“Have ya seen some of the women we gotta rape?”

Exploring discourses on rape in an antifeminist Internet forum

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Abstract

This thesis aims to examine how participants in an antifeminist online discussion forum debate issues of rape and how they further utilize the term *rape* in their discussions. Research have shown that one of the most common antifeminist discourses on rape online has been the use of rape threats against women and feminists who are prominent in the public sphere and receive media coverage. These threats have been found in feminist discussion forums, on women’s personal social media accounts and been sent to women’s personal e-mail addresses. This study however, asks how the discourses on rape are influenced when antifeminists are debating within a space that is considered “their own” with little to no influence or interruption from outsiders who have infiltrated this space, where the participants might be more comfortable with expressing their own true attitudes and opinions. To answer this question, I have conducted ethnographic observations in a particular antifeminist discussion forum and I have further utilized methods such as textual analysis, critical discourse analysis and linguistic analysis in order to analyze and understand the meaning of the data material.

Further, I sorted the findings in my data material into six different categories, which helped me detect patterns in the discourses on rape found in the comments the participants shared in the forum. These categories were (1) malevolence, (2) impaired credibility, (3) victim blaming, (4) mocking victims and advocates for women’s issues regarding rape and sexual assault, (5) justification of rape and (6) male feminists as gender traitors. These were the general discourses on rape I found in the forum, however, when analyzing the data material further, I also found evidence of misogynist language and discrimination on the bases of sexism, racism and ageism in a variety of the comments, which was on occasion intertwined. This means that in some of the comments I detected instances of intersectional discrimination. I also found that the participants within this particular antifeminist discussion forum seemed to value masculinity and whiteness and feared that they were loosing power and privileges to women an ethnic minorities in Western society and that these fear is part of the reason why they mobilize within their own space and why misogynist and racist language, in particular, are so prominent in this space.
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1. Introduction

Sovereignty means supreme power of authority, autonomy, independence, self-government, self-rule, self-determination and freedom. These are the words written by an unknown administrator of the antifeminist online space selected for the purpose of this study and they greet you as you enter the particular website. This anonymous online space will be the main space for the observations that will be analyzed in the fourth chapter of the following thesis. ‘Sovereignty’ stands out as this part of the antifeminist movement’s vision for its proponents and presented here are the definitions that the movement uses in order to define this concept. It may mainly be defined for its supporters, but also perhaps for curious outsiders venturing onto this online space for the first time. It seems that these particularly descriptive words utilized in the definition constructed by the administrators of the website themselves and they seemingly resonate with my understanding of this particular antifeminist ideology’s purpose and its vision for its advocates. The ideology is to be found under the umbrella term The Manosphere, however due to reasons which will become clear later in chapter three, I will not be disclosing the name of the antifeminist ideology this thesis’ analysis will focus on itself.

The general definition of antifeminism is: the opposition and resistance to some or all feminist approaches and goals. This means that the antifeminist ideologies may be found actively working to reverse or hinder the progressions and achievements of the feminist movements (Nicholas and Agius, 2018). There has been an increasing academic interest in antifeminists and their presence online particularly from North American and Australian scholars and especially due to the fairly recent rise of new right-wing movements as a backlash particularly to mass immigration from the Middle East, South Asia, South America and Africa to Western parts of the world, such as Europe and North America. These researchers are often found within interdisciplinary research fields such as gender research, media studies, psychology and sociology, and are often seen building upon both feminist research as well as masculinity research.

Due to the emergence and growth of the Internet in recent decades, along with social media more so in the last decade, the way we as people communicate has changed drastically. At the beginning of the Internet era the common way of communicating online was through email where you had to patiently wait for response, which could take up to several days. In
modern society however, we seem to mostly communicate through instant messaging meaning that we are expected to be more available than before (Castells, 2013). During this time, antifeminist movements decided to migrate to the Internet because it provided safe spaces for like-minded people to gather and share ideas, opinions and experiences on a more global scale than before and one could in fact do so from the comfort of one’s own home. Further, as well as providing individuals with a more open world, the Internet has also provided its users with a certain degree of anonymity where your actions and the behavior that you portray online seem to have very few consequences to the everyday person’s offline life. The Internet has made is easier for antifeminists, as well as other ideologies and political movements, to mobilize and communicate with one another locally, nationally and transnationally. Therefore, antifeminists made it easier by utilizing the Internet as their communication tool and they can be found communication across a variety or different platforms such as blogs, discussion forums, Facebook, Reddit, their own websites and also YouTube, to mention a few.

In the beginning stages of this thesis process, I found it helpful to explore several of these different antifeminist channels in order to get an idea of how many such platforms exists, which forums, social medias or websites are the most used by members of the antifeminist movement, and if they seemed to generally discuss similar issues or topics across these different platforms. Under the umbrella term the Manosphere, as I will elaborate on further in the next chapter, one may find a great variety of different blogs, forums and websites. Some of the antifeminist forums I browsed through were 4chan, A Voice for Men (AVFM), Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW) and some antifeminist subreddits on the social media platform Reddit. For the purpose of this thesis however, I found that I wanted to direct my focus to one particular forum, because I came to the realization that there is an enormous amount of data material on all of these websites. But a cross-study of these different antifeminist forums could potentially be something interesting for future research to undertake and explore.

1.1 The purpose of this study and research questions

Previous research that comprises antifeminist discourses on rape have mainly focused on how proponents of these ideologies, particularly men’s rights activists, have been using rape as threats against women and feminists in the public sphere, especially those who are prominent
in the media. These threats could have been seen made on a distance in online discussion forums, on social media platforms such as Twitter or Facebook, but also at a more personal distance through personal e-mails, through phone calls or even letters sent to home addresses. One of the researchers who have in recent years done such studies is Australian researcher Emma Jane. In her studies, Jane (2014; 2015; 2017) focuses on hostile communication and online misogyny in forms of using rape as a threat in online forums, while Canadian researchers Lise Gotell and Emily Dutton (2016) have studied Men’s Rights discourses on rape in the Manosphere in general. This thesis however, will not be focusing specifically on rape threats and not in the Manosphere as a whole, but more how antifeminists seem to discuss and use the word rape in general in an anonymous online discussion forum. Such a space is made for its members as a place where they can be open with each other about their attitudes, opinions and worldviews and utilize language that might not have been accepted in other public spaces.

In this thesis I intend to explore how participants in a particular antifeminist online forum discuss issues of rape and also how they utilize the word and its meaning in their discussions with one another, and this reflects in the questions that have guided me through my observation and the analysis of this thesis:

1. How do participants in an antifeminist discussion forum represent and discuss issues of rape?
2. How do the participants use the word rape and in what context?

The purpose of this study and answering these research questions is to attempt to expose the misogynist language that other researchers claim exists in antifeminist discussion forums, which I will illustrate in the next chapter. In order to do this, I will utilize real excerpts and examples of comments I found during my observations of the chosen antifeminist forum along with my analysis and discussion of these comments and their content.

1.2 Study overview

In the next chapter of this thesis, I lay intend to the groundwork for my analysis. I begin the chapter with an introduction to the history of antifeminism and how it affected the feminist movement and how antifeminism has evolved up until today. Further, the literature chapter
will introduce the reader to existing literature and theories that will be an important foundation for this thesis and the findings that I will present, analyze and discuss.

In the third chapter, I will present to the reader the methods I chose to use for this project when collecting and analyzing my data material. It will become apparent that I have used a variety of different methods that I found to be necessary for my thesis and the goals I had when starting this project. Further, I will take some time to discuss some of the ethical issues that I had to take into consideration before and during this whole process.

In chapter four I present, analyze and discuss the data material I conducted from my ethnographic observations in the chosen forum, the discoveries I have made and how these findings might be related to interdisciplinary and already existing theory and concepts. I will present examples from my observations and along with the discussion, the analysis will be divided into different categories and I will elaborate on the patterns to be prominent I found in the forum.

Chapter five is where I will sum up some of the main points and findings I have made from the previous chapter and finally answer the research questions mentioned above. I will also provide a few pointers for future research and for other researchers that would be interested in pursuing this topic further.
2 Literature Review

In this chapter, I aim to present the historical background of the antifeminist movements, how the movement first emerged and what the movements and their ideologies look like in contemporary society as well as some historical background about the ideologies’ interests. Further, I will present some literature, which will provide some background knowledge for the analysis itself. My aim for this chapter is to account for the origin and the growth of the antifeminist movements and the ideologies’ contemporary standpoints in terms of feminism, gender, stereotypical gender roles, race and, related to my research questions, issues related to rape. I will also account for some of the research that has previously been conducted on antifeminist discourses on rape online. Furthermore, I will mainly rely on researchers and theories regarding antifeminism and Men’s Right Activism, which is heavily influenced by masculinity theories such as Michael Kimmel and Raewyn Connell.

The term “antifeminism” may be referred to in its plural form “antifeminisms” because of the movement’s heterogeneity and due to the fact the it consists of various sets of ideologies (Blais and Dupuis-Déri, 2012). However, throughout this paper I will mainly be using the term in its singular form, though this should not be interpreted as an attempt to group the various ideologies of antifeminisms into one singular ideology or to disregard the diversity of the antifeminist movements.

2.1 The historical background of antifeminisms

The antifeminist movements have through history been considered by researchers to be backlash movements against the women’s liberation movement and feminist movements (Chafetz and Dworkin, 1987; Nagle, 2017). One can detect that this type of backlash movement has in fact occurred with every Western wave of feminism starting from the first wave in the suffragette era with those who opposed giving women the right to vote. Later there were movements advocating for issues such as the anti-abortion or anti-choice campaigns during the second wave. However, it was in the 1990’s, after the end of the second wave feminism, in the United States particularly, that the men’s rights movement, which is

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1 Often refer to themselves as the pro-life movement in contemporary society in an attempt to establish a positive connotation to their cause.
associated with the antifeminist term today, gained eminence instead of the men’s liberation movement that used to coexist with the women’s liberation movement as its brother (Nicholas and Agius, 2018).

The men’s rights movement, as we know it today, originated in the 1960-70s and emerged as the men’s liberation movement alongside the women’s liberation movement and the second wave feminism at the time, particularly in the United States. However, it also to some extent emerged globally and have been perceived as consisting of white upper-class men (Marwick and Caplan, 2018; Messner, 1998; Kimmel, 2013; Nagle, 2017). However, the men’s liberation movement was eventually divided into two sets of camps: antifeminist men and profeminist men (Lin, 2017). The antifeminist men’s liberation movement emerged as an angry and fearful response by some men to the second wave women’s liberation and their demands. Particularly their argument stating that women are oppressed due to being restricted to the private sphere caused the antifeminist men’s liberation movement to react. The men’s rights movement turned this argument around to present men as the victims of gender division of labor, by arguing that men are being exiled from their homes and their children because their traditional gender role requires them to leave home and work in the public sphere (Ferber, 2000; Kimmel, 2013; Lin, 2017).

Contemporary antifeminism has emerged from the previous antifeminist men’s liberation movement and have been seen advocating for men and boys’ interests and values through the attribution of manliness and through patriarchal ideologies, as the so-called masculinist movement. According to the members of this movement, they do still advocate for the rights and needs of men and boys while they claim that they promote opinions, values and attitudes that are regarded as typical of men. Feminist writers however, argue that the masculinist movement relies heavily on a patriarchal ideology and builds upon the idea that men are suffering because of gender equality policies implemented in society. This is due to arguments stating that gender equality, for men, means the loss of power and rights to women, and that the male gender is becoming the oppressed gender because of the mobilization by women in general and feminists in particular for women’s rights (Blais and Dupuis-Déri, 2012; Duerst-Lathi, 2008; Jane, 2017). Further, the antifeminist solution to this ‘feminization’ of society is to repress feminist influence in all institutions while increasing the value of masculinity in society yet again (Blais and Dupuis-Déri, 2012).
Furthermore, researchers often establish a connection between contemporary antifeminism\(^2\), and the alternative right\(^3\) movements and these masculinist subcultures constantly cross-pollinate with several layers of online right-wing populist forums (Nagle, 2017; Nicholas and Agius, 2018; Walton 2012). What these movements and ideologies have in common is that they tend to rely on masculinist tactics and this becomes the foundation for opposing feminism in order to further their primary goal of re-establishing male dominance in society. Masculinism is based on the assumptions that women are the dominant gender and that they are dominating both men, white men in particular, and all of the meta-institutions, such as economy, education, family and governments, in contemporary society (Blais and Dupuis-Déri, 2012; Ferber, 2000). Therefore, these masculinist tactics these movements rely on, consist of oppression of the Other\(^4\) sex, reducing women’s financial resources by cutting of government subsidies and also harassment of women’s shelters on a collective level. These tactics could also be attempts to cause women’s shelters harm through political actions due to the negative image sexual assault and domestic violence campaigns convey of men and further establish patriarchal dominance in order to weaken women’s position in society (Blais and Dupuis-Déri, 2012; Butler, 2002; Gotell and Dutton, 2016; Holter, 2005). As an example of the connection between these movements mentioned above one may find parts of Norwegian terrorist and right-wing extremist Anders Behring Breivik’s manifesto to illustrate both misogynist and racist attitudes and language. For instance, Breivik states that in his opinion, Norway is a suicidal country for having a dialogue with Muslims and feminists, and that the rise of women in powerful positions are eventually going to cause the collapse of the contemporary Western civilization (Berwick, 2011\(^5\); Walton, 2012).

