past within the Incel community; the authors specifically point to Elliot Rodger and his Incel-fueled revenge attack on women in Isla Vista. Kitts (2021) highlighted for the Proud Boys the innate nature of

anger in the group, first by discussing the heavily violent initiation ritual and aggression and anger towards others, as seen during the Capitol Riots in 2021. Similar beliefs are present with AC1; the group has shown anger towards liberals, the mainstream Conservative movement, and society (ADL, 2020).

The second theme is hate, as this research examines online hate groups to understand why young men join these groups. Castaño-Pulgarín, et al. (2021) explained that social media has become a place for hate to be spread online. The authors define online hate speech as "any communication that disparages a person or group on the basis of characteristics such as race, colour, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, or political affiliation" (p. 1). Labbaf (2019) called the Incel community a support group for hatred and that members encourage feelings of hate from others. Kitts (2021) made the argument that the Proud Boys take from historical white supremist and other hate groups. Similarly, AC1 are known for their hatred of society and the growing Liberal/left-wing movements and even the mainstream Conservative movements (ADL, 2021).

The third theme used in this research was entitlement, which Meyer (1991) defined psychological entitlement as "those rights which one feels justified in bestowing upon oneself" (p. 223). Bishop and Lane (2002) argued that entitlement can become problematic when "the person believes he or she has the right to special privileges due to having endured some unusual, unjust suffering" (p. 740). In Vito et al., (2018) work discussing masculinity and the Incel Isla Vista shooting, the authors discussed the concept of aggrieved entitlement. The authors stated that violent behaviour is connected to men who feel entitled to certain things, and violent behaviour occurs when they are not given what they expect. The Proud Boys believe they are entitled to freedom of speech and high-power positions for being white males (Balleck, 2019).

The fourth theme identified through the literature review is isolation. Zavaleta, Samuel, and Mills (2016) defined *social isolation* as "the inadequate quality and quantity of social relations with other people at the different levels where human interaction takes place (individual, group, community, and the larger social environment)" (p. 370). Isolation and particularly loneliness is a heavily discussed topic for Incels, Labbaf (2019) discussed how Incels are often socially isolated and sought out a group for connection.

The fifth theme was humiliation, and like the previous theme, isolation, this theme was mainly found in the literature on Incels. Klein (1991) claimed humiliation "involves the experiences of some form of ridicule, scorn, contempt, or other degrading treatment at the hands of others" (p. 2). For Incels, humiliation is often explained as rejection, and bullying is part of the members' past/youth; Rouda and Siegel (2021) stated that many Incel members have dealt with rejection and bullying in their childhood. Again, like with isolation, there was a goal to see if humiliation was also commonly discussed in online forums for the Proud Boys and America and Canada First.

The final theme identified from the literature review of the three online hate groups is privilege. Black and Stone (2005) defined privilege as

> "privilege is a special advantage; it is neither common nor universal. Second it is granted, not earned or brought into being by one's individual effort or talent. Third, privilege is a right or entitlement that is related to a preferred status or rank. Fourth privilege is exercised for the benefit of the recipient and to the exclusion or detriment of others. Finally privileged status is often outside of the awareness of the person possessing it" (p. 244).

For the three groups, there are many privileges that the members have; for the most part, all members of these groups are men, and they are white. Black and Stone (2005) stated, this privileged status is often outside of their awareness, and many members believe they are on the outside of privilege. For Incels, often, the findings show that the group believes women are the privileged members of society (Tomkinson et al., 2020). Both the Proud Boys and AC1 believe in a 'white genocide' and the need to protect the white culture (Balleck, 2019; ADL, 2020). All three groups show their privilege and the ignorance and inability to claim their male and white privilege.

Chapter 4 – Findings

This section explores the findings from the data analyses. First, I discuss the content analysis, starting with the Incels, then the Proud Boys, and finishing with AC1. I break down the findings into the eight core emotions, emphasizing the most common emotion within each group. After presenting the emotional analysis findings, I delve into the thematic analysis findings. A similar process will occur; I discuss each group's findings, focusing on the theme more commonly identified.

Content Analysis

I employed content analysis to comprehend the emotional words utilized by posters in the three groups. The objective was to demonstrate whether an emotional foundation existed for individuals joining and remaining in hate groups. I examined the emotional words and meanings in the posts, mapping them on Plutchik's Wheel of Emotion chart, which includes joy, sadness, trust, disgust, fear, anger, surprise, and anticipation. Throughout this analysis, only the original posts, rather than comments, underwent examination. This decision stemmed from the observation that comments either adhered to comparable emotional patterns or lacked sufficient content for analysis in this manner.

Incels

I analyzed a total of 64 posts from Incels, with eight posts excluded due to insufficient content, resulting in a count of 56. Within these 56 posts, I identified 149 distinct emotional words. Each post contained at least one emotional word, ranging from a minimum of one to a maximum of 11—however, most posts featured between one and five emotional words. Notably, three specific emotions—sadness, disgust, and anger—were prevalent across the 64 posts. While

various emotions were present in different posts, these three were significantly more prominent throughout the dataset.

The emotional language of sadness manifested in 28 posts, totaling 55 occurrences. Within the emotion of sadness, 15 distinct words were identified, with the most frequently encountered being "depressed" (11), "rejection" (9), "sadness" (8), and "disappointment" (6). The second most prevalent emotion in Incel posts was anger, observed 45 times. Dominant forms of anger included "anger" (18), "annoyance" (7), "rage" (7), and "mocked/judged" (5). Disgust ranked as the third most common emotion in Incel posts, appearing 21 times, with 18 posts expressing this emotion. Among the ten disgust emotions, "disgust" was the most recurrent (12), while the remaining five emotions were each identified at least four times: joy (6), trust (4), fear (9), surprise (5), and anticipation (4).

Proud Boys

During the emotional analysis, I examined 78 posts from the Proud Boys. Among the 78 posts, 14 lacked emotional language or meaning, leaving 64 posts with at least one emotional word or meaning, with a maximum of six per post. Most posts contained between one and four emotional words or meanings. The Proud Boys' emotional language predominantly featured anger, disgust, and joy within the eight core emotions.

The emotion of anger surfaced 66 times and was present in 49 posts, while 29 posts did not include this emotion. Prominent anger emotions included annoyance (14), anger (13), violated (12), mocked/judged (10), and provoked (7). The second most prevalent emotion for the Proud Boys was disgust, appearing 31 times within the 78 posts. Within the ten emotions of the core disgust group, the most common were disapproval (11) and disgust (10). The third most frequently encountered emotion during the analysis of Proud Boys' posts was joy, occurring 21

times across 19 posts. Joy and pride were linked and occurred 16 times out of the 19 posts. I identified sadness 15 times in 12 different posts. The remaining four core emotion groups were present in some posts: anticipation (9), surprise (9), trust (5), and fear (4).

America and Canada First

I analyzed 72 posts for AC1. Among these posts, 58 used emotional language or conveyed emotional meanings. The posts exhibiting the most emotional language or meaning demonstrated up to six identified emotions, although the majority contained between one and four. The predominant emotion groups were anger, joy, and disgust.

Anger was identified as the most frequently encountered emotion for AC1, appearing 39 times in 35 posts. Notably, the most common anger emotion was the term "anger," which occurred 26 times, with the next closest being "provoked" (6). Joy constituted the second most common emotion group for AC1, observed 28 times across 18 posts. The third most common emotion group for AC1 was disgust, appearing 23 times in 23 posts, with the most common disgust emotion being "disapproval" (15). The remaining five core emotions included anticipation (9), trust (8), fear (7), sadness (7), and surprise (4).

Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis sought to uncover the main patterns in the discussions within the three online hate groups. Its purpose was to find context regarding the motivations driving individuals to join these groups. This section will present the findings for the three online hate groups—Incels, Proud Boys, and America and Canada First. The thematic analysis began with six themes—anger, hate, entitlement, isolation, humiliation, and privilege—to ascertain if common discussions exist among the various groups. The explanation of findings for each group will highlight prominently identified themes.