2.2 Antifeminist views on gender and race

The groups within the far-right movement and the antifeminist movement attempt to use the re-establishment of white, heterosexual and hegemonic masculinities as well as very traditional variations of femininities in meta-institutions as strategies for how to protect Western cultures, nations and societies. As mentioned earlier, the men’s rights movement perceive of women as the dominant gender in Western societies. According to researchers,

\(^2\) Antifeminists often refer to themselves as men’s rights activists.

\(^3\) Considered a grouping consisting of white supremacists, neo-Nazis and the far-right movement, amongst others.

\(^4\) Refers to women’s subordination where men are the Subject while women are the Other (de Beauvoir, 2010 [1949]).

\(^5\) The pseudonym Anders Behring Breivik used for his manifesto.
one of these movements’ aims is to re-educate the population into accepting a more particularly traditional version of gender and family roles compared to the more egalitarian and modern views on the same issues we see in contemporary Western societies today (Erel, 2018). This means that they seek more gender segregation between paid and unpaid labor and for women to go back to working in the private sphere with the household and the children as the caregivers, while men account for the work in the public sphere as the families’ possibly sole breadwinners. This is due to the fact that more traditional definitions of gender in society would generally benefit men more than it would benefit women and this would assist in re-establishing male dominance in society (Ferber, 2000).

Furthermore, another strategy in this backlash against feminism includes getting rid of the need for the feminist concept of gender in our vocabulary and revert back to only relying on the biological sexes, male and female, and the societal and culturally traditional roles that belongs to each of the two sexes (Oakley, 1998). Some researchers justify antifeminist men’s need to revert back to traditional gender roles by arguing that more liberal and egalitarian gender roles that we see in the modern society confuse men in regard to what it means to be a man and disrupt the meaning of masculinity (Lemon, 1995). This may leave men with the feeling that their masculinity and masculine norms are threatened, which might further cause a backlash where men would want to revert back to traditional gender roles in order to recover their masculinity (Kosakowska-Berezecka et al., 2016). However, by continuing the act of traditional masculine gender norms, men also reproduce power imbalance and male domination in society (Holter, 2005).

Contemporary antifeminism has also become a voice for Islamophobia and racism (Ging, 2017). The antifeminist- and right-wing populist movements both tend to present mass immigration as a serious danger to Western cultures and societies. Further, they fear that this would cause an estrangement from the cultural traditions that are already established in these societies and that such a demographic change in the population threatens the future of the Western nations (Erel, 2018). The idea of whiteness is an essential part of the antifeminist ideology and in this context, whiteness does not only refer to a person’s bodily distinction, but also a set of privileges and a form of power that being white has held in the world throughout history and continues to hold in the contemporary world (Keskinen, 2013). And these ideologies and the people leaning further to the right on the political scale, such as antifeminists often do, feel entitled and a desire to return to the times when white men were
perceived as dominant in our society or to gain the rights and entitlement they claim to lack, but are convinced they deserve. These rights and entitlements draw on and also reconstitute white and male supremacy and also the supremacy of gender traits that have historically been considered masculine (Nicholas and Agius, 2018). Further, the antifeminist movements have a tendency to blame white men’s losses in regard to gendered and racial power on women and minorities and due to the feminist achievements we have seen throughout history (Ferber, 2000).

When discussing gender and especially race, a concept it is important to elaborate on is intersectionality. Intersectionality is the concept of examining social stratifications such as class, gender, race and sexuality as interconnected and mutually constructing one another within social hierarchies in order to identify marginalization within society rather than being examined as separate notions (Collins, 1998; Crenshaw, 1989). It is also important to understand this concept seen as it may be applied to how antifeminists seem to value male power and whiteness, as we see evidence of in existing research throughout this chapter. On the contrary, they tend to deem females and people from non-Western parts of the world, meaning people of color and especially people who identify themselves as Muslims, of lesser value. The concept of intersectionality is also explained here because as I will illustrate later in the analysis, it is highly relevant to some of the findings made in my data material because many of the participants had a habit of making comments, which included for instance sexist, racist and ageist views all within the same sentence.

2.3 Antifeminist interest areas

Antifeminism may be defined as a collective attempt to slow down, stop or reverse the accomplishments and social changes made by the feminist movement and the proponents’ aim is to protect the patriarchy, meaning men’s power over women and male privileges. Men’s Rights activists have experienced the interference of feminism in society as an invasion of an already functional male territory (Kimmel, 2013; Nicholas and Agius, 2018). Even though this might suggest that only men would be the ones to support antifeminist ideologies, since they would be the beneficiaries in an ideal antifeminist society, it is important to note that there are in fact women who also identify with and support antifeminist ideas (Lin, 2017; Nicholas and Agius, 2018). For instance, there is a group on the social media platform Tumblr, who calls themselves Women Against Feminism (WAF), and they openly disagree
with feminist theories and values. Further they welcome people, women in particular, to critique the feminist movement and especially the contemporary or third wave feminism. On this platform, a wide range of women argue why they do not believe feminism is necessary in contemporary society and why they themselves are opposed to feminism or do not want to carry the feminist label themselves (Christensen and Høyer, 2015).

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, some of the interest areas for the antifeminist movement, according to the movement itself, are men and fathers’ rights. The proponents have expressed special interest in men’s mental health and suicide rates, male victims of domestic violence, boys falling behind in school, favoring of women and mothers in divorce courts and false rape allegations made by women. Most of these issues that the antifeminist movement claims that they aim to put on government agendas are very important issues that society should address. However, the members of the movement often tend to go about these issues by attempting to degrade or take action against feminists (Ging, 2017). For instance, instead of advocating for more shelters for male domestic violence victims and survivors, they will rather attempt to reduce the amount of women’s shelters as an attempt at achieving “gender equality”. Other antifeminist actions against feminists may take a variety of forms, which include, but are not limited to, insults and threats via email or telephone, belittling feminists in the media, Internet disclosure of personal information also known as “doxing”\(^6\), attempts to infiltrate women-only spaces and anti-choice demonstrations in front of abortion clinics (Blais and Dupuis-Déri, 2012).

Further, antifeminist communities use the Internet in order to exchange articles and videos that they perceive of as exposing the true nature of Western societies, feminists and female sex offenders while also sharing stories from their personal life such as their marriages, or failed marriages and failed relationships with women whether they were friendly or intimate (Lin, 2017). This helps in creating some sort of unity within the forum where members might feel a sense of belonging. A proponent for this antifeminist ideology might visit this website if they want to be updated on global news, specifically news that concern the movement’s interest areas. This might be because sharing personal stories and giving others advice might create a bond between the participants in these forums.

\(^{6}\) Meaning the online practice of exposing someone’s personal information that had previously been kept private (Chandler and Munday, 2012).
2.4 The Manosphere phenomenon

In 2018, the number of people who accessed and used the Internet was approximately 3.9 billion\(^7\) and this accounts for approximately 51 per cent of the world’s current population. People who have access to the Internet through their computers or smartphones, and are able to utilize these tools, also have the opportunity to create and distribute content to a fairly global audience (Lipschultz, 2008). Even though traditional media\(^8\) is still the most significant source of news, its influence has recently seemed to decline in the Western world and across all age groups (Nagle, 2017). The Internet and social media\(^9\) however, have for some people, emerged as a substitute for traditional media. This may occur because social media and traditional media do in fact share common traits when it comes to framing issues and shaping people’s perception of reality and social and political issues. On the contrary, social media is different from traditional media in the way that it is built upon interactions, communication and individuals creating, managing and sharing content, which have shifted the consumers from passive observers to possibly active content creators (Törnberg and Törnberg, 2016).

Traditional media have however taken measures in order to keep up with how rapidly the Internet and social media have evolved, such as having online newspapers with interactive comment sections and being visible on mainstream social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter in order to further keep up with the consumers’ needs and demands (Törnberg and Törnberg, 2016). This shift to more interactive news platforms may have brought new media dynamics such as online hate or online radicalization. The Internet has become a space where strategies of power are being played out and feminists and women, particularly women of color and queer women, have often been the main targets of this misogynist hatred online. This particularly in various comment sections and on blogs to the point where women report actually perceiving this as part of the everyday online experience when entering online public spaces (Castells, 2013; Marwick and Caplan, 2018). One of the concerns some researchers had as women increasingly began using and exploring the Internet was that gender inequality would also be established online and that women would experience gendered-based harassment also in the online spaces they might enter (Herring, 1999).

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\(^7\) https://www.statista.com/topics/1145/internet-usage-worldwide/

\(^8\) Traditional media are forms of mass communication, which was available before digital media such as newspapers, radio and television (Meyers, 2013).

\(^9\) Social media are online, user generated communication channels for creating and sharing information, networking and online interrelating. These channels include, but are not limited to Facebook, Twitter, blogs and Internet forums (Griffin, 2017).
Current writing has focused on how men’s rights politics have migrated onto the Internet and social media particularly in recent years, and it is argued that now the Internet is the only space where one might access the communities and their members (Lin, 2017). The movement is there found celebrating their traditional cultural and societal male sex roles and masculinity (Kimmel, 2013). While they are now often seen referring to themselves as men’s rights activists (MRAs) many members also chose to use the term antifeminists as a synonym for MRAs and so do researchers (Ging, 2017; Lin, 2017). It is important to note that these should be perceived of as diverse movements and therefore parts of the men’s rights movement’s members might not be motivated by antifeminist ideologies. However, the masculinist component of the Men’s Rights movement, consisting of the tactics mentioned earlier in this chapter, would in fact impact the feminist movements’ current achievements and women’s lives.

By establishing a web of blogs, communities, forums and organizations online, these movements are able to promote and discuss what they consider to be male interests, for instance men’s and fathers’ rights. As mentioned earlier, these interests may also consist of society’s neglect of male mental health, high male suicide rates, fair and equal treatments in divorce and family court and the issue of underachieving boys in schools (Blais and Dupuis-Déri, 2012; Nagle, 2017). The movement also argues that laws regarding violence against women are in fact discriminatory against men and that these laws fail to acknowledge violence perpetrated by women against men (Kimmel, 2013) However, a large number of members of these communities are often united by hostility and resentment targeted at women, opposition to feminism and misogynist discourses involving extreme violence (Jane, 2017; Nagle 2017). These many sites, which share similar or even identical political and philosophical views, are now collectively known as ‘The Manosphere’ (Nagle, 2017).

Academics, traditional media and the users of these websites themselves are amongst those who have referred to this web of antifeminist platforms as the popularized term ‘The Manosphere’. This ‘collective’ and its proponents have received extensive media coverage for their extreme online misogyny (Ging, 2017). The Manosphere also has associations to cases of rape and death threats and general harassment directed at female and minority gamers and game developers, journalists and critics, a controversy known as Gamergate. The Gamergate movement became a symbol of a continued backlash against women particularly their use of
technology and participation in online public life such as online gaming (Massanari, 2017). These antifeminist platforms have also been linked to mass shootings in the United States and Canada (Ging, 2017). For instance, Elliot Rodger murdered six people and injured 14 more victims in California. In his own manifesto he explained that the shooting spree was rooted in the feeling of social and sexual rejection he had previously received, and he referred to the mass shooting as a beta\textsuperscript{10} rebellion (Lin, 2017; Nagle, 2016).

Further, Rodger also described the attack as retaliation against women, who he claimed rejected him and refused to provide him with the sex he deserves and is owed due to being a man. These are attitudes that are common in the incel\textsuperscript{11} community, which will be elaborated on later in this chapter. Following the attack, Rodger gained hero- or saint-status within parts of the antifeminist community, and especially the incel community (Nagle, 2017). Further, Alek Minassian, who was allegedly inspired by Rodger, killed ten people with a vehicle in Toronto and also pledged his allegiance to the beta rebellion and the incel community (Branson-Potts and Winton, 2018, \textit{LA Times}). This indicates that there is in fact an urgency to the issues discussed in this chapter and which will be elaborated on further later in this thesis due to the seemingly deadly consequences of some of these attitudes that are promoted on the websites and forums that are connected to the Manosphere.

One may argue that the anonymity the emergence of the Internet provided seemed to unleash more rage-filled and hateful characteristics of the men’s right movement (Nagle, 2017). Antifeminists who participate in discussions online tend to perceive these platforms as all male safe spaces where they feel more comfortable expressing views and opinion they might not have felt as comfortable with expressing in open offline interactions in fear of being shunned or judged by people around them in what they perceive of as a gynocentric society (Lin, 2017). Members of these platforms connected to the Manosphere term are often observed invoking their right to freedom of expression when confronted with their racist and sexist attitudes, in order to defend and justify their racist and misogynist statements. Further, they tend to perceive the left-wing concept of political correctness as a threat against their freedom of speech, because they believe that being politically correct hinders a person’s ability or possibility to express one’s true opinions (Ging, 2017).

\textsuperscript{10} Beta males perceive themselves as less dominant males, more withdrawn, obsessional and curatorial when it comes to their cultural habits, in contrast to the macho and sporty alpha male (Nagle, 2016).

\textsuperscript{11} Involuntary celibacy (Ging, 2017).
Communication laws and regulations are experiencing a never-ending change because of the new technologies and the social challenges that follow their emergence and rapid evolution (Ging, 2017). Further, the Internet has presented the world with new legal problems in terms of Internet indecency\(^\text{12}\). The Internet has created a struggle of control as an open-minded, transnational space where its users have the potential and the tools to develop new ways in order to avoid whichever restrictions may be imposed on it (Lipschultz, 2008). With the Internet being such a global space, the lack of common international legislations makes it more difficult to prosecute the people who are seemingly breaking the law on the Internet as a public space and I will discuss these issues more in chapter four (Land, 2013). Though blaming the legal system might steer the discourses away from the actual problem, which is a normalized online culture of misogyny and attribution of violence towards and harassment of women online (Banet-Weiser and Miltner, 2016).

The Manosphere consists mainly of three groups of people who have built the foundation for this space. The first group of people one may argue is ‘subcultural trolls’, which often comprise of young, male ‘geeks’ who seem to gather in the subreddits of the social media forum Reddit (Jane, 2017). These men tend to be socially awkward and often also identify as incels, meaning that they live in involuntary celibacy and blame women for this state of life (Jaki et al. 2018). Further, they tend to use the argument of free speech in order to assert their right to say or write anything regardless of the harm it may cause to others (Ging, 2017). Secondly, there is the Men’s Rights Movement, which consists of antifeminist groups who centers their arguments around the claim that men are the oppressed gender in contemporary societies, not women (Jane, 2017). Further, the men’s rights movement within the Manosphere’s focus is on issues concerning father’s rights, male circumcision, antiabortion laws, allegedly female-perpetrated rape and domestic violence and particularly on the supposed epidemic of ‘false rape claims’ made by women. The last original group of the Manosphere is perceived to be ‘Pick-up artists’ (PUAs). This is a term used for heterosexual males who use manipulative behavior in order to have a large number of sexual conquests and recognizes that women dominate the dating sphere. Similar to the other two groups, PUAs have an agenda of conspiracy with regards to feminism, calling feminism a ‘war against men’ (Jane, 2017; Lin, 2017).

\(^{12}\) Defined as extreme speech that are considered to be at the edge of social tolerance (Lipschultz, 2008)
The Manosphere has evolved from being one single website in 2009, to be used as a term referring to hundreds of blogs, forums, websites and now consists of more groups of (usually) men than the three mentioned previously and all these groups seem to have several different interests in mind, yet also have established some common ground (Jane, 2017; Kimmel, 2013). According to the members of these groups who consider themselves a part of the Manosphere space, they are dedicated to expressing, discussing and working for men’s interests and issues. However, it becomes clear when visiting these websites that they are also used as a space to assert aggressive behavior and dialogue via misogynist attacks on women and feminists in an attempt to maintain the status quo, meaning male dominance, online (Jane, 2017). Feminist scholars have used the term “online misogyny” in order to connect peoples’ online behavior to structural sexism and violence against women. Scholars make this connection because when women experience harassment, regardless of who they are or what they do, the harasser most often focus on women’s gender by using sexist speech and threats of rape. Such misogynist behavior is often seen organized in subcultural spaces such as Reddit, where members collectively frame feminists and women as men’s enemy (Marwick and Caplan, 2018).

Looking at the nature of the Manosphere and of the various blogs, forums and websites, one might argue that this can be linked to the concept of ressentiment. According to Lin (2017), antifeminists online tend to display resentment towards women in their discussions. Philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche introduced this term, which in French is called ressentiment. The term was sociologically developed by Max Scheler and can be simply defined similarly to the English word resentment. This means that the concept may be described as when a group of people are harboring the feeling of resentment towards another person or another group of people, which often leads to hostility or hatred towards this person or these people can further manifest and a feeling of powerlessness in attempting to take action to better one’s life status in society (Meltzer and Musolf, 2002; Young, 2009). The concept might also be interpreted as self-poisoning of an individual and a society when it comes to political settings and it creates inferiority, the fear of finding oneself at the bottom of a hierarchy and an individual who experiences this might react with anger, frustration, bitterness and vindictiveness (Skorgen, 2017).
2.5 Antifeminist masculinity

The principle of the particular ideology within antifeminism I have chosen to examine in this study, and which is the main focus of my analysis, is that men do not need women in their life and should rather depend on their own masculinity with the support of other men. Masculinity is a socially and culturally constructed concept that builds upon a certain set of behaviors and roles that are typically associated with being a man or a boy, though it should not exclude that women also may conform to these stereotypes. It is also a socially constructed concept that reaches beyond the differences between the biological sexes to how men differ among themselves (Connell, 1995). This is the concept of hegemonic masculinities and is defined as:

“[...] the configuration of gender practices which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (Connell, 1995, p. 77).

According to Connell’s theory, hegemonic masculinity first recognizes the existence of male domination and female subordination in society. Then, the theory also acknowledges the existence of multiple different masculinities that may vary across cultures and time and that these different masculinities, which may illustrate how men differ from other men, have their own position in the gender hierarchy. For instance, a white, upper class, heterosexual male would hold the top position while a black, working class, homosexual male would be perceived as a non-privileged male and would therefore be situated close to the bottom of the hierarchy due to the intersections of his race, social class and sexuality (Connell, 1995). Therefore, examining people’s gender alone does not provide the correct perception of a gender hierarchy in a society. Rather, it is the intersection of these social stratifications, for example age, gender, race and sexual orientation to mention a few, which shows us the different experiences in life that different individuals may have and that makes us different from one another (Crenshaw, 1989).

A subdivision of hegemonic masculinities is the concept of toxic masculinity. Toxic masculinity is characterized by the endorsement of definite gender roles, but also involves the need to manifest dominance over others by endorsing misogynist, racist and homophobic attitudes and views, and people displaying such behavior often feels threatened by femininity.
in our society. There have been debates regarding how to properly define toxic masculinity and some researchers argue that toxic masculinity should be characterized by a person engagement in toxic practices, but that these practices should not be perceived as defining characteristics of that individual. Online interactions in anonymous forums may particularly be considered potential breeding grounds for toxic masculinity (Banet-Weiser and Miltner, 2016; Ging, 2017; Parent, Gobble and Rochlen, 2018).

Haider (2016) states that throughout history a rite of passage between boyhood and manhood has been to enlist in the army and for many men at different times in history this has meant going to war. The researcher further argues that due to the expectation of boys to enter the military, this means that the development of boys’ masculinity might be associated with violence due to the associations one might have with the military and the nature of war. Furthermore, this might assist in creating a disillusion of masculinity with violent symbolic, which is brought into everyday interactions both before and after a man enlists in the army. This disillusion might be a part of the construction of toxic masculinity in some young men. An antifeminist argument regarding young boys being confused about their masculinity is the feminization of schools. With majority of the world’s teachers being female\textsuperscript{13}, young boys might not have enough masculine role models in the place where they spend most of their time. Another concern is that the education systems do not seem to be accommodating boys and are feminized in a way that school is about sitting still, rather than taking a more active approach, which could benefit young boys more (Imms, 2000; Gough, 2001; Thorne, 1993).

Further, the people who engage in discussions forums considered a part of the Manosphere tend to create avatars or online personas, which liberates them from their own physic and maybe physical limitations they might have. These avatars are often presented as the users’ profile picture on Reddit or other discussion forums and they often present a hyper masculine fantasy figure with exaggerated bodily features and masculinity and it often performs hostile or, in some cases, illegal acts in these pictures. These avatars would not have gone un-checked in any other space, however in these forums they are effectively utilized without any consequences to the person behind the screen (Ging, 2017).

\textsuperscript{13} https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/se.prm.tchr.fe.zs
Earlier in this chapter, I discussed gender and race and the importance of whiteness to the antifeminist movements. Building further upon that, antifeminist masculinity is perceived to be synonym to white masculinity. White masculinity has seemingly become a central part of identity politics for young white men. The antifeminist movement attempts to reinstall white masculinity as normative in the contemporary Western society. Further, young white men perceive themselves as victims of a multicultural and female dominated society. This may cause confusion regarding the current meaning of masculinity as well as whiteness and could be triggered by the feeling of losing the white male privilege they are used to or have heard or read about and therefore have developed a feeling of entitlement. These feelings might end up causing some sort of backlash in forms of movements, like the backlash movements as responses to feminist actions I previously mentioned in this chapter, and which we will also see throughout the analysis in chapter four or even in terms of violent actions, such as the beta rebellion mentioned above (Ferber, 2000).

I also mentioned earlier in this chapter that antifeminists have grown to celebrate their masculinity instead of using it as the excuse as to why men are being dominated, in terms of traditional gender roles, in contemporary Western societies. Yet they have also grown to believe that women are the dominant gender and therefore see feminist interest areas and continued mobilizations as an attempt to strengthen women’s position in society even further and this is perceived as an attack on the social construct of masculinity and on men in general (Kimmel, 2013). This is due to the perception that if women’s position in society is strengthened, at the same time men’s position have to be weakened, which dismisses the idea that men and women could in fact hold equally powerful positions in society at the same time and therefore it may be perceived that the antifeminist movement rejects the idea of equality and that a gender equal society is not possible to achieve.

2.6 Antifeminist views on the issues of rape

Feminists have since the beginning of the second wave feminism in the 1960s contributed to breaking the silence on rape, sexual assault and harassment, with the #metoo-campaign being one of the most recent examples we have seen in contemporary society. However, the growing anti-rape activism has yet again triggered the emergence of a backlash and again antifeminists play a particular role in this backlash. The Manosphere reveals a set of claims made by some MRAs in regard to sexual violence. For instance, they argue that sexual
violence is to be considered a gender-neutral problem, meaning that equal amounts of men and women experience sexual violence in society. Further they argue that feminists tend to erase men’s experiences of sexual assault by focusing solely on women’s experiences regarding this issue and by not acknowledging that men experience sexual violence as well (Gotell and Dutton, 2016; Kimmel, 2013). The Southern Poverty Law Centre (SPLC), an organization that monitors hate groups, has listed some of the websites connected to the Manosphere as hate sites, due to their misogynist nature and the encouragement of violence towards women one can find when entering these spaces (Gotell and Dutton, 2016).

Rape is one of those phenomena that have been perceived as hard to define both in society in general, but also when it comes to legislations and the justice systems around the world and especially due to the issue of consent. According to Burges-Jackson (1995), rape has in the past been understood as the use of violence or threats in order to force an unwilling person into sex, but has now been broadened in order to include a variety of sexual relations. Some, particularly radical feminists, will argue that all coerced sexual acts, whether it is used physical, psychological or economic coercion, are to be considered rape. Others would simply argue that rape is not a real phenomenon. Most people would define rape as somewhere in between the two where some acts or types of coercion are included while others are excluded from the definition (Burt and Albin, 1987).