Incels

I analyzed a total of 1283 posts and comments for the Incel group. Of these, 215 did not align with any theme due to insufficient content (e.g., emojis, brief text, or mere liking of posts) or unopened links (for my personal safety as many links appeared to be pornographic content). Of the six themes, Incel's posts and comments primarily linked to four themes: anger, hate, isolation, and entitlement.

The theme of anger looked for the anger codes and the overall message of posts or comments, ranging from verbal to physical expressions. Anger emerged as the most prevalent theme for Incels, occurring 1508 times in 751 posts/comments. I identified six codes for the theme of anger: resentment (348), verbal anger (274), annoyance (232), passive aggression (153), irritation (124), and rage (116). The second most prevalent theme for Incels was hate, often expressed through slurs or offensive language targeting specific groups or expressing disdain for a particular group or situation. Hate appeared in posts and comments 1372 times across 664 instances. The theme of hate comprised 15 possible codes, with four heavily found in Incel posts and comments: misogyny (406), self-hate (346), general hate (268), and racism (161). Isolation emerged as the third most common theme for Incels, addressing loneliness and inter-group connectivity, found 754 times across 415 posts or comments. Prevalent codes in Incel posts and comments were a search for group/group connection (346), romantic loneliness (102), loneliness (87), and lack of belonging (74). The fourth significant theme identified for Incels was entitlement, occurring 589 times across 320 posts and comments. This theme examined how Incel members perceived themselves in relation to the world. Entitlement featured seven codes, with two prominent in Incel posts and comments: disdain for people they see as beneath (175)

and unmet expectations (135). The remaining two themes, humiliation and privilege, were present in numerous Incel posts and comments but not to the extent of the preceding four themes.

The Proud Boys

I analyzed 827 posts and comments by the Proud Boys. Of these, 123 lacked themes due to insufficient content or unsuitability. 704 posts aligned with the six themes, with anger, hate, privilege, and entitlement being the most prevalent themes.

Anger emerged as the most common theme in Proud Boy posts and comments, occurring 1538 times across 676 instances. This theme, comprising 12 codes, prominently featured seven: verbal anger (275), passive aggression (218), rage (215), irritation (194), annoyance (151), resentment (149), and violence (113). The second most common theme for the Proud Boys was hate, observed 1324 times across 509 posts. Within this theme, I identified five prevalent types of hate in Proud Boys' posts and comments: general hate (432), ideological hate (213), government and society hate (140), homophobia and queer hate (130), and racism (128). Privilege emerged as the third most common theme in Proud Boy posts and comments, appearing 429 times across 216 instances. All seven codes for privilege were identified, with two being particularly significant: feelings of being unjustly attacked or censored (129) and having specific rights or taking back those rights (110). The fourth significant theme identified in posts and comments from Proud Boy members was entitlement, which was found 370 times across 266 posts. The theme of entitlement comprised seven codes, and I identified two: disdain for people they see as beneath them (173) and arrogance (166). The final two themes for the Proud Boys, namely humiliation and isolation, were not heavily identified.

America and Canada First

AC1 generated a total of 630 posts and comments. Of these, 528 posts and comments could be categorized into the six themes, while 102 posts and comments needed more content for coding. Four recurring themes dominated AC1 discourse: Hate, anger, entitlement, and privilege emerged as the most prevalent themes.

I identified hate 1326 times, occurring in 414 different posts and comments. This theme included five heavily found types: general hate (371), government and society-based hate (235), ideological hate (168), religious hate (150), and conspiracy theory-based hate (133). Anger was detected 888 times across 479 posts/comments, consisting of twelve codes, with five frequently observed: verbal anger (209), irritation (178), passive-aggressive (132), rage (128), and resentment (117). Entitlement emerged as the third identified theme, appearing 317 times in 222 posts, primarily falling into the codes of arrogance (181) and disdain for people they see as beneath them (115). The final widely identified theme in AC1 posts and comments was privilege, which was found 201 times across 136 posts and comments, with two principal codes: feelings of being attacked/censored (73) and taking back rights (55). Two themes, isolation and humiliation, were present but less commonly found in AC1 posts and comments.

I have shown the findings from the content and thematic analysis for the three hate groups: the Incels, the Proud Boys, and America and Canada First. In the next section, the findings are discussed and explained. The discussion section provides examples of posts and comments from the significant findings. I discuss the content and thematic analyses and use these findings to understand and answer the guiding research questions.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

This section will provide a deeper understanding of the findings, here I will answer the research questions by discussing the finding, connecting the theoretical framework, and looking to the past literature. This discussion section will be guided by the three research questions that began this research:1) can evidence be gathered from online forums to explain why some young men join online hate groups? 2) Is there evidence within online forums regarding the dominant emotional characteristics driving membership to these groups? And 3) Is there evidence that differences exist between the online groups and if so, what are these differences? This section is divided into the three research questions, each question will be answered, by discussing the findings, providing examples from the data, and discussing the theoretical framework.

The theoretical framework helps connect the findings to the current research on progression, hate groups, masculinity, and white supremacy. Although Walters' (2010) designed A General Theories of Hate Crimes to understand why hate crimes occur and the progression to committing these crimes, my research uses the theory to understand the progression to hate groups. This discussion section uses direct quotes from the data. This thesis addresses material that is sensitive in nature and may be offensive and harmful to readers. Reader discretion is advised as the content in some quotes is disturbing and offensive.

Research Question #1 - Can evidence be gathered from online forums to explain why some young men join online hate groups?

The first guiding question for this research asked; can evidence be gathered from online forums to explain why some young men join online hate groups? The basis of this question is to understand why people join online hate groups. Over the course of this investigation the goal has

always started with the idea of progression; how someone turns from a so-called 'normal' person into a member of a hate group. The thematic analysis found that the Incels are angry, hateful, isolated, and entitled. The Proud Boys were found to be angry, hateful, privileged, and entitled. And America and Canada First were found to be hateful, angry, entitled, and privileged.

Incels

Looking first at the Incels, the findings shows that the prevalent themes of anger, hate, isolation, and entitlement which can help to explain why some young men joined the Incel community. Looking at the first theme of anger and hate which were closely tied, the data showed that anger was often present as forms of rage especially towards women. For example, this post where a member highlights his anger towards females:

> I DECLARE WAR ON THE FEMALE AND CHAD COMMUNITY. FEMALES AND CHADS BEWARE. THE WOLVES HAVE AWOKEN. WE WILL MARCH TO YOUR HOMES, RAPE STACY, AND STAB CHAD 56 TIMES.

This post obviously shows the anger that the poster felt, as he threatens to sexually assault women and kill men, as well as the use of all caps writing showcasing his rage. It also shows the want for violence, as well as the hate for women and men who are able to have relationships (also known as 'Chads' – the stereotypical alpha males). Tomkinson et al., (2020) examined the Incel community and found that a core belief is the idea that men are victims in society due to the evil nature of females. And Vito et al., (2018) studied Elliot Rodger's manifesto, and found themes of Rodger's masculinity being challenged or rejected by others, which led to Rodger turning his anger on women and others.

A large portion of the posts and comments in the Incel forums, discussed the hatred for women and the world (like the example above), or at themselves. One of the most common forms of self-hate found had to do with the posters' height; or lack of height. This example is the second one that highlights someone's hate for themselves based on lacking height:

> Being short is one of the worst traits to possess as a male, you are disrespected looked down on, ignored and ridiculed. All your accomplishments will be belittled as overcompensating for a lack of height.

Height was often seen as an ideal masculine or hegemonic masculine feature, and when height was lacking it devastated the self-esteem of many Incel members. Another ideal masculine feature that left many members feeling anger and less than was physical appearance, for example, "**I have a hideous face**: being part of the east Asian phenotype my face is the worst of the worst." The hate for self often goes deeper and included posts where Incels talked about wanting to die, and to kill themselves, for example "If God really hates me, I'll live a long life" or "I want to KMS" (Kill MySelf). This commonly found sub-theme legitimizes the culture of self-hate and loathing that occurs in the Incel community. This theme of self-hatred was commonly seen in Elliot Rodger's (Isla Vista Shooter) manifesto; Vito et al., (2018) states that Rodger's manifesto was filled with self-hate due to his shortness, and even his race.

Race was a large factor for themes around hate, often racism was closely tied to self-hate like in Rodger's manifesto and the example above, but more often racism and misogyny were so interconnected it would be impossible to separate due to the inherent misogynistic and white supremacist culture. Women of colour often were targeted for hate speech; for example, in one post entitled "What colour pussy do you prefer" the member listed out in his preference different

races of women. When discussing black women, he said “I’m not into bestiality”. This example highlights the importance of acknowledging the inherent intersectional issues of gender, sex, and race; as this post targets women by calling them a derogatory name for a sexual organ, but also black individuals by calling them beasts.

Isolation was another commonly identified theme for Incels. Often the theme comprised of a search for group or connection from one of the members for example,

> My cat died and I want to rope. I expect to get mocked but I can’t care anymore. I've got no family or friends to vent to. I truly have nothing left, should I just rope? I have SN altho it’s expired and I don’t even know the correct dosage. That cat got me through a lot of lifes bullshit and in the end I couldn’t even save her.

As seen in this post, the Incel member is desperate for connection. The poster claims to have no one to “vent” to and has “nothing left”. In the post he asks for advice on if he should commit suicide.

Romantic loneliness was also a significant code for isolation, often the men discussed past histories of rejection, and the disappointment for not having a romantic relationship. Often these young men post about their experiences with women and why they turned to the Incel community for support. For example:

> As I got older and the more rejections I got, I realized that my efforts were in vain, and I also realized that girls weren’t as innocent as they seemed. I first got into the redpill/blackpill right before my senior year of high school when one of my friends introduced me to it. … When I first joined this forum, I still held onto bluepilled beliefs and I still didn't want to see myself as misogynistic. Though overtime my beliefs would

> change for the better as I learn more and more about women's nature, and what they are really attracted to.

This post highlights the effects multiple rejections can have on a person, and when they find a place that dissolves them from any blame and supports them their views and attitudes can easily change. As well this post highlights an important concept from Bates (2021) book, in which she claims that early involvement in some online communities can make extreme views in later communities more palatable. Rouda and Siegel (2021) state that loneliness and rejection can turn into hateful anger and violence. In the example the Incel member discussed how multiple instances of rejection, and the access to this Incel forum as well as other "manosphere" groups and videos changed his perspective and made him blackpilled.

Bates (2021), Rouda and Siegel (2021), and Labbaf (2019) all discuss how the group is mainly comprised of angry young men, who experience intense loneliness, bullying, rejection, and unhappiness. Bates (2021) states that these combined emotions and experiences plus feelings of injustice like resentment lead to men searching for community. The destruction occurs when they find communities like the Incel group; as the emotions they were once feeling are now supported and pushed to extreme levels. Like Labbaf (2019) states; Incels are a support group; but they just so happen to support feelings of rage and hate.

The final common theme found for the Incel community is entitlement. Entitlement had two common sub-themes found from Incel posts and comments; disdain for people they see as beneath, and unmet expectations. Disdain for people seen as beneath them, has multiple examples already seen; most posts in this sub-theme used slurs and derogatory language to place themselves as higher than different groups. Unmet expectations were just that, expectations that

were not met. Often these expectations were for romantic relationships or for life in general, for example:

> I'm the real incel, a supreme gentleman, intelligent, sophisticated, good hygiene, money, would do amazing in a relationship, I tick every box, but women hate me because I'm ugly.

Vito et al., (2018) discussed the idea of deserving, and how the Incels community believes they deserve an intimate female relationship/sex due to the fact they are men. The authors state that Rodger's manifesto highlighted the belief that women owed men sex, and he particularly deserved a girlfriend. Vito et al., (2018) also identified themes that showed Rodger believed that his form of masculinity (smart, and gentlemanly) should be the ideal form rather than more traditional forms (popular, and physically attractive/strong). The example above highlights what Vito et al., (2018) found, that Incels believe they deserve relationships and when they do not get what they expect they put the blame on others (mainly women).

Roose et al., (2022) identified five themes to explain why some young males turn to extremist groups, and one of the themes he identified is culture and male alienation. In this theme the authors state that males who have experienced alienation or discrimination are more likely to become radicalized. One of the themes identified in my research was that many Incels are isolated and experience feelings of self-hate and rejection, like what Roose et al., (2022) states as being a theme for becoming radicalized. Bates (2021) states that due to loneliness and rejection, Incel members search for community and what they find is a supportive group full of hate. Rosse et al., (2022) would argue that the group mentality of hate only amplifies the new members.

The General Theories of Hate Crime (2010) and especially, Agnew's (1992) strain theory can help connect these findings to the research question. Agnew's first strain is the failure to achieve positively valued stimuli, which can be anything someone wants (often a house or a car) in the case of the Incels this would be having a romantic relationship with a woman, as well the desire to be more masculine. Having failed their perceived goal of being in an intimate relationship with a woman, they often blame women (claiming women are “naturally evil”), themselves (having a “hideous face” or being “short”), or more likely a mixture of the two (women are evil and that is why they will not look past my shortness). Allison and Klein (2021) saw strains around masculinity being either threatened or lacking as reasons that led to anti-homeless bias homicides occurring. Similarly, the Incels members studied here shows examples of masculinity strains, through romantic isolation, and self-hate for lack of masculine features. These examples of strains in masculinity can highlight the connection in seeking out online hate communities for these Incel members.

Bates (2021) studied the Incels and found that they are a support group for each, and that new members started by looking for connection. Agnew (1992) states that groups can be beneficial when faced with strains, but it depends on the if the group is socially positive or not. Positive groups will provide good coping skills and support, negative groups will encourage bad coping skills like delinquency. Labbaf (2019) called the Incel community a support group for hatred, supporting that this community is not a positive group and does encourage bad coping skills, like hatred and anger. This research and the backing evidence from the theoretical framework and past literature shows that strains like romantic rejection and self-hate, compiled with loneliness and a search for group inclusion shows why the studied young men have joined the Incel community.

The Proud Boys

The findings identified that the Proud Boys' content is full of anger, hate privilege, and entitlement. The Proud Boys anger often was filled with resentment and rage. For example, during the time of data collection Gavin McInnes (creator of the Proud Boys) went on a multi-day rant on Gab.com about Pennsylvania State University (Penn State) revoking his planned talk at the school. In late October 2022, McInnes had planned to give a speech at Penn State, and at the last-minute the university uninvited McInnes. Students and staff were outraged at the event, and the school cancelled the talk. So McInnes turned to ranting his frustrations online. During the multi-day rant, McInnes and many of his followers commented their anger at the decision for example, "fuck them fags … right in the goat ass" and "fucking ridiculous". These comments show the anger that is felt when one member of the group is attacked. These examples highlight the rage felt within the group, especially when a member of the group is attacked. In another example, a Proud Boy member shows a video of a fight between a group of Proud Boys and Antifa members, and says:

> Brawl between Antifa and conservatives in California. One #Antifa is slammed to the ground and kicked in the face, then smashed into a wall; good.

This post shows the encouragement of violence, especially towards those against the Proud Boys and their mission. As well, this post shows the joy of harming the Antifa members.