Many members of the MRA movements often claim that false allegations of sexual assault made by women against men are a very common phenomenon in contemporary society. They have in fact been seen arguing in their own forums that majority of all rape allegations made by women against men are false. These MRA discourses on sexual violence mentioned here in this section are, according to researchers, utilized as a way of framing feminism for persecuting and marginalize men (Gotell and Dutton, 2016). Further, as mentioned earlier, the communities that are connected to the Manosphere are known for using misogynist discourses especially online, and in her research, Jane (2017) refers to these discourses as “Rapeglish”, a contraction of the two words “rape” and “English”. The researcher explains that she has established this term due to the discourses’ extreme sexually violent language often describing acts that are to be considered rape. Along with the set of claims mentioned above, these discourses also include graphic threats of rape against women and particularly feminists who are visible in the media and the public sphere (Jane, 2017). Other researchers also argue that these communities as well as the antifeminist movements
tend to utilize misogynist and violent language in discussions amongst like-minded people in their secure spaces as well as in discussions with people who are perceived as outsiders to these cultures, for instance when infiltrating feminist forums (Kimmel, 2013).

In 2016, antifeminist Richard Dawkins shared on his Twitter account, which has accumulated 1.3 million followers, a cartoon video featuring Canadian feminist Chanty Binx. The video ended with Binx’ character encouraging another character portraying an “Islamist” to rape her. Such a perversion of intersectionality does not only appeal to Islamophobic responsiveness, but it is also a strategy to deny that rape culture in fact exists in Western societies and therefore recover the virtue of white masculinity (Ging, 2017). Another argument, related to this and that has also been used by the antifeminist movements is that the feminist concept of “rape culture” is actually just a moral-panic produced by third wave feminists (Gotell and Dutton, 2016). The antifeminist movements are often seen arguing that feminists are using this concept as an excuse to stay relevant in contemporary society and that rape culture is a non-existing phenomenon in, at least, Western society. While Susan Brownmiller seems to be the first person who used the term “rape culture” in 1975, it was later explained by Buchwald (1993) and she used these words in order to define this concept (Rentschler, 2014):

[...] complex of beliefs that encourages male sexual aggression and supports violence against women. It is a society where violence is seen as sexy and sexuality as violent. In a rape culture women perceive a continuum of threatened violence that ranges from sexual remarks to sexual touching to rape itself. A rape culture condones physical and emotional terrorism against women as the norm (Buchwald et al. 1993: vii).

Some of the communicative sexual remarks that are being considered as parts of the rape culture that we also may see in society today are for instance catcalling, street harassment and rape jokes (Rentschler, 2014). The definition of rape culture, especially the sentence in regard to male sexual aggression and supporting violence against women resonates with the point made earlier in this chapter while talking about the violent and misogynist language that is seen used by antifeminists and particularly in the Manosphere universe. Antifeminists often use such language in online interactions with outsiders and particularly when engaging with feminists, but also when interacting with each other. Furthermore, antifeminist movements, particularly Men’s Rights activists seem to be using
issues of rape in order to mobilize members by exploiting young men’s fear of the shifting standards of consent and further how law enforcement take the issue of consent into consideration, as well as the changing gender norms within contemporary society (Gotell and Dutton, 2016).

Sexual violence has had a history of either being individualized instead of being treated as societal or cultural issue or being naturalized and linked to men’s nature, and therefore excusing the existence of such behavior. Downplaying of gender based and sexual violence as well as victim blaming are still common globally. For instance, the media tend to emphasize how the women behaved or dressed at the time when the (alleged) sexual assault occurred and the police urges women to be alert at all times when in the public sphere. These are examples of the responsibility being put on the individual person, and actually the victims, or potential victims, instead of tackling the systemic and underlying issues. Part of this issue is that we live in a society where white male-nature is perceived as default in the public sphere and therefore women and other minorities are expected to adjust to white male discourses. This is a way of life and practices, which relegates women, people of color and non-Christians to second-class citizens (Nicholas and Agius, 2018).
3. Methodology

3.1 Chapter introduction

“Different methodologies will produce different kinds of information – even if they are used for analyzing similar questions” (McKee, 2011, p. 2).

Previous research on antifeminists online in relation to rape has focused on how the ideologies’ proponents often tend to use threats of rape when engaging in discussions with women and feminists in particular in various online spaces (Jane, 2017). In this thesis however, I aim to find out how antifeminists treat issues of rape in an online forum by using six different categories. The categories will be utilized in order to unveil how antifeminists uses rape as part of their discussions when observed in a space that is considered their own and seemingly without unwanted interference from outsiders. These categories will consist of (1) malevolence, (2) impaired credibility, (3) victim blaming, (4) mocking victims and advocates for women’s issues regarding rape and sexual assault, (5) justification of rape and (6) male feminists as gender traitors. I will be elaborating further on these categories and how I define and interpret these in the beginning of chapter four.

Choosing my methods and defining key concept will help to situate myself as a researcher in relation to those being researched. Also, even when analyzing text, I will make sure to have established an awareness of my potential power position and the possible power relationship between me, as the researcher, and those being studied for the purpose of the thesis. This is also an important notion in terms of the observation method that I utilized when collecting the data material for my thesis, which will be elaborated on later in this chapter. This exertion of power will also be present in the researcher-researched relationship even in situations where the people being studied are in a position to exercise power over you, for instance in terms of gender power relations. This means that the researcher and the researched might exert different means of power over one another and that this is happening at the same time (Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002).

The approach I will be taking when observing cultures and analyzing text is what is called a post-structuralist approach. This means that I will attempt to see all cultures’
approaches to sense-making and all forms of languages as having their own advantages and limitations rather than attempting to describe or search for the one ‘truth’ when conducting my research (McKee, 2011). Therefore, it is important that I analyze the comments made by the people I study in depth and relate their arguments and my findings to existing theories research, instead of making assumptions based on my first impressions of the statements made by the people found within the space I study.

As I mentioned earlier I started the research process by exploring different antifeminist forums and social media platforms. However, as my observations went on, the focus of the research question shifted from antifeminist discourses on rape in general to antifeminist discourses on rape within the specific forum I researched due to the extensive amount of data one might find within these spaces. Making this shift helped me narrowing my research to fit into a master thesis. My research may not be perceived as generalizing antifeminists and their discourses on rape, but only speak for the participants within the specific forum that has been observed.

3.1.1 The Internet as a research space

The Internet is a perceived structured place, which consist of many different cultural spaces where meaningful human interactions occur and where actions may have genuine consequences (Markham, 2007). Because the Internet is being conceptualized as a public place, it also becomes its own sociocultural space and should therefore also be studied by researchers. As a researcher, one might study a selected part of the space itself, the interactions that take place within the selected space and the various communities that might form through these interactions. When choosing the Internet as my field of research I have the opportunity to travel through several cultural venues through my laptop and observe people without ever actually seeing them in person. Some may argue that the emergence of the Internet has given researchers endless opportunities, including the ability to conduct research and interact with interviewees from the comfort of your own home or office and with the greater chance of complete anonymity between the researcher and the research subject.

However, Internet research also raises certain dilemmas. For instance, not being certain of the gender, age, race or other demographic characteristics, of the people I observe due to only being able to identify people by their username or if the participant reveals some
of these characteristics about themselves in their own comments. Or the fact that the participants in the one online culture I am observing may in fact live in various different countries, so how do we as researchers draw a boundary around the ethnographic context? In the case of my own thesis, I have chosen to focus solely on the forum I am observing as its own computer-mediated and constructed society (Markham, 2007). Therefore, I have made the conscious decision to disregard demographic characteristics such as age, gender or ethnicity of the participants in my observations, since it is not directly interesting in terms of this thesis and my research aims and questions. Though it would be interesting to see this as a separate study, possibly for future research. I have rather accounted for some of these components of the antifeminist movements in existing literature as discussed in the previous chapter, some of what the administrators of the forum have written on their website and I have also made some assumptions based on my own study of the forum and its participants.

3.1.2 The chosen forum

The forum where I chose to conduct my ethnographic observations is a space where like-minded people may come together and anonymously share ideas, personal opinions, world views and discussions with little or no resistance or disagreement from other participants or outsiders, yet that might not have been accepted by general public (Jaki et al. 2018). The particular strain of antifeminism that I am observing for this thesis, argues on their website that they are not affiliated with the Men’s Right Movement, but should be perceived rather as a facet of the Manosphere. According to previous research and from exploring the website itself, the forum is to be considered a misogynist male echo chamber, due to the website’s nature and the findings that will be presented and discussed in the next chapter. The Internet is perceived to have become the new men’s locker room, where men may express any thoughts or attitudes they may have without any consequences, and I would argue that this forum seems to suit that description (Jane, 2017; Kimmel, 2013).

The people administrating the website also clearly state that this website and forum is ‘for men only’, though there is no way of truly knowing the true gender of the different users and the anonymous participants of the website or its discussion forum. What we can find out, however, is where in the world the traffic to this website is coming from. The website has

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14 https://www.similarweb.com/ (I will not link the statistics for the particular website due to anonymity).
approximately 750,000 monthly average visits in total and as of 08.02.19 the top five countries generating the most traffic were: the United States (40%, all percentages are approximate), United Kingdom (8%), Canada (6.5%), Brazil (4.5%) and Germany (4.4%). While the rest of the countries that seem to generate traffic to this website represent numbers less significant than the five mentioned here. This shows us that the largest part of the website’s users and participants in the forum are currently based in the United States, while the other four countries’ percentages are very low in comparison. Furthermore, this transnational nature of the forum discovered here will be discussed in relation to legal issues in the next chapter.

Further, it is stated clearly by the website’s administrators on their forum pages that discussion forum actually does have some form of moderation of the engagement in the discussions where topics and replies will not automatically appear after submissions, but will however be sent to the moderators of the website while pending approval. This is called pre-moderation and it means that the forum’s moderators have in fact approved and therefore posted all of the comments in the discussion forum. This also includes the comments that I have collected as part of my data material and that will be used as examples and further discussed in the next chapter.

In the chosen forum, discussions can be found sorted into different categories made by the administrators that are listed on the front page of the forum for easy navigation when participants are looking to discuss a specific topic. Some of the topics one might find the participants discussing in this forum are:

- Dating, marriage and divorce
- Sports and leisure
- Health and fitness
- Money and work
- Technology, movies and music
- Politics
- Men and fathers’ rights
As illustrated above, most of the general discussion topics are related to an average person’s everyday life whether it concerns one’s work life, love life, personal life or political interests. As I will discuss in the analysis in regard to the discussions in the forum concerning issues of rape, these “everyday discussions” also tend to be characterized by antifeminist ideas and misogynist opinions. And even the descriptions of the different categories the discussions are sorted into suggest or encourages that a misogynist tone should be utilized when engaging on discussions on this forum. These descriptions include statements such as: “Ever work for a woman? Roll up your sleeves and share your horror story.” or “The stuff girlfriends and wives can't stand - on everything from computers, games & recommendations […]”.

3.2 The material

3.2.1 Choosing the material

As stated earlier, I collected my material from one carefully selected antifeminist forum. I had a certain set of criteria in mind at the early stages of the thesis process. The criteria I decided to operate with when choosing the forum where I would conduct my ethnographic observations were:

1. The founders and/or the administrators as well as the community must consider it an antifeminist website/forum.
2. It must also be considered an antifeminist forum/website by academics and researchers.
3. In relation to my research question and method and for ethical reasons, it is necessary that the website has an open discussion forum where membership or attempts to infiltrate the community is not needed in order to conduct ethnographic observations.
4. The website’s forum should possess a search function in order to make the data collecting process easier, seen as I am looking at discussions regarding one specific topic and containing a specific word.

I made the choice to utilize the forum’s search bar in order to narrow down the potential extensive amount of material I would have to sort through in the forum as a whole. I chose to search for the term ‘rape’, which meant that first hand I would only be able to see comments
containing this particular word and I could further click on the initial comment in order to reveal the full discussion. This meant that I would also be able to see and understand the context of the particular comment I was interested in collecting as part of my data material. While sorting through the extensive amount of material one can find in the chosen forum, which I will elaborate on in the next chapter, I took a wide reading approach in order to gain a general understanding and first impression of the comments’ discussion topics. I also utilized this method, so I could sort out the discussions that I found to be not at all relevant to my research questions. For instance, the participants in the forum often seemed to discuss their own divorces, or divorces just in general, and how the different participants seemed to have come out of the divorce worse than their female ex-partner. Here they have created their own term; being ‘divorce-raped’ by their ex-wives and the divorce courts. Even though it might be worth discussing why they choose to utilize the term ‘rape’ as a metaphor in this context, as it is a significant observation on its own, it does not quite fit within the categories that I found emerging while observing and analyzing. However, I did find it significant enough to discuss it a little further towards the end of my analysis.