The theme of hate centered around who the Proud Boys directed their hate to, and one of the most common was ideological hate, like the example above the Proud Boys clearly dislike and direct a lot of hate towards the Antifa and non-right-wing/conservative groups. One example a poster shared a video of a fight between the Proud Boys and Antifa members; and cheered on the violence targeting the Antifa group. In another post, a Proud Boys member shared an image

of a guillotine with the message “reward them for the world they created” and the hashtag “#ProudBoysDidNothingWrong”. This post seemingly blames the Antifa for the “world they created”, which the Proud Boys believes is destroying traditional America. The phrase with a picture of a guillotine also shows that the Proud Boys believe the Antifa deserves to be executed for destroying the ‘ideal’ world.

Like the hate for the Antifa, there is also a hate for the current government and the state of society, one example, was a post about the idea of a “great replacement” and a white genocide two racist conspiracy theories. This Proud Boys member truly believes that a white genocide is occurring in society, which will result in the destruction and removal of the white population, for example,

> It’s called The Great Replacement. And no, asshole, it’s not a conspiracy theory and it’s not for lefty voters either. It's White replacement. White babies make up 3 per cent of world population and falling.

Racism was often found through the use of slurs, racial stereotypes, and racist conspiracy theories. Racial conspiracy theories were often references ideas like the above great replacement theory, which argues that people of colour are taking over from the white norm. On the same line of thinking the group also expects and believes in a white genocide, one commenter believes that the American society would benefit from being all white:

> America should have a racist society where non-Whites can’t and aren’t allowed to make it. This is supposed to be a White country after all.

White supremacy is a deeply ingrained notion within the Proud Boys. Looking back to the discussion on whiteness Belew and Gutierrez (2021) and Matias and Newlove (2017) all argued

that white supremacy is already the norm in society, and that systems of white supremacy are reinforced by keeping white people in power. The threat of losing this power leads to the fear of the others (Perry, 2001), and Garner (2007) stated that when whites are faced with their own race they lash out in fear and anger, as seen in the examples above.

Homophobia and transphobia was also very common, examples of this form of hate often were forms of slurs against the community, or comments like “being ugly doesn’t make you another gender …" Another way the Proud Boys attacked the queer community was by calling them pedophiles; which falls back on a homophobic and transphobic belief that gay men and transwomen are lying and are really pedophiles attempting to prey on children. Another example was a comment that said “no surprise seeing that school protecting pedophiles”, which was a comment on a post condemning Penn State.

Privilege was the third most common theme found for the Proud Boys. This theme of privilege was mainly seen as feelings of being unjustly attacked or censored, and taking back rights.

McInnes and his anti-Penn State rants gave multiple instances of feeling censored and attacked by Penn State. In one post McInnes calls the canceled event “A war on free speech” and thus believing that he has been in some way treated unjustly and censored. Taking back rights often accompanied feelings of being attacked, like the poster and commentors wanted to take back what they were being attacked over, for example,

> We are not fucking leaving. ProudBoys are here forever. I suggest you start figuring that out. We're your plumbers … your police officers … we are your elected officials. We are western chauvinist … and we will never fucking apologize for shit. We’re here to stay.

This post obviously shows the deep connection and pride the members have for the Proud Boys, but it also shows the belief the group is under attack, and the need to fight back. The Penn State situation was often discussed as if the protestors were taking away or violating McInnes' right to free speech. McInnes shared a social media post from the group organizing the Penn State protest. McInnes said:

> In the name of student safety and anti-violence, radical leftists have decided to attack people who come to my talk. Sound reasonable?

Privilege is often referred to as something that is given at birth and not earned (Black & Stone, 2005). In the section on whiteness Garner (2007) discussed a concept called colour-blindness, which is the idea that white people have a difficulty seeing racism and the system of white supremacy. Whiteness is seen as neutral or the standard in society; but this accounts for more than just race; Christian, Conservative, Heterosexual, and Cisgender are all the standards or norms in society. Taking from Perry (2001) who discussed "doing difference"; when the norm group sees the other group stepping outside of the bounds that have been set; this is when anger occurs. In McInnes' rant he is upset at multiple groups for what he believes to be an attack on him and his group. During the rants, McInnes insults queer individuals, liberals, and women for going against him. Perry (2001) would argue that the norm groups (McInnes and the Proud Boys) feel like they are under attack because the others are stepping outside of the box the norm group put them in. So, it is not that the norm group is losing any rights, instead the others are trying to gain the same rights.

Privilege was seen as feelings of being attacked and censored and taking back rights. Walters' (2010) theory can explain why privilege is the key factor to explain why they joined

these two online hate groups. Using the second theory, Perry's (2001) doing difference, which states that hate crimes occur due to power imbalances and differences. Perry states that there is a powerful group in society called the norm (white cisgender men) and there is everyone else who is not part of the norm. The norm group wants to keep their power, and Garner (2007) would argue that in a lot of cases their privilege and power is something they are blind to. The norm group is fearful that the others are going to trespass and try to control the norm group. These fears can lead to in-group (the norm) versus the out-group (the others), which in turn strengthens the in-group and their hatred for the out-group. According to Perry (2001) the bond the in-group/norm group has is even more strengthened when they feel attacked. Connecting Perry's work, with these findings, and past literature on the two groups highlights how important a sense of brotherhood and joining together to protect whiteness and their version of society is. Therefore, the anger, hate, and the privilege are all evidence of why the studied members joined the Proud Boys, since these themes are all connect with a deep connection within groups and especially ones that fight for the white identify and the 'true America'.

America and Canada First

America and Canada First had four themes identified: hate, anger, entitlement, and privilege. AC1 members are angry, and they often show their anger through insults, slurs, and hate. Here I will discuss the first two themes identified; hate and anger as they are closely tied together. In AC1 hate often took the form of hate towards society and the governments, for example, in a post about freedom of speech from Tyler Russell (leader of Canada First), a member of AC1 First commented "yes … Americans should have the right to practice hate against religions, minorities, and others – freely and unfettered …" This comment shows the hate the member felt towards the government for taking aways his right of hating people "freely".

Ideological hate is closely connected the societal and government hate, but this directly looked at political and ideological positions that AC1 directed hate towards. For example, Russell shared a post about a Fox News (typically very conservative) host who went to a drag show and supported drag shows on university campuses. Russell shared his anger through the use of hateful slurs, claims that liberals are to blame, and stated that these beliefs are not conservative or Christian values. This post highlights two of the central beliefs in AC1, which is ultra conservative and Christian.

One group particularly was on the receiving end of AC1 hate filled rants, and that was the Jewish population. Many of the posts that were antisemitic in nature were filled with conspiracy theory and hate speech for example: “the holocaust didn’t happen but it should have” or the “6 million hoax”. These comments are incorrect with no evidence, but there are groups (like AC1) trying to elevate these hateful beliefs. The Holocaust happened and it was a horrific stain on humanity that will have consequences forever. Denying the holocaust is conspiracy theory with the goal of sympathizing with Nazis and making Jewish people appear untrustworthy. Unfortunately, comments like the ones above are too common, there are many examples of antisemitic discourse found in the data, like antisemitic conspiracy theories that do not denying the holocaust like Fuentes announcement of his live stream “we are discussing the JEWS REVENGE against Ye – powerful Hollywood Jews calling for Ye to be EMBARGOED” shows another antisemitic conspiracy theory that the Jewish population is controlling the world. The antisemitic discourse and beliefs are ingrained into the group and connects people through their hate.

The ADL (2021) and Roback (2021) both discuss the antisemitic rhetoric that was found in AC1 livestreams, and social media posts. In my data analysis it was very common to come

across posts that either denied the Holocaust or celebrated the Holocaust. Smith (2023) discussed a concept called irony poisoning which is when ‘jokes’ that are racist/homophobic/antisemitic are made that can lead to extremism, because the harmful belief that is hidden under the guise of being a joke is easier to digest than a blatantly racist/homophobic/antisemitic comment. However, what occurs is the ‘jokes’ make the harmful beliefs more accepted. Somos (2022) states that the use of ‘jokes’ that hide the hateful beliefs can make joining the group easier, as the hate is not as visible for some, and the use of ‘humour’ can bond the group members.

Entitlement was the third theme identified from posts and comments made by AC1 members on Gab.com. Posts and comments were viewed as arrogance when the words showed a belief of being better than others or knowing more, and in a talking down manner. There have been many examples of the arrogance within this group, such as the examples above that blame others for the so-called collapse in society. Disdain for people, had a lot of overlap with arrogance, as both at the core believe that one person is more deserving or better than another person. For example, this comment:

> Back in the day somebody was a faggot you bullied them they committed suicide there you go problem solved now you got a whole entire parade of homos attacking normal people for having values yep we should have kept bullying

The disdain for the LGBT+ community is clear from this comment; as the group member would prefer to bully and have youth commit suicide over having a pride parade. Disdain for others showcases the belief that AC1 and their members are above others, and those less than like the queer community should be “bullied” until they commit “suicide”.

Roose et al.'s (2022) first identified theme is what they call "psychology and identity crisis", this theme for radicalization deals with an identity crisis and often looks at young males who are leaving behind boyhood and growing into men. Often at this crisis in identity there is a desire to rebel and do something adventurous. These desires of rebelling and searching for adventure help amplify the desire to join groups and find a community. Roback (2021) states that Canada First has a very young membership, and that people as young as 14 were found on their discord server. The teenage stage is a time when peers become large influences in one's life, and with this desire of adventure and rebellion that Roose et al., (2022) highlights showcases why a young male would turn towards a group and end up becoming radicalized.

Understanding the progression from a person to a hate group member was one of the major goals that began this research. The findings, discussion, theoretical framework, and past literature all helped in explaining why the young men studied have joined online hate groups. It was found that for the Incels a desire for group and group support were major factors for the young men in the group, which could account for why they sought out the Incel community, and the connecting strains of rejection and self-hate are reasons for staying. The Proud Boys and America and Canada first showed that connection of already being part of the norm group and the feelings of being attacked further connected the young men and their individual hateful beliefs are what encouraged them to find places to spread their anger and hate like in the Proud Boys or membership to America and Canada First.

Research question # 2 - Is there evidence within online forums regarding the dominant emotional characteristics driving membership to these groups?

The second research question asked: is there evidence within online forums regarding the dominant emotional characteristics driving membership to these groups? This question uses the emotional language and meanings from the posts to understand what emotions are driving people to join online hate groups. This question, inquiries about the emotional characteristics of the group members, and if there is a connection between emotional characteristics and motivation to join online hate groups. Here I will use the content analysis and the findings, the theoretical framework, and past literature to answer this question.

Incels

There is evidence from the emotional characteristics of posts from Incel online forums that help to explain the desire to join the online hate group. The findings show that the posts from Incel forums had three primary emotions: sadness, anger, and disgust. Sadness is an important emotional characteristic as the core emotion spanned over different intensities and was the most prevalent. Many Incels discussed sadness in terms of depression and wish to end their lives, and a feeling of giving up. For example, in one post that there was anger towards women for rejecting men, but there was also deep sadness and depression evident: “listen I know I’m a degen Loser”. This example showcases the depression and the dislike of self that is commonly seen in Incel posts. Depression was also seen as suicidal thoughts for example, take this post:

> I turned 26 today. I’m probably the top 5 oldest here, most incels at my age have already roped or ascended through SEAmaxxing or after getting bored of fakeceling. … I promised myself that I wouldn’t neck so my mother doesn’t have to bury her son, … I

> can’t see myself being a 60 y.o oldcel. … I legit have nothing to live for. ... I’m so incredibly bored. It never even began boys.

This post about a young man’s birthday has a few crucial pieces of information. First the man states that he turned 26 years old, and with that he claims that he is one of the oldest members in this group; thus, highlighting that the group tends to be younger. By saying he's one the oldest members, he also identifies how people move on from this group in three ways. First by “roping” which is a crude way of saying suicide. “Maxxing” in the Incel community refers to the idea of improving oneself in a way to get a date (Rouda & Siegel, 2021). There are multiple ways to “max”, common ones are “looksmaxxing” (improving one's appearance) (Radicalization Awareness Network, 2021), fakeceling (not true Incels and only faking it once they begin dating), and SEAmaxing (seeking out or moving to Southeast Asia to find a wife). Similarly, another poster shares his disappointment in himself by saying “I am average height. Average height is not going to cut it anymore in 2022.” This poster expresses his sadness and disappointment in being average height. Later in his post he claims, "I want to sit home and play video games all day and rot!!!”. This further highlights the pressure young men put on themselves and the absolute despair that follows when they cannot live up to their and societies expectations. In the same post the Incel member continues to discuss his other failures and disappointments, including being autistic, having an “ugly face”, being Asian in the western world, and not having the “ideal porn body”.

Disgust was the second most common core emotion found in Incel posts. Disgust often looked at disgust for oneself, and disgust for others. Disgust and anger were often closely related, and often appeared in the same post. There have been numerous examples already provided for

disgust of oneself; like the example of the member who hated his short stature, Asian heritage, and lack of typical masculine features. However, also commonly seen is a disgust for other people; especially women. This example highlights the disgust some members have for women:

> I've had many experiences where fat, ugly foids walk around thinking they're hot shit but when I see them I'm repulsed. Sometimes they have the gall to insult me and I'm astounded that they think they are any better.

In this post the Incel member uses multiple words to describe his disgust for women; repulsed, disgusting, and foid (a derogatory term for female). This disgust showcases the complete hatred for women that is felt in the Incel community.

These intense emotions like sadness, disgust, and anger are difficult feelings to experience, but they are part of what connected the group. Bates (2021) discussed how deeply ingrained sadness, and mentions of suicide are in the Incel community, she claimed that these messages are signs of how deeply unhappy the members are. Bates goes on to say that most of these young men are unhappy before joining the community, and once they find the supportive connection in the Incel community they become socially dependent, and the extremist views can grow from there. Anger was also a very common emotional characteristic for the Incels, and often anger was shown through being mad about past and present life experiences, and often being annoyed with non-Incel members.

The theoretical framework of A General Theories of Hate Crime can help explain the connection between sadness and anger to the membership of the online hate group. Agnew's (1992) third sub-strain states that when resources are not divided as expected it can be seen as unfair, and people may act out in deviant ways. For the Incels, many were upset about not having

relationships and women dating other men, and their lack of height or unattractive appearance. These reasons to be upset were often seen as unfair and unjust, as well there was a lot of jealousy around people getting more – more attention, more dates. Agnew (1992) claims that one way people act out when faced with this strain is to lower their outputs; meaning lower their efforts to achieve the goal as they see it as pointless. People may also redirect their efforts, in the case of the Incels they often redirect their efforts from finding romantic relationships to growing their connection to the group. The emotions as well as past literature and the theoretical framework highlight why the studied young males may have turned towards online groups for emotional support when they are feeling stressed and unloved.

The Proud Boys

During analysis it was found that three core emotions of the eight were primarily used in Proud Boys posts: anger, disgust, and joy. The core emotion of anger is similar to the theme of anger discussed in the section above. The finding for the Proud Boys showed multiple intensities of anger from annoyance up to rage. For example, during McInnes' multi-day rant before, during, and after the canceled Penn State talk McInnes went as far as using slurs in a rage filled post about his anger over the canceled event, "You assume retarded hate mail comes from retarded students but it's often from retarded professors." The other example of anger that is shown through the desire to mock and judge others. Again, McInnes has provided numerous examples such as calling professors and students "retarded" and in another example calling a female professor a "manatee" for linking McInnes to white supremacy. McInnes and the Proud Boys tend to lean into the mocking and insulting of other when they are angry or disagree.