Furthermore, I chose to focus on the discussions in the forum that included the use of the word rape and discussions of issues of rape due to the relevance that these issues continue to hold in contemporary society. Since second wave feminists put issues of rape on their agenda issues of rape has been a focus point in the media and in politics. In modern days the discussions on rape have gained relevance in the traditional and also on social media especially since the beginning of the #metoo-campaigns on social media in October of 2017. Also, as a token of how relevant these issues are in contemporary society still, 2018’s Nobel Peace Price was awarded to Congolese doctor Denis Mukwege and Isis survivor Nadia Murad for both of their efforts to end the use of sexualized violence as a weapon in war and armed conflicts. Further, I also wanted to choose a topic that I knew, from reading previous research on antifeminism online, could have the ability to spark a variety of different discussions in such a space with the possibility to illustrate an assortment of different opinions from various people on the subject.

3.2.2 Organizing and coding the material

After I began collecting the data material I started to consider how to actually organize the large amount of material I was finding in the forum. I decided that in order to obtain and also
maintain a clear overview of the material, organizing the comments that seemed to fit into the categories that I found emerging into a spreadsheet would be the leading choice for my methods. When inputting the excerpts into the spreadsheet and categorizing them, I found that using the method of close reading was beneficial because it allowed me to sort through the data while being thoughtful, critical and focused in order to find significant details or patterns while giving me a more precise understanding of the textual meanings. Close reading is also the method I used throughout the process of analyzing my data material because it is a method that I found to be useful and wanted to utilize in order to gain a deeper understanding of what I was reading and the meaning behind the words, expressions and sentences used by the participants (Brummett, 2018). This was the first step in order to identify the patterns I found in my data material and close reading of my material assisted in the identification of the categories presented earlier in this chapter. Further, while collecting the material as explained in the previous section, I discovered comments on the topic of rape, which also included other discriminatory features than on the bases of gender towards both men and women. These other discriminatory and features included and on occasions intersected with for instance ageism, lookism and racism. I chose to mark these features in my data spreadsheet using color-coding in order to distinguish them from the essential topic of the comment and to bring these features into my analysis as well, due to its overwhelming significance to the discussions and to the research. This will give my analysis an intersectional dimension and this will be illustrated in the upcoming chapter.

Lastly, the participants in the forum often used slang words and expressions in their comments, which I did not always know or understand the meaning of due to the fact that I am an outsider to this cultural space. As mentioned earlier, I found it very important to make sure I had full understanding of the messages the participants were conveying through their comments. Therefore, I found that it was important for me to learn and understand the meanings of these expressions and the slang words in order to make real instead of interpretive sense of the material I had gathered. In my opinion it was also important to define some of these expressions for parts of the analysis because in some cases the choice of words and expressions were also significant observations in themselves. I decided to use a non-official and user-generated online dictionary called Urban Dictionary, which is a website that specializes in storing definitions of slang words and expressions that are used in a variety

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15 http://urbandictionary.com
of different, particularly online, cultural spaces. The website where I have conducted my ethnographic observations also provides their own glossary section, which I will be cross-checking some of the definitions found on Urban Dictionary with in order to confirm that I interpret the messages conveyed by the participants in this particular forum as correctly as possible.

3.3 The methods

3.3.1 Ethnographic observations

Observations are amongst the approaches to producing data material that are especially valued for respecting and understanding the research subjects as people (Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002). As the first method I chose for this thesis and the one method I have utilized in order to collect my data material, is ethnographic observation. I found that this method would pair well with my chosen research space since my initial intention from the beginning of the research process was not to interact with the research subjects in the chosen forum.

As we uncovered in the previous chapter, antifeminists have in the recent decade migrated to various Internet and social media platforms. Therefore, I made the decision to utilize ethnographic observations in a discussion forum as one of my methods. I will be using observations of a public Internet forum where the discussions take place in English, even if English might not necessarily be the participants’ first language. The forum I chose is where self-proclaimed antifeminists talk about and discuss issues important to them and their ideology freely and where one would be able to observe their discussions without having to interact with the participants, which would disrupt the cultural space or where I had to create an account in order to gain access to the discussion forum and the participants’ comments. Therefore, I have been a non-participant observer within the research space, meaning that I did not actively engage in the discussions taking place in the forum at all, nor did the members know of my presence in the forum.

Over the course of four months, I have been observing the discussions on rape in one particular antifeminist discussion forum and I discussed the criteria I used when choosing this website earlier in this chapter. I began observing the forum on 14.09.2018 and decided to
conclude my observations on 08.02.2019. This gave me an observation period of approximately four months and this gave me enough time to look through the archived discussions that were no longer active, as well as observing new discussions that emerged during this period of time. Just as I began my observations, the case of sexual assault accusations made by Dr. Christine B. Ford against Brett Kavanaugh, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States to be at the time (now current), was a hot topic in the main stream media in the United States, but also globally. This also reflected on the discussions taking place in the forum at that time and I will mention this in relation to the analysis in the next chapter.

Since I am focusing on how the participants in the forum discuss and use the word rape, I wanted to specifically show that up until the day that I concluded my observations, the word ‘rape’ had been mentioned a total of 18937 times on the forum as a whole and the first comment that contained the word rape in this particular forum was posted on 13.07.2014. This number also include comments not so relevant to my own research question such as the expression ‘divorce rape’, a term which I found that the forum often utilized and discussed as I elaborated on in the previous chapter. In the data I gathered, there are 97 different users who, at some point, have engaged in the discussions regarding rape on the forum and I ended up collecting 204 of their comments for my analysis. Some participants may have made only one or two comments, while there are some participants who are seen frequently engaging in and starting discussions. As mentioned earlier in the second chapter, the website does have moderators who approve of comments and topics, meaning someone approved of the comments mentioned in the analysis and did not find them harmful or breeching any of the rules and guidelines that the moderators might be operating by.

3.3.2 Textual analysis and Critical discourse analysis

After completing my observations, I used textual analysis in order to interpret and understand the comments and discussions within these forums. Textual analysis involves more than just analyzing text and in this context, text is not restricted to the form of written text. Instead, when using the term text, we refer to it as something we may make meaning of, or when we “produce an interpretation of something’s meaning” (McKee, 2011, p. 4). This could for instance be a film, a piece of clothing, a picture or an actual written text such as comments made online in the case of this particular thesis. Further, textual analysis is a data-gathering
method, which can be seen as a way for researchers to collect information about how people make sense of different issues. The method is especially useful for researchers within the fields of communication-, cultural- and media studies, but also often within sociology and philosophy (McKee, 2011). These are the reasons why I believe this method will be one of the best options for my thesis and especially when paired with ethnographic observations of the discussion forum.

Further, I will also be using textual analysis in order to interpret and understand the comments and discussions consisting of possible antifeminist attitudes, opinions and discourses in regard to rape that I have collected from my observations of online forum. Ramazanoğlu and Holland (2002) argue that with methods such as textual analysis, it is important to define certain key concepts in order to clearly specify and, as a researcher, know which research objects and data one collects will be most suitable and relevant for the intended project. Related to this a researcher should be aware that one might self-consciously search for events to be written down for research purposes and may therefore position oneself within these unfolding events in order to observe and write (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011). However, one should be able to do research without the interference of one’s own biases and without the intention of strengthening only the argument that, in the researcher’s opinion, is the most politically correct one or correct in terms of personal opinion. It is actually important to be curious of our own biases and how they affect our way of viewing the world around us and I perceive researching this topic as a potential way of challenging my own biases and myself as a person and as a researcher.

I perceive it as important to this research that I utilize qualitative research methods, and that I do use them in forums where self-proclaimed antifeminists themselves express their own views and opinions also in a way which leaves as little room for personal interpretation, based on assumptions and personal opinions, as possible. First, because of my own position as a woman and being inspired by feminist research, which might put me in an underdog state if the research subjects turn out to be mostly male. Also because of my own research and education background, which is also heavily influenced by gender research. Furthermore, this makes me an outsider in relation to the online culture and the group of people I am studying, but the influence of feminist research also provides an interdisciplinary approach to my own research, which gives me a variety of different research tools when analyzing the material (Hesse-Biber and Yaiser, 2004). However, I am aware that it may also be a challenge when it
comes to objectivity since on a personal level I see myself as likely to disagree with the culture I am studying as well as running the risk of feeling personally attacked. Therefore, even when analyzing text, I will have to make sure to have established an awareness of my own subjectivity in order to stay as objective as possible while observing and analyzing these discussions.

Further, textual analysis will also be intertwined with critical discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is used in order to detect and analyze patterns that may form when people use language to discuss different domains of their life, for instance medical discourse in the medical field and at a hospital (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). When adding the word “critical” to discourse analysis, this becomes a method that is used to investigate how societal power relations are established and reinforced through the use of language and how one may use language as a form of social practice. This allows me to look at the data material with a critical eye while analyzing how the participants in the discussion forum attempt to establish societal power through the use of language and text (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). The objectives of this method are highly relevant to the cultural space and the members I will observe, especially seen in relation to my elaborations in the previous chapter on the antifeminist movements and their aims. I will also partly relate this to social constructivism and how the participants’ interactions might affect the constructions of their own reality.

Finally, as part of the textual analysis and critical discourse analysis I will also be looking at some of the linguistic features of the texts and the language used in the comments throughout the next chapter. A person has the ability to convey information about ones feelings, thoughts and how one experience and view the world using words, whether they are spoken or written, in person or online (Lyons, Aksayli and Brewer, 2018). A linguistic analysis is said to consist of three parts. Firstly, the analysis of language features which I will be using to analyze the shape of the texts, such as the grammar and the expressions, metaphors and abbreviations the participants chose to use in their comments. Second, is the meaning of language, which I will utilize in order to understand how the participants’ language constructs a relation between independent existence and other aspects of the world. The last part is language context, which will help me understand how the production of meaning in the chosen research space influences the forum’s situational context (Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet, 2000).
3.4 Ethical considerations

A researcher needs to reflect critically on the consequences of his or her presence in a research space or in a research process (Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002). When conducting research there are a number of ethical considerations one might acknowledge and be aware of. As stated earlier, one of the methods I have used is ethnographic observation of an antifeminist online forum. However, using this method raises several questions in regard to ethical considerations. Firstly, as mentioned earlier I have not been utilizing participatory observations and therefore I decided not to announce my presence when I entered the discussion forum. Neither have I asked any of the participants engaging in discussions within the particular forum for consent when it comes to observing them or collecting their comments as data. This is a conscious decision I made on the bases of several factors.

Firstly, most of the discussions I have been observing are archived, meaning that they are no longer active, and participants no longer engage in discussions on these specific threads. Secondly, by announcing my presence in an active discussion thread, I would risk disrupting the discussion and some participants might have fallen silent or end up leaving the discussion altogether. This could have critically affected the atmosphere of the discussion and the cultural space and therefore also my data material and my research. Further, I would also risk setting myself up as a target of abuse from the participants and turning the discussion in a completely different direction, leading the discourse astray since my presence in the forum might have been perceived as disrupting and threatening the antifeminists safe space (Lin, 2017). This could have happened, as I have mentioned earlier in this chapter, because of my own position as a researcher from a gender studies background and feminist influence, but also as a female and the analysis in the next chapter will likely prove why I have considered this. Therefore, the decision of not disclosing my presence or asking for consent is also based upon my own personal safety. However, this also means that this background might influence my perceptions and I might be perceived as biased by the participants in the online forum, but also by the readers of this thesis as discussed earlier. So, I will make sure that I present the data truthfully and further attempt to adapt a language fitting to the post-structural approach I will be taking.

Another ethical consideration, which is to be taken seriously, is regarding the question of anonymity and the individuals’ right to privacy. As for the participants in the discussion
they are already mostly anonymous as the only identifier I, as the researcher have, is their chosen username since I chose an online discussion forum as my research space. This means I do not know any identifying information about the participants, unless they specifically state facts about themselves in their comments. However, the participants’ usernames will be kept confidential since they are potentially linked to their personal email addresses. Therefore, the full usernames will be kept on a separate computer from the rest of the data where usernames have been replaced with mostly two or three letters. Because of these ethical questions, I will be using The National Ethical Research Committee’s (NESH) guidelines on how to ethically conduct research on the Internet to ensure that I conduct my research in an ethical way. The guidelines state that the researcher may use publicly posted material without consent from individuals, therefore my intent was to find and observe a public forum with no membership requirements in order to read and observe discussions. On the other hand, the guidelines also state that the researcher must make a judgment on how to best protect research subjects’ right to privacy and their anonymity, which becomes especially important, because as I already mentioned, I will not be asking individuals within the discussion forums for their consent. Along with keeping the usernames anonymous, I have also made the decision to anonymize the forum I am observing. In this way, the comments cannot be traced back to the original place of publication and therefore the full usernames of the participants should not be disclosed.