The core emotion of disgust follows similar patterns from anger. Often disgust related to disapproval, and name calling. In one post from a Proud Boys group, the poster shares a video of

a transwoman verbally fighting with a homophobic store owner. The poster calls the woman a "mentally ill tranny" and claims the woman was harassing the older man who had an offensive and transphobic sign on his store window. The language highlights the disgust the poster has for the woman. In the literature review, McInnes and the Proud Boys are known for shifting their hate to any target that benefits them at the time (Kitts, 2021). McInnes' history of homophobic/transphobic and misogynistic rhetoric is numerous and extremely common. The Proud Boys and McInnes show their hatred for groups by treating them as if they are disgusting. The Proud Boys have a strong sense of the brotherhood (Kitts, 2021) as discussed in the literature review, and that means the outgroup or non-members criticized and disliked to a higher degree.

Joy was found so often due to the word "proud" in many of the posts. Pride is one of the coding words for the joy part of the wheel. Of the 78 posts, 16 had the word proud or pride included. Often proud was found in the hashtags, such as these examples; "#POYB" (proud of our boys), "#ProudBoysDidNothingWrong", and "#ProudBoys" all have proud somewhere in their tags. In a post discussing the disbanding of the Canadian Proud Boys organization one group member said:

> It was an honor to have our brothers from up north represent the greatest fraternal organization the world has ever known. Because the ProudBoys put Christ and our families first.

Although this post has undertones of disappointment, at the forefront are words of pride. For example, honor and proud all highlight the overall joy of being a member of this organization. The Southern Poverty Law Center (n.d. D) states that the group is a brotherhood, they are deeply

connected in their beliefs and goals. Davis (2022) even refers to the group as a militarized fraternity; again, showcasing how deeply the group is connected to each other. In the example above, the pride in the group is blatantly there; claiming it was an honor to serve in the greatest fraternal group.

America and Canada First

Anger was the number one core emotion found in AC1 posts. Anger was typically seen through the use of curse words, and anger at groups and governments. Tyler Russell (leader of Canada First) posted in the fall of 2022 his anger at what he called "fake nationalists":

> The epidemic of fake nationalists needs to be dealt with. Whether it's Joe Kent, Pierre Poilievre, or others who feel the need to disavow groypers, these fake nationalists aim to suck the life out of the only real game changing movement. … It's fake, it's loaded, it's complete bullshit. … If you want real right wing change, ride or die with real right winger. It says a lot about you if you side with these people. It means you're weak. We will always remember!

In this post Russell highlights his anger at what he calls fake nationalists through curse words and dislike for those politicians and people against AC1's goals for society. Anger was closely connected to a sub-emotion like provoked, and was often seen as an attack on AC1. For example, Russell was upset about the Liberals and New Democratic Party (NDP) in Canada joining forces; he claimed this is an attack on the group:

> Trudeau, with the help of terrorist Jagmeet, will remain in power until 2025. … They WILL attack Whites, Christians, & REAL Canadians.

These young men are angry due to what they see as their rights being removed. This post illustrates how these young men see their beliefs being attacked, which provokes anger and feelings of being treated unfairly.

In their posts joy often had to do with excitement, which could either be for the wanted future or for the group as a whole. Nick Fuentes (Leader of America First), often posted about his excitement for his upcoming livestream of his show. For example: “America First is LIVE!” This post shows a lot of anger and distrust at governments and conspiracy theories, but the first line shows excitement for Fuentes’ live stream. Similarly, Russell shared a post from when he was at a conference in California: “Thanks for having me Fresno! Shoutout to Kali, Carson, & John for all having great speeches. Fantastic event! We are the future of America!” In this post Russell shares his joy and excitement, he congratulates other members for their great speeches, which shows his excitement for the future of the group.

The ADL (2021) talks about how supportive the group is. Members of the group are given the nickname the “groyper army”. These supporters are often found cheering on Fuentes and Russell as they spew their hate and anger driven agenda (Bump, 2020). The joy and excitement continues through the groups’ use of protests and attacks. Fuentes excitedly encouraged the attack on the Capitol on January 6th (ADL, 2020) and celebrates the anniversaries, and Russell encouraged his followers to join the trucker's occupation in Ottawa (Roback, 2021). Drumming up enthusiasm and excitement can help drive their cause as members want to participate in the ‘fun’. Like the Proud Boys, group involvement is seen as a joy or an honor for the members. A general theory of crime discussed how crime and deviancy is seen as fun and it is often very easy (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) also found that social attachments can affect self-control and deviancy; as positive attachments are a

barrier to crime versus negative influences which can lead to deviancy. The excitement within the two groups, AC1 and the Proud Boys again shows that deviancy is fun, and the peer group supports that idea.

For Agnew (1992) anger is an important aspect to strain theory, and when people face strains, they often become angry. The anger that is felt is what leads to deviant acts, and he believes that anger heightens the want for revenge. In the case of Incels, experiencing rejection and self-hate can be seen as one of Agnew's strains and the deviant acts is going online and ranting about their hate towards women and society. Thus, showing how the emotional characteristics found in Incel forums can lead to members joining the group. For the Proud Boys and AC1, the strains are the fear of losing power and being attacked (like being banned from Penn State, or politicians changing laws around freedom of speech and hate crimes) which can result in the acting out in deviant ways as well. Agnew (1992) also saw that positive coping skills can help diminish the anger and want for revenge. However, the opposite is also true, therefore not having healthy coping strategies can result in delinquency, such as the joining of non-socially positive groups like the Incel community, the Proud Boys, and the AC1.

The second question asks: is there evidence within online forums regarding the dominant emotional characteristics driving membership to these groups? I have shown that yes, the dominant emotional characteristics found in online forums can explain why the members studied have joined online hate groups, such as Incels, the Proud Boys, and AC1.

Research question #3 - Is there evidence that differences exist between the online groups and if so, what are these differences?

The third research question asks; is there evidence that differences exist between the online groups and if so, what are these differences? All three groups studied in this research had a lot of similarities; they are all hate groups, they are male only, they focus their membership online, and they all have been publicly in the news for violence recently. So, on the surface there are a lot of similarities between the three groups, which is why they were chosen. However, the similarities between them make the differences even more important. The differences can explain why someone joins one group over another, because there is a lot of overlap it can be hard to parse out why someone would join the Incels over the Proud Boys or AC1, and this section will help to clear up some of those questions. This section will explain the main differences between the three groups.

The group that stands out the most from the others is the Incels. In the thematic analysis the four themes identified were anger, hate, isolation, and entitlement. The other two group had three of the same themes: anger, hate, and entitlement; but only the Incels had implicit isolation. It is possible that isolation occurred in the other two groups, especially through the excitement of being included in the group (as seen through the emotion joy), but without it being implicitly stated it is difficult to judge the isolation of the other two groups. One of the major findings for Incels was their loneliness and desire for support from the group. Examples from above show how desperate for connection many of the members are. In one example the poster discussed his birthday, finding no enjoyment from life, and hoping to end his suffering through suicide. Discussion like that example were not seen in the Proud Boys of AC1 posts and comments, but

they were incredibly prevalent in the Incel forums. Looking back to Bates (2021) who discussed the high number of posts in the Incel community that discuss suicide and depression, and Vito et al., (2018) discussed Elliot Rodger self-hate, all of these examples illustrate that deep darkness and depression that the Incel community faces. These findings of depression, self-hate, and suicide are similar to what is found in past research on the community, but the Proud Boys and AC1 are very different in these findings.

The Proud Boys and AC1 had very limited amounts of sadness but did experience the opposite emotion: joy. The emotion joy found in the two groups had to do with the joy found in being a member of the group; the Proud Boys are in fact proud of their membership and AC1 is seen celebrating their groups accomplishments. The Proud Boys constantly discuss their belief in the group, and that they did nothing wrong during the January 6th riots. These beliefs highlight what Kitts (2021) discussed in his research, about past white supremist and extremist groups and their common desire to save their country from the modern wordl. The Proud Boys believe their actions are needed to revert to the golden age in American history. Kitts even states that the Proud Boys have built pride and brotherhood into the group through their initiation rituals. AC1 also has shown similarities with what Kitts (2021) discussed around the shared goals of saving their country. In an example from above, Russell (one of the leaders) celebrates the idea of being the future of America. Again, highlighting feelings of excitement and joy in the group that were not found in the Incel community.