3.5 Limitations

For this thesis I will only examine the discussions regarding rape in one particular antifeminist forum. Therefore, this research and its findings may only be seen as representative for this particular forum alone, and not for the entirety of the antifeminist movements or all of the different antifeminist discussion forums one might find on the Internet. This is due to the fact that other forums might have different members than the forum seen in this research and different people might have different opinions. However, relating back to some of the studies I elaborated on in the previous chapter and pointing further at my own research in the upcoming chapter, one might argue that these attitudes, ideas and opinions, and also the language used when talking about women and minorities, might be seen as a symptom of the growth of the antifeminist movement online. Especially due to the fact that there are hundreds of similar blogs, forums, websites and even YouTube channels and as mentioned earlier, I ventured onto a few others of these. Similar to my chosen
forum, they also fall under the Manosphere phenomenon and on some of these forums I found data material that are more extreme than the examples found in the data material I collected from the forum I chose to observe.
4. Analysis

4.1 Chapter introduction

To start off my analysis I will first begin with explaining how I have utilized the various categories that I found emerged while I conducted my ethnographic observations and my interpretation of them. Further, I will also include an example from my data material along with each category in order to broaden the reader’s understanding of the definitions I will be using of these categories, which will also be critical for the understanding of the analysis. While I was collecting data and further started close reading, I noticed a pattern where the comments I read could be placed into these particular categories:

(1) Malevolence: when a person wishes harm to others. E.g. “I dont give a shit about you Ladies. I hope you fucking die. I hope a Muslime sand-neggar rapes your holes”.

(2) Impaired credibility: women are perceived as overall liars who should not be believed and false rape allegations are the norm. “It is far more likely they will lie about rape than experience it. In fact, it is far more likely they will lie about virtually anything than experiencing it”.

(3) Victim blaming: women are raped or harassed because of their actions, or on the contrary, their actions imply that what they experienced could not have been rape. E.g. “Horseshit. She was drunk, and hanging out with “rich” swarthy Arabs. Her dumb ass choices led to her assault”.

(4) Mocking victims and advocates for women’s issues regarding rape and sexual assault. E.g. “She’s clearly a liar, no man would ever sexually harass that”.

(5) Justification of rape: attempts to use arguments or theories from different disciplines in order to justify rape and sexual assault. E.g. “Rape ensured our survival of the Neolithic”.

(6) Male feminists are gender traitors. E.g. “Ohhh by the way, he is a raging male feminist. Hope he gets nailed by the law, send to prison and chad inject some DNA on him, rectal way. Fucking cuck”.

By utilizing these categories I will, as mentioned earlier, attempt to map out patterns and understand how antifeminists discuss issues of rape in an online discussion forum and also in
what context the word is being used. I chose this research space because I wanted to examine the real and unfiltered opinions of an antifeminist cultural space and with the anonymity that the Internet has the ability to provide, this was the place where I thought I would be able to find this. Further, with my background in linguistics, I also sought the opportunity to partly conduct a linguistic analysis by investigating linguistic elements possibly used by the participants within this cultural space. Later in this chapter, I will also address a few other interesting findings that did not necessarily fall under these specific categories mentioned in the list above, but which I still found significant enough to be mentioned as part of the analysis. As a disclaimer, because I will be using direct quotations from the participants in the forum, all linguistic mistakes made in the excerpts presented in this analysis are made by the participants themselves and I will not be correcting any misspellings due to the fact that it may prove to have significance to the analysis itself. Only in the cases where there is use of names and personal information posted in the comments will I alter the comments by making sure I anonymize this information.

Next, I also thought it would be beneficial for parts of the analysis to elaborate on some legislations regarding freedom of expression in the countries with the most traffic generated to the forum I have observed. As mentioned earlier, most of the visitors are based in the United States, and some of the participants can be seen referencing the First Amendment, which is why I found it important to have an understanding of what the legislation in some of the countries, with most visitors on the chosen website, actually state. The United States’ First Amendment protects the individual’s freedom of speech and there are no exceptions in the constitution that prohibits hate speech unless a statement can be considered incitement to violence with clear and in-depth and visual description of a violent act (Weissblum, 2000). Also, the European Union’s (EU) Code of Conduct is working on fighting illegal hate speech online, which they also define as incitement to violence and hatred directed at groups or individuals based on their ethnicity, skin color, race and religion (Jaki et al., 2018).

However, reading the EU’s Code of Conduct regarding countering hate speech online it becomes clear that it does not seem to include incitement to violence or hatred directed at individuals of groups consisting of a certain gender or sex. The Canadian Criminal Code discusses the boundaries between freedom of expression and hate speech. It states that any public statement that incite hatred or violence against an identifiable group that may be distinguished by age, ethnicity, race, skin color, religion, gender or sex, sexual orientation or
mental and physical disabilities is considered punishable by law. Brazil added a new bill in 2006. They already had established a law punishing discrimination against ethnicity, race, religion, skin color and national origin, however this newly approved bill was set to also include punishing of discrimination based on an individual’s sexual orientation and gender identity (Guimarães, 2018). So, the laws that are in place in these different countries do differ from another and there does not seem to be a unity or agreement on the laws that concern freedom of expression. Further, with the Internet and the globalization it brings, there are no international legislations in place (Land, 2013). However, as I mentioned in the second chapter of this thesis, the lack of global legislation and possibility of legal action due to the transnational nature of the Internet should not steer the discourse astray from the cultural and societal issues with discrimination online (Benet-Weiser and Miltner, 2016).

4.2 Wishful thinking

Starting off the analysis with the first category, I found that many of the participants in the discussion forum often express malevolence, a feeling of contempt and hate towards women, or certain women, to the extent that they would wish them harm. According to Banet-Weiser and Miltner (2016), we are currently experiencing an era of gender wars, which is recognized by the violence directed against women in online spaces, but that these forms of violence is not only about gender, but also race. The most common feature of my findings was that the participants often wished for women, some specifically mentioned Western women, to be raped in varied degrees. I found that these comments appeared most often in discussions where the topic sparked anger amongst the participants, for instance in discussions regarding a female perpetrator and young male victim or in discussions where it became clear that a female feminist had made an unpopular statement in the traditional media or on social media, which some or the majority of the participants did not agree with.

One specific statement, which I found some of the participants discussing, was that a female feminist had expressed on Twitter that in her opinion, “men are not entitled to sex”. This statement did not seem to sit well with the participants and most of the comments that will be presented in section 4.6 of this chapter were posted in regard to this statement. Another, common feature of the malevolent comments was also wishing death upon women. Further, I also found that there seem to be a pattern, where the participants usually express malevolence
and violent acts not to be performed at their own hands, but at the hands of someone else, which will be demonstrated in the examples below.

Lpb: “I dont give a shit about you Ladies. I hope you fucking die. I hope a Muslime sand neggar rapes your holes. [...]”

Lpb: “I think all Muslimes should infect themselves with HIV and rape as many western women as they can. [...]”

Ca: “Fuck women and children. Let them burn, let them drown, weak die, strong live. Rape away sand people, rape away, women, children’s, im none of those, IS NOT MY PROBLEM.”

Online misogyny is often characterized by the explicitly sexual rhetoric and often prescribes coerced sexual acts and MRA’s have often been perceived as angry with women and the feminist movement and they can be seen applauding and encouraging various acts of violence against women and children, even including murder (Jane, 2014; Kimmel, 2013). As mentioned earlier and as illustrated in the comments above, the common wishes are for women to be raped and killed, with the participants expressing that they would not care, and it is not their problem because they are not women, which means we can expect the participants to be male. Lpb even states that in his opinion, all Muslims should infect themselves with the fatal virus, if untreated, and further rape Western women and therefore pass the virus onto them.

The third comment, from Ca, stands out from the others. This participant also mentions children and does not care if either women OR children are raped, because he does not fit in those categories. In other discussions I have observed, there have been arguments made in order to defend children and that they need to be protected from mass immigration and refugees. Therefore, some of the participants might possibly disagree in regard to children’s right to be protected. Further, all of the statements made in the comments above are also racially motivated. Both of the participants make racist remarks when they mention Muslims and I will discuss this more in detail later in this section.
Ro: “I didn’t post this because of the woman who got raped. I DON’T GIVE A SHIT ABOUT HER. I posted this because of the mass immigration that’s threatening London. MEN, AND KIDS ARE AFFECTED BY THIS.”

Above, we see another participant arguing that he does not care about a certain woman who was apparently raped, but his concern is rather directed towards that in his opinion, men and kids in London are currently threatened by mass immigration. The argument the participant is utilizing in this comment here, resonates with parts of my discussion in the second chapter of this thesis of how antifeminists tend to argue that immigration of non-Western citizens to the countries in the world that are considered Western nations, threatens the future of the Western culture and society, but also white masculinity (Erel, 2018; Ferber, 2000).

Ro: "If 50 Muslim migrants gang rape that cunt and she dies of untreatable syphilis, I might not give a fuck I might even eat popcorn.”

This comment is of similar character as the ones we discussed previously. Here the participant wishes for a certain female feminist scholar to be raped by a large number of Muslims, to contract a sexually transmitted disease and, as a consequence, die. What we see in several of the malevolent comment regarding rape is that the participants often specifically mention ‘gang rape’, rape by a large number of people. This raises the question of why they seem so obsessed with people they disagree with or, as shown throughout this chapter, despise being gang raped as if being raped by one singular person is not enough for some of the participants in the forum. One might argue that this may be explained by the fact that the participants might believe that being raped by multiple people at the same time is perceived as more degrading, embarrassing, humiliating or shameful to the victim than being raped by one singular person. If the participants in the forum wish to cause the victims these feelings, specifying the malevolence with ‘gang rape’ might be a way of doing so.

El: “At the opposite sexual assaults by migrants are irrelevant and they can be even a GOOD thing in my opinion: they show to local women what real rape is. Without migrants actually raping women our society would be closer to “heterosexual intercourse is always rape” due rampant feminism.”
Above, we can see the participant “El” arguing that immigrants can show local women (presumably meaning Western women) what he regards as real rape. This suggests that the participant believes that white, Western men are not capable of rape and that women who accuse white men of rape have not experienced what they think is rape, or that they are in fact lying. The participant further shares a concern that in his opinion, feminism has contributed to making all heterosexual intercourse rape, meaning that if men engage in sexual intercourse with a woman he runs the risk of being accused of rape. And again, similarly to many of the other comments mentioned in this section, this comment also has a racist tone to it due to the participant portraying immigrants as the villain of contemporary society.

In my data spreadsheet I included a column where I would type other discriminatory features than sexism, such as ageism, homophobia and racism that I thought would potentially occur in my data material. In several of the malevolent comments, the participants also seem to use a racist tone by often specifically wishing harm to women at the hands of immigrants, refugees and Muslims. As we can see, all of the excerpts mentioned earlier illustrate how the participants often specifically mention Muslims, people of color and immigrants, or “sand people”, as they continuously refer to them, which is a reference to people of Muslim descent. In my opinion, the comments illustrate not only a clear sexist tone, but are also a combination of a prominent racist aspect along with the malevolent one and this further gives several of the comments and discussions an intersectional dimension. The participants also kept continuously and deliberately misspelling the word “Muslims” and this might be done as an attempt to further degrade people who do identify as Muslim, and I will discuss this more in depth later in this chapter.

These findings may be connected to arguments promoted by the ideology of right-wing populism, where discourses include addressing the ‘native women’ as victims and the ‘non-native Other men’ as perpetrators and promotion of gendered anti-Muslim racism and everyday sexism in the public sphere (Vieten, 2016; Erel, 2018). The findings presented in this section regarding race also correlates to some of the arguments mentioned in the literature review. First, in regard to how people that resonate with the far-right movements, often perceive immigration as a threat to the future of the Western cultures and societies (Erel, 2018). Secondly, the findings in this section is also cohesive with Ging’s (2017) argument, which I also mentioned in chapter two of this thesis, stating that the intersectional aspects of these comments and also in the video she stated was posted on Twitter, denies that rape
culture even exists in Western cultures and societies due to the fact that the participants imply that only Muslims and immigrants are capable of being rapists.