Disgust and anger were common emotions that were seen in the three communities, and those emotions were typically tied to victims of their hate. Although the three groups shared similar themes and dominant emotions, the key to their differences is the victims of their hate. Incels primarily targeted their hate towards women and themselves; the Proud Boys targeted

their hate towards society and the government, ideological differences, the LGBT+ community, and people of colour; and AC1 directed their hate towards society and the government, ideological differences, and the spreading of antisemitic hate.

Incels again have the biggest differences; they are the only ones who have dominant hatred for women, and for themselves. Looking back at Vito et al., (2018) research, they examined Elliot Rodger's manifesto following his Incel motivated mass killing. Vito et al., identified themes of masculinity and how that tied to misogyny and self-hate. Rodger was a very unhappy man who hated his mixed-race ethnicity, his height, and his face; but Rodger hated women for the perceived belief that they hated him du to his mixed-race ethnicity, height, and face. In examples from my thesis, similar beliefs to Rodger are still very present; Incel men in this study hate themselves, and they blamed women. There was almost hate towards the self in the Proud Boys and AC1, and thus, self-hate was uniquely an Incel trait in this study.

AC1 are the only ones who had incredibly high levels of religious hate, and it was almost entirely antisemitic hate. Antisemitic hate often occurred in two ways, the first is a denial of the Holocaust and the genocide of millions of Jews, Romanies, homosexuals, communists, and prisoners of war. Or AC1 would celebrate the Holocaust due to the deaths of millions of Jews. Although ironic for both denying and celebrating the Holocaust, AC1 had many posts and comments that supported the hatred of the Jewish community and continued the spreading of antisemitic conspiracy theories. The ADL (2017) discussed the Christian Identity, which argues that white Christians are the chosen people, and everyone else (i.e. Non-white and non-Christian) are evil and less than. The ADL (2020) discussed America First and their strong commitment to their traditional Christian identity and going as far to distance the group from mainstream conservative movements due to the lack of Christianity. AC1 was found to have strong

connection to Christianity and deep antisemitic hatred. The only group that directed their hate towards any religious groups was AC1 in my research.

The Proud Boys, on their other hand were unique in the way they targeted the LGBT+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, plus) community, and people of colour. In my research the Proud Boys were never seen directing hate towards themselves or the group, as well rarely posted and commented antisemitic hatred. But the Proud Boys did use racial slurs, and racist language to promote hatred for people of colour. The group was seen to go as far as promote a white enthnostate; in one example provided above the poster wishes for a racist society. Stern (2019) stated this wish would create a society where only whites are given citizenship, and all other races would be unable to reside or be a citizen of that nation. Although AC1 and the Incels did have racist rhetoric it was less so than the Proud Boys.

The Proud Boys also targeted their hate towards the queer and LGBT+ community, in a way that was not seen with AC1, and the Incel community. AC1 had a few posts that showed their hatred for the queer community, like the example above that called for bullying queer youth until they commit suicide. The Incels would call each other and themselves queer slurs and would target anger toward queer women (for not dating men/Incels). But the Proud Boys used homophobia and transphobia as a way to attack others. When Gavin McInnes' talk was cancelled at Penn State, McInnes resorted to calling his protesters queer slurs, and compared being Liberal to queer slurs. The Proud Boys often attacked transgender individuals stating, "being ugly does not make you another gender" and calling a transwoman a "mentally ill tranny". The Proud Boys also often re-affirmed the hateful belief that queer individuals are pedophiles trying to prey on children.

The third research question asked about the differences between the three online hate groups. It was proven that all three groups had many similarities, but the differences were just as clear. The Incels on the surface were the most different; experiencing sadness instead of joy and having the theme isolation over privilege were two of the most apparent differences. However, the real differences included where the hate was directed. Incels directed their hate towards women and themselves; the Proud Boys directed their hate towards society, government, people of colour, and the LGBT+ community; and America and Canada First directed their hate towards society, government, and the Jewish community. These directions of hate can help explain why young men join one hate group over another; if someone already feels hatred towards women, they might find a connection to the Incels. Online extremism is not always a pick and choose situation, sometimes people fall into a group without any real reason besides stumbling into it. The third research question asks; is there evidence that differences exist between the online groups and if so, what are these differences? The answer is yes there are differences between the three online hate groups, and we can find many of these differences hidden inside their individual emotions and where their pain and anger reside.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

The inspiration for this research started with a desire to understand why young white men are joining online hate and extremist groups. I used three online hate groups and their social media posts and comments to understand if there is a link between the emotional characteristics and the motivations to join online hate groups. Three research questions guided this thesis: 1) Can evidence be gathered from online forums to explain why some young men join online hate groups? 2) Is there evidence within online forums regarding the dominant emotional characteristics driving membership to these groups? And 3) Is there evidence that differences exist between the online groups and if so, what are these differences?

This study applied Walters' (2010) framework of A General Theories of Hate Crime to dissect the intricate motivations behind the engagement of young white men in online hate and extremist groups. Mark Walters' (2010) General Theories of Hate Crime connected macro and micro perspectives to shed light on the motivations leading individuals to commit hate crimes. This thesis uses Walters' framework to conclude and explain the motivations and the decision to join online hate groups. This theoretical framework contains Strain Theory (1938), Doing Difference (2001), and A General Theory of Crime (1990), providing a nuanced understanding of the emotional vulnerabilities and societal strains propelling membership in extremist digital communities. The integration of these theories not only contributes to a multidimensional view of hate crimes but it also looks at the connection between white supremacy and the patriarchy. By acknowledging the structural influences of white supremacy and the patriarchal societal norms, this theoretical framework provides a comprehensive lens to interpret both the societal influences and individual-level characteristics, which offers an understanding of the emotional motivations of white men who join online hate groups.

By examining the three groups: Incels, The Proud Boys, and America and Canada First, through Walter's (2010) theoretical framework a General Theories of Hate Crime, I have uncovered a strong link between emotional characteristics and the decision to join these groups as evidenced by the narratives of an Incel member who expressed a sense of hopelessness at the young age of 26. The individuals studied, like the Proud Boys, perceived themselves as victims of societal collapse and actively sought out groups to find belonging, which reinforced their negative emotions and pushed themselves further into hate.

Understanding the factors that lead to membership to the Incels, the Proud Boys, or America and Canada First is of the most importance. It not only gives insight into the minds of the members of extremist groups and their ideologies, but it could also offer opportunities for intervention and prevention. My findings suggest that there is a need to target young men with strategies to address emotional vulnerabilities, that could provide alternative supports instead of turning to online groups.

In a world where online radicalization is a growing threat to society, this research highlights the importance of addressing the underlying emotional and behavioural factors that attract young men into these groups. In addition to understanding why young men initially join online hate and extremist groups, it is also crucial to acknowledge the ongoing nature of this issue. In May 2023, a gunman with extremist ties to a group called "Right Wing Death Squad," or RWDS, killed eight people and wounded seven at a mall in Texas (Dev, 2023). This example of the Texas mass shooting is just one example of the connection between extremism and violent consequences. As Kitts (2021) pointed out, the Proud Boys are not fully unique; they evolved from what already existed, taking bits and pieces from other hate groups until they became what

they are today. Other groups in their infancy will look towards the Incels, the Proud Boys, and America and Canada First and take what works and leave behind the rest.

In delving into the motivations behind the participation of young white men in online hate and extremist groups, this research has unearthed a profound connection to the broader context of white supremacy. The narratives and experiences of individuals within groups such as Incels, The Proud Boys, and America and Canada First underscore a troubling intersection of emotional vulnerabilities and the propagation of supremacist ideologies. Looking back to Delgado and Stefancic (2017), who wrote on Critical Race Theory and discussed the structures of society that benefit the white majority and oppress minorities and the others. Matias and Newlove (2017) examined the systems of white supremacy and how these structures give extremist groups space to hate. Deconstructing these spaces that allow for hate to occur is a needed future step, as prevention will only succeed when society dismantles structures that allow space for hate.