Researchers have found that when men feel that their masculinity and the masculine norms in society are threatened, one might see the emergence of compensatory behavior, for instance increased aggression, harassment of women and avoidance of behavior considered feminine such as housework, while adopting more masculine behaviors in order to reclaim their masculinity (Kosakowska-Berezecka et al., 2016). These malevolent comments may be interpreted as an example of this. Further, they might also be perceived as incitements to violence against women and also some men, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Though it seems that advocacy of violence does in fact receive protection, at least from the United States’ First Amendment. The American legislation I presented in the beginning of this chapter clearly states that an individual’s right to freedom of speech is protected by the constitution unless a statement can be considered incitement to violence with a clear and in-depth description of a specific violent act against a person or a group of people (Weissblum, 2000).

I did find a few participants while collecting my data who did in fact invoke their right to freedom of expression, like in the example below, and often through the First Amendment. However, I personally find several of the comments throughout this analysis to be certainly descriptive. Therefore, I would argue that some of the statements made by the participants should not be perceived as protected by the legislations regarding freedom of speech as I have elaborated on earlier due to the fact that they paint clear pictures of several violent acts. The fact that the participants in the forum are found invoking their right to freedom of speech corresponds with Ging’s (2017) findings stating that freedom of expression is a concept that is perceived as an important concept to the antifeminist movement.

Gt: “No, I will speak anywhere I want. I don’t give a fuck who gets offended. I have freedom of speech. I’m not afraid of women, nor their evil ways. I’m not going to tuck my tail, and remain silent around these bitches.

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16 I mainly discuss the American constitution due to the fact that the website of the forum is American-based and a large portion of the participants can be found based in the United States of America.
I’m a man, and I will act like one. Whether they like it, or not.”

Above we see an example where one of the participants discloses that people who are being offended by his words will not silence him. He argues that because he is, both according to the participant himself and the legislations in several counties depending on where the participant resides, protected by freedom of expression. In my interpretation of the last sentence of this comment, the participant also seems to connect his willingness to speak his mind to his masculinity. By stating that “I am a man, and I will act like one”, the participant illustrates that he has his own perception of what it means to be a man and he be basing this statement on the existing cultural stereotypes regarding masculinity and he will conform to the cultural and social norms of masculinity, which is in this case includes to express your opinion and not let anyone attempt to silence you.

Re7: “Even hate speech is protected by the first amendment. That’s something the liberals seem to of forgotten when they try to silence speech they don’t agree with.”

Here is a participant who actually specifically argues that hate speech is protected by United States First Amendment, though he does not clarify that descriptive acts of violence are not legal. The fact that participants in this forum seem to have knowledge regarding the legislations that comprises hate speech and with how these laws in the United States require specific details of a violent act against a person based on their demographics, normalizes the use of such language online and that no legal action can be taken. Further, statements like this might suggest to other participants or outsiders venturing into this forum that hate speech is acceptable online.

Ih: “Fuck western women. They are useless, non-human, and not worth saving. Let the Chads rape and beat and kill them. Maybe at the end of their life — they will understand.”

In the comment above, the participant refers to Western women as “non-human”. This can be understood as an attempt to dehumanizing women that come from the western part of the world. Dehumanizing means to depict a person as non-human objects or animals, and women are in fact frequently subjected to this (Tipler and Ruscher, 2019). Further, we also
see the participant using the word ‘chad’\textsuperscript{17}, which has been used to describe a stereotypical young white alpha male. According to Jaki et al. (2018), the term has been appropriated by the forums that are connected to the Manosphere and is in this space associated with white, sexually active alpha-males, and by alpha males meaning men who are perceived as physically attractive, both physically and mentally. This means that the participant wishes for women to be raped by stereotypically white, hyper-masculine\textsuperscript{18} men, which is different from the previous comments that we have covered thus far, yet it is similar in the way that the violent acts are still at the hands of others since, as we covered in the second chapter, the men who are participants in the Manosphere forums are often considered and consider themselves beta males.

Further, what we see in this section is that within the particular forum and cultural space, there has been established a clear rape culture. In the second chapter of this thesis, I used a definition of this concept, which stated that it is defined by established beliefs that encourage sexual aggression amongst men and further supports violence against women. This whole section above is dedicated to present the violent and malevolent language used towards women in this forum and how several of the participants even seem to urge others to perform violent acts against women. Even though the forum most likely does not consist of female members or visitors, due to the nature of the website and the forum and with the clear rule that states “for men only”, the participants themselves use language that does in fact support and maintain a rape culture within the forum itself. This contradicts the antifeminist argument that rape culture is a myth, and the arguments found in this forum that rape culture is only established in other societies than the Western society.

4.3 Impaired credibility

Next, the participants often discussed current news and a common theme in the discussions I observed was rape allegations that were made by women decades after the alleged assault. These discussions became especially prominent at the beginning of and following the #MeToo-movements in October 2017. The participants seemed to paint an overall picture of women as liars, especially when discussing high profile cases of rape allegations such as the Brett Kavanaugh versus Catherine Ford case, which was a high profile case in September of

\textsuperscript{17} https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=What%20a%20Chad
\textsuperscript{18} Exaggerated of male stereotypical behavior; aggression, sexuality and strength (Mosher and Anderson, 1986)
2018. However, the participants also engaged in discussions about rape allegations just in general, and some participants even argued that women lie about everything. This may be understood as a way of impairing women’s overall credibility and especially the credibility of the particular women they happen to discuss in the forum and who have made allegations against high profile men in various professions. Despite the fact that researchers have found that false rape allegations account only for approximately five percent of allegations (Heenan and Murray, 2006; Kelly et al., 2005; Lisak, et al., 2010), the participants in the forum continuously agree among themselves that this is not the case and false rape allegations actually account for majority of allegations regarding rape and sexual assault that are made by women.

One might argue that this creates some sort of group identity and mentality building upon their shared opinions and ideas, by frequently make conclusions that might even be opposite to what research have proven, such as false rape allegations being the norm when female accusers make such allegations. Further, the participants have even made their own slogans such as ‘BelieveAllMen’, referring to both everyday men, but also to high profile men that have experienced being accused of rape or sexual harassment by women. This particular slogan is in fact also an antifeminist intertextual play on the BelieveAllWomen slogan from the MeToo rallies. This also resonates with other observations made while I was studying the forum, where another common discussion topic was in regard to young boys being sexually abused by adult females, and especially by female teachers. In these specific cases, the participants had decided to completely disregard their other statements made in other discussions, which will be illustrated further in this section, such as the statements saying that rape is not a real issue. Shown below, is an excerpt from a thread of discussion from the forum regarding a female perpetrator and a young male victim:


Wp: “They are calling it ‘sexual misconduct’. If we reversed the genders, this would be RAPE. She waited outside his home in her car. She encouraged him to sneak out of the house and get in her car. That is KIDNAPPING and RAPE.”
Psf: “When the raw numbers are tallied it will be seen that women are the real abusers of children as such statistics have always shown.”

Sam: “Society needs to wake up about women abusers they are more prolific than male abusers and get far less punishment and far more breaks from the gynocentric system than men. Women are just as abusive, its just that their victims do not normally include strong healthy men, because that is the only demographic that can really do damage back to them worse than they can dish out. But women abuse every other group they can, other women, the elderly, children, and weaker disabled peoples. Any group they on average can be dominant over, they abuse. They are no better than men in this regard and are often worse because they can play victim or have womens groups or even gynosociety itself work on their behalf to rationalize away the same behaviors that get men locked up for lifetimes.

Some of the participants posted several news articles about such cases and all of a sudden, the participants disregard how they discussed female victims and in fact recognize that rape is a real issue, when the victim is male, and they very clearly state that these female teachers should be punished. The difference in these cases compared to the examples that will follow is that the case above has female perpetrator and a male victim, in contrast to the other discussions I will elaborate on after. In the examples below, one will notice that there is a shift in the participants discourses once the discussions are regarding female victims and male (alleged) perpetrators. Further, as it will become apparent later in this section, this excerpt illustrates a double standard in these different discussions and this gives me the impression that the participants in the forum are attempting to discredit and depict women as villains in narratives of rape allegations. This is either in cases where women are victims or perpetrators and it seems that they focus more on this than they actually strive for justice in these cases.

Sam, one of the participants above, also uses a couple of words that especially stand out. Firstly, the participant uses the expression “gynocentric”, which refers to a dominant focus on the female, but specifically feminist, point of view (Wright, 2014). The second expression is “gynosociety”, which is not an actual word with any meaning, you may find in a dictionary. However, if we look at it in relation to the word “gynocentric” which was used in the same comment and in this context, we may be able to make an interpretation that the
participant is in fact attempting to argue that we currently live in a society that tend to favor female and feminist concerns and points of views. This resonates with one of the arguments that were discussed in the literature review where previous research stated that the antifeminist movements see females as the dominant gender in contemporary society (Blais and Dupuis-Déri, 2012).

Wro: "She’s clearly a liar, no man would ever sexually harass that."

In the comment above, along with calling a particular woman they are discussing a liar in order to discredit her, we also see another example of a participant dehumanizing her in the same sentence. By referring to a woman as “that”, the participants continuously objectify the women they are discussing and sharing pictures of and they also degender her by stripping her of a pronoun or neuter her, which is a neutral grammatical gender equal to masculine and feminine used in division of noun classes. Dehumanizing and degendering women in this way may be seen as an attempt to further degrade them in these discussions, possibly for the male participants to feel that they are more in power over the women they discuss.

Mp: “It is far more likely they will lie about rape than experience it. In fact, it is far more likely they will lie about virtually anything than experiencing it. Except cheating of course.”

Wp: “Cunt whores making up false rape allegations again. Nothing extraordinary about that.”

Here we see two examples where one of the participants depict women as liars in practically any situation. This is yet another participant questioning women’s overall credibility and demeaning women by arguing that they are not at all trustworthy regardless of any situation or factors. The other participant makes a comment arguing that false rape allegations are a phenomenon that occurs often, which I argued earlier that supporters of the antifeminist movements will dispute even if research have found and presented evidence that contradicts these statements made by the participants here (Heenan and Murray, 2006; Kelly et al., 2005; Lisak, et al., 2010).
Lpb: “‘Dr. Ford’ is a MASSIVE SLUT, she has probably been gang raped voluntarily dozens of times.”

Online misogynists most often tend to target women who are visible in the public sphere and mainstream media (Jane, 2014). As shown above, this participant states that Dr. Ford\(^1\), whom I discussed briefly earlier, presumably has had a large number of sexual partners. This may be seen as another attempt to impair her credibility when it comes to the rape allegations she made, by not only calling her a liar, but also due to the fact that the participant believes that Ford is sexually active with several different partners. This means that the common belief in the forum seems to be that women who have had a larger number of different sexual partners than average are and should be less likely to be believed when making sexual harassment claims or accuse someone of rape. The social and cultural construct of femininity is also linked to being sexually passive, therefore women who are sexually active and especially with a number of several different partners may be considered un-feminine (Murnen, 2000). The participants also make an assumption that Ford has voluntarily been “gang raped” several times, which is contradictory in itself because rape is never voluntary.

Wro: “When I hear the words “accused of rape”, what I actually hear is “some lying ho is falsely accusing an innocent man and she should be in a mental asylum. The sooner every man starts thinking that whenever they hear the words “accused of rape” the better. All men must be believed.””

This example illustrates the perception within the forum that all accusations are false, and men should always be deemed innocent, because in their opinion women are always lying in these cases regardless. The participant above also states that women who accuse a man of rape belong in a mental asylum and this exhibits an attempt to degrade women and impairing their credibility by questioning their mental health. This is not a new phenomenon since women’s mental health has continuously been questioned throughout history. The patriarchal society has since the beginning of the industrialized societies attempted to keep women out of workplaces in the public sphere. Instead societies have been domesticating women by

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mobilizing ideas that suggest women were more likely to suffer from mental illnesses such as hysteria and were therefore unreliable and incapable of physical labor (Bondi and Burman, 2001). I find that this is partly an argument that we see from the participant above, where Wro claims that women who accuse a man of rape are to be considered unreliable due to the state of their mental health and this should yet again, as mentioned earlier, be perceived as another attempt at impairing women’s credibility.