This study reveals the sense of hopelessness, victimhood, and disenfranchisement expressed by these individuals and how it becomes entwined with a culture of white supremacy, creating a toxic union that fuels their attraction to extremist groups. By understanding the emotional factors within the specific cultural framework of white supremacy, we gain critical insights into the underlying motivations that propel these individuals toward radicalization. Perry (2001) discussed the nature of the world shifting and the dismantling of the status quo. This shift in power upsets the norm group, and they shift into defence mode to fight against what they now view as white oppression. The ignorance of privilege seen and highlighted in my findings illustrates what Perry (2001) pointed out: When the norm group feels like they are losing power, they fight back to keep it. Only by comprehensively tackling both emotional vulnerabilities and

white supremacy can the world hope to create lasting change and foster a society that rejects the allure of online hate, extremism, and the dangerous undercurrents of white supremacy.

In the exploration of the factors influencing the recruitment of young white men into online hate and extremist groups, a correlation emerged between the influence of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity. The narratives revealed within groups like Incels, The Proud Boys, and America and Canada First, a deep connection between emotional vulnerabilities and the reinforcement of patriarchal norms. Looking to Allison and Klein (2021), who studied the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and bias homicides and saw a connection between the need to prove one's manhood by committing violent hate crimes, Allison and Klein's findings illustrate the structures in society that place an ideal masculinity above all others, and the toxicity of this hierarchy leaves many men unable to reach. The Incel members who discussed their shortness, unathletic body, and perceived ugliness struggled to find positive methods of performing their masculinity and turned to violence, aggression, and hate. Likewise, the Proud Boy and AC1 members who used calls of violence and bullying to display their manhood on social media. Roose et al., (2022) saw the close connection of manhood and the performance to the recruitment of extremism and how the structures of the patriarchy allow space for male extremist groups in society. This study illuminates how feelings of societal disconnection and perceived victimhood intertwine with hegemonic masculinity, fostering a narrative where the encouragement of traditional gender roles becomes embedded with the decision to join extremist circles. The findings showed that for many individuals studied, the connection between the need for belonging and the toxic notions of masculine identity can lead to and exacerbate the emotional challenges the individuals face.

Recognizing the interplay between emotional vulnerability, hegemonic masculinity, white supremacy, and extremist ideologies is essential for devising effective interventions that not only address immediate concerns but also challenge the deeply ingrained societal structures that sustain harmful patriarchal norms. Tackling the structure in place that allows for extremist hate to continue, like the patriarchy and white supremacy, is needed to create environments that foster acceptance and a more equitable and inclusive society.

This research demonstrated the importance of understanding extremist ideologies and the vulnerabilities that members experience. Often, the groups share similar experiences of anger and disenfranchisement, and recognizing these characteristics can help future research build strategies to combat extremism. Future research should look toward creating initiatives that provide emotional support, mental health resources, and alternatives that offer hope and belonging without resorting to hate and violence. Future research also needs to create initiatives that dismantle the white supremacist and patriarchal society, by creating education that will address systematic issues and not just focus on the individual level. In doing so, society can work towards a safer and more inclusive digital world that promotes tolerance, diversity, and respect for all individuals and users.

While this research has provided valuable insights into the emotional and behavioural factors driving individuals to join online hate and extremist groups, it is essential to acknowledge some of the limitations in this study. The online world is constantly evolving, which can be seen by the rapidly changing platforms, technologies, and trends. For example, during data collection, the social media website Twitter was sold and bought by Elon Musk, who renamed it X and changed the rules around hate. The rapid transformations in platforms, technologies, and trends involve a heightened awareness of any research context, as the online world is in perpetual flux.

This change impacted the study so that if it happened sooner, I might have used Twitter as one of the websites. I have to highlight that the findings in this study are a snapshot in time, and with the constantly changing online world, new platforms and communities have merged since the data was collected. These limitations only illustrate the need for ongoing research to look at both interventions to limit the desire to seek out online groups while vigilantly tracking emerging groups and tactics used to radicalize.

As society navigates the ever-shifting landscape of online extremism, this study reveals avenues for future research that can contribute significantly to understanding online hate. Moving forward, researchers should look deeper into the effectiveness of targeted interventions addressing emotional vulnerabilities among young white men to divert them from online hate groups. Exploring the impact of emotional support initiatives, mental health resources, and alternative interventions holds promise in dismantling the appeal of extremist ideologies. Additionally, investigating the role of white supremacy and patriarchal norms in the recruitment process warrants attention, shedding light on the complex interplay between gender dynamics, race, and radicalization. Furthermore, studies should focus on new and changing extremist groups as they evolve on social media and recognize how changes in technology and social media will impact recruitment strategies. Given the dynamic nature of the online world, future research should adopt a forward-looking perspective, considering emerging platforms and communities. This perspective would entail tracking the formation of new extremist groups and examining how existing groups evolve. By focusing on these research avenues, scholars can contribute to a comprehensive understanding of online extremism, enabling the development of more effective preventative measures and intervention strategies.

In conclusion, this research has contributed to understanding the emotional factors behind online hate membership. As well as examining the narrative and experiences of individuals involved in these groups, I have gained valuable insights into the motivations that urge them into extremist ideologies. Moreover, this study has shed light on how these factors manifest in the context of a culture of white supremacy. The forward-looking implications of this study extend beyond awareness and strive to pave the way for initiatives that address the root causes and societal conditions fostering the growth of online hate groups. The future goal is to foster a more inclusive and tolerant digital landscape.

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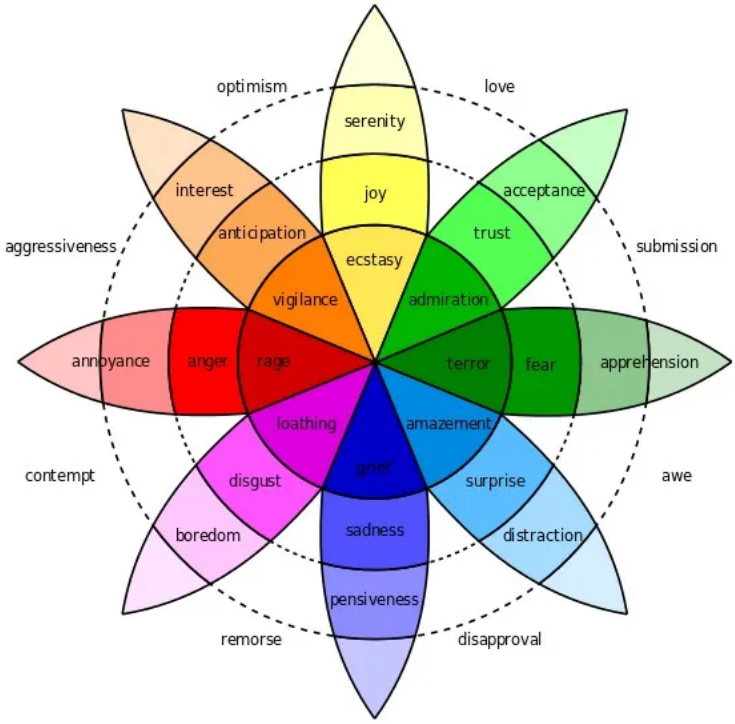
Table 1.1

Data collection of posts and comments for the three groups.

	Day 1		Day 2		Total		
	Posts	Comments	Post	Comments		Posts	Comments
Incels	32	720	32	499	1283	64	1219
Proud Boys	55	407	23	342	827	78	749
AC1	23	456	49	102	630	72	558

Appendix A – Plutchik Wheel of Emotion Chart



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