Bo: “Nothing is ever women’s fault. They are children. They should be deemed below the age of legal responsibility and given adult guardians. That is really the only logical conclusion.

El: “Women have never been full adults, it always had been “women and children” – and notice that women come first, meaning that they have to be protected MORE than children.”

Referring to women regardless of their age as “girls” have become increasingly normal in everyday speech and this is a phenomenon known as infantilizing (Kleinman, Ezzell and Frost, 2009). As seen in both of the comments above, the two participants both make statements where they deem all women as children and this should also be perceived as an example of infantilizing. Further, when Bo also argues that women should be given “adult guardians”, what the participant really means is that women should be given male guardians, due to the fact that he just argued that women are not to be considered adults. Male guardianship has actually been, or even still is, a historical reality in most societies. Also in many Western societies, fathers used to be women’s guardians until they married, and then their new husband would take over the guardianship. This meant that women’s freedom was restricted, they did not have the individual right to exercise citizenship and male guardianship has in later years been deemed as oppression of and a way of establishing dominance over women on an institutional level (Vogel, 1988).

4.4 Blaming the victim

While I conducted my ethnographic observations, I found several instances of the participants shifting the blame for experiencing being raped or sexually harassed onto the women they
were talking about and whom they simultaneously called liars. Victim blaming is a well-established phenomenon in our society with individuals passing their judgments on victims of rape, despite the fact that they are indeed ‘victims’ (Grubb and Turner, 2012). With attitudes stating, in different manners, that the victims are in some ways responsible if they were raped, sexually assaulted or harassed, these tactics are perceived as examples of victim blaming. Shifting the blame onto the victims in the cases of these discussions can also be seen as an attempt to, again, impair the women’s credibility by claiming that the assaults occurred as a response to the women’s actions ahead of or in the moment.

Hm: “The bitches that don’t put out as a form of control are the ones more likely to cause rape.

Revenge of the post-wall woman.”

In this comment, the participant states that women who do not provide men with sex, or ‘put out’ as the participant describes it, whenever men want it as a way of staying in control in a relationship, are the ones who are most likely to cause men to rape. The participant therefore suggests that if women happen to choose not to consent to sex, men will take it anyway. Arguments like this do not only blame women for saying “no”, but in my opinion it also discredits men and their ability to respect and accept sexual rejection. The participant also states that men not accepting rejection should be perceived as revenge against older women and the participant uses the term ‘post-wall woman’ referring to women who are no longer considered attractive due to their age. This participant or the following discussion gives no explanation as to why rape is to be considered revenge towards a certain group of women, other than that it seems some of the participants hold resentment towards women who were active in the second wave of the feminist movement due to its achievements for women’s rights. Another theory could be related to Simone de Beauvoir’s argument that children, according to her and her own experiences, grew up to resent their mother due to them being the present, overbearing and dominant parent within the house (de Beauvoir, 2010 [1949]; Patterson, 1986). The participants who do seem to resent women of an older age may therefore relate these women to a mother figure and if de Beauvoir’s theory is correct it may be applied to these participants and this resentment they seem to feel towards women of a certain age.

20 When a woman reaches a certain age where she is, according to this forum, no longer considered attractive. Usually after menopause occurs, https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Post%20Wall%20Woman
Bo: “The problem is that she has the right to call stop at any time for any reason she pleases even when he is bitch deep in her.”

Here Bo argues that the fact that a woman, or any person for that matter, has the right to say no or stop an ongoing sexual encounter or intercourse at any point of time and for any reason that she would like, should be classified as a problem. Particularly, it seems, when speaking of the legal system and legislations regarding rape, and the fact that the person at first agreed to sex, but can at any time decide to revoke their consent. Further, if you decide not to listen when the other part wants to stop it will be classified as rape instead of sex and according to the participant this is an issue. As discussed earlier, the confusion about consent may cause fear and have been one of the issues that have made many young men proponents for the antifeminist movement (Gotell and Dutton, 2016).

Rk: “Turns out that the accuser was the biggest slut in school
What a role model, what a victim LOL”

Here we see a similar example to the case of Dr. Ford from earlier in this chapter, where a participant assumes that the woman in question has had a large number of sexual partners, hence the use of the word “slut”, which I will discuss in the last section of this chapter. The participant further argues that this makes her a bad role model and proceeds to mock her, according to my interpretation, by arguing that since the woman used to be a “slut” while she was still a student, she cannot be a victim now, regardless of what has happened to her. Further, with the participant’s use of the word “LOL” at the end of the comment I get the sense that he is emphasizing the ridiculing and mocking of the woman.

Td: “Most promiscuous women are ‘raped’ a few times in their lifetimes.”

Td: “Rape for sluts is to comfort their tortuous souls for letting the dicks ride free for a decade or two more than anticipated.”

Similar to the example mentioned earlier, the two participants in the comments above, Td and Rk, also seem to agree on the assumption that women who have had a larger number of sexual partners have less credibility if they accuse someone of rape. This also relates to the previous section of credibility. Further, it also means that they claim that women they perceive as “sluts” may only blame themselves if they ever experience being raped by someone. If women act a certain way, or in this statement “promiscuous”, they should expect to be raped a couple of times in their lives. One may relate this argument made by the two participants to Sigmund Freud’s theory of the Madonna-whore complex. The original theory argues that some men suffer from psychical impotence when with a partner whom they respect (the Madonna), while women whom in ways have been degraded (the whore) causes sexual arousal (Hartmann, 2009). Reading through the comments that I collected as my data material, it seems as if the participants are holding a sort of grudge against women who do act more freely in terms of their sexuality. Some of the participants do tell stories in the comments about being married once, but talk mostly about having bad experiences with relationships, whether they were friendly or intimate, with women. Being cautious in making assumptions about the participants, these stories of bad experiences may be the cause to the resentment many seem to express in the forum. It may also relate to the Manosphere being associated with beta males, and the forum’s glossary describes beta males as men that women have to settle with if their plan of marrying an alpha male fails. A few of the participants on a couple of occasions did actually refer to themselves as betas and this might imply that they have experienced the feeling of being women’s second or even third choice when it comes to sexual encounters or settling down.

Smw: “Horseshit. She was drunk, and hanging out with “rich” swarthy Arabs. Her dumb ass choices led to her assault.”

This participant argues that the woman in question is to blame for her own assault for two different reasons. First, she was apparently drunk when the assault occurred and according to Grubb and Turner (2012), victims of rape who were intoxicated at the time of the alleged assault are usually held more accountable and responsible as well as more often being blamed for their own rape. Further, research suggests that when alcohol is involved stereotypical judgments related to female sexuality often occur (Grubb and Turner, 2012). Second, the participant argues that the woman in question is to blame for being raped because she put herself in a situation with a certain group of people, in this case Arabs. It can be
argued that Arabs are amongst the groups of people the participants in the forum have throughout this chapter illustrated clear hatred towards and which the participants do depict as rapists. This means that we again see another racially motivated comment and an attempt to discredit and undermine certain people based on their background. This is also an attempt to undermine people based on gender by providing the same treatment of women who associate themselves with men from a certain cultural and racial background that is not considered to be white. One could argue that participant here illustrates certain resentment towards women, who decide to engage with men of color instead of white men and that this makes men of color appear superior to his white masculinity, which resonates with the feeling white antifeminist men have of loss of power to minorities (Ferber, 2000).

B: “[...] Well what if it happened at a party where she had her slut clothes and bunny ears on where people were hooking up left and right, they had both been drinking, and she just finished giving him a little lap dance and bouncing her naked titties in his face while grinding on his dick, and he stopped trying to escalate things when she said no or resisted. [...]”

The above comment I would argue overlaps with the justification category, however I choose to place it in the victim blaming category because the participant is clearly illustrating a story of a possible case of rape and blaming a woman’s choices for what might have happened to her. First, he blames the clothes that the woman could have been wearing by referring to them as “slut clothes”. Then he further proceeds to argue that they were both intoxicated before he blames the alleged rape on the woman’s actions towards the man such as giving him a lap dance and being naked on the top part of her body. These attitudes of victim blaming we have seen in this section so far also resonates the individualization of responsibility and how society urges women to be responsible for their own safety instead of recognizing the systemic issues society have when it comes to rape and sexual assault (Nicholas and Agius, 2018).

Gpi: “Usually women are horny too though. The whole idea of rape is rather delusional anyway, women want to be railed!”

Here Gpi implies that because women, like men, are also to be considered beings with sexual desires and further experience the feeling of being horny, rape of women is to be
considered a non-existing phenomenon and the whole idea of rape as an illegal act and especially as an issue in contemporary society should therefore be dismissed, when in fact violence against women and rape occur more often than expected, also in societies that are oriented about gender equality (Holter, 2005). Gpi also suggests that this idea stems from the fact that women want to be “railed”\(^\text{22}\), meaning to engage in rough sex, and that this alleged desire substantiate this theory. Here we see another example where women’s sexuality is used to discredit them and also as an excuse to blame them for being assaulted and these attitudes will, as mentioned earlier, be discussed more in-depth later in this chapter.

4.5 Mocking

Another mechanism the participants in the forum seemed to use in order to demean accusers and victims of rape, sexual assault or harassment, but also those who advocate for issues of rape and sexual harassment in contemporary society, was to attempt to ridicule them. I found that this often included making disparaging comments about women’s looks and ages, in a laughing manner by occasionally adding “HA!” or “LOL”, at the end of such a comment. They would also make derisive comments about the fact that women were protesting, such as during the MeToo rallies, and shaming them for attempting to mobilize and speak up about issues of rape. I further found that these comments most often were posted in discussions where the participants would share pictures of women in the comments, especially groups of women, and further proceed to make ridiculing comments specifically about how the women looked, and their bodies especially if the women did not conform into the beauty standards that are set in contemporary Western societies.

Wro: “It’s ridiculous that we even live in a society where a woman that ugly can claim to have been sexually harassed and not get laughed out of the room”.

Re7: “Believe me no one is harassing these women; they’re not rape or harassment material. No one is sexual anything with these ugly fat cunts!”

Hm: “What are they protesting for…..because they’re too gross to get harassed?”

\(^{22}\) https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Railed
Aym: How can a Guy get it up with that… thing???

Users of the Internet, particularly women, have in recent years increasingly received judgments on their looks and sexual appeal by other (male) users in the same space (Jane, 2014). In the comments presented above, we can clearly see several cases of lookism, which means to discriminate a person based on their appearance (Granleese and Sayer, 2006). In the discussion threads where these comments were posted, one participant had previously shared several images of women during the MeToo demonstrations and rallies. The participants in the forum made claims stating that the women in the pictures are too fat, gross or ugly to be harassed and should therefore not have to participate in these demonstrations. They therefore convey a perception that in order for a woman to legitimately claim that she has been harassed or raped she must, according to the participants, fit a certain culturally constructed beauty standard. If a woman does not fit within these standards her credibility in relation to an accusation of rape or sexual harassment, at least within this discussion forum diminishes. These comments within the forum regarding women’s looks could also be related to the fact that women are seen as their bodies and beauty, while men are perceived as a neutral and more universal person. A woman “is something”, while a man “has something”, which could be qualities such as intelligence, control and strength (Holter, 2005).

The participant Hm also suggests that the women in one of the particular pictures are actually protesting for wanting to be harassed, but that they do not fit the beauty standard for harassment and therefore will not experience such treatment and this further lead to her protesting. We can also see one of the participants asking how a man would be able to get an erection if one of the women they are discussing were present. Again, we see several case of dehumanizing, which has become a common pattern throughout my findings. Two of the participants are referring to women as “material” and “that thing” and these are two more examples of dehumanizing and therefore one might argue that the participants are in fact objectifying the women they are discussing.

Aym: “look at her, would you even try and tap that let alone break the law for it?”

This comment also belongs in the group above with the other cases of lookism, however I wanted to separate this comment and discuss one particular part because it

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23 Refers to a woman in a video posted in the discussion.
contradicts most of the perceptions and other arguments presented in this thesis. Here the participant actually states that rape\textsuperscript{24} is breaking the law, which is seemingly contradictory to the other discussion that we have encountered. The participant proceeds to ask the others in the forum if they would break the law in order to have sex with a woman that looks like the woman they are currently discussing. The participant made this statement as a response to others in the discussion and even though none of the other participants actually answer this question maybe due to the fact that it could have been rhetorical, this seems to be the opinion of the majority of the participants who engaged in discussions regarding women and their looks. However, the comment is similar to the others above due to the participant Aym’s use of the dehumanizing term “that” for the second time when referring to a woman.

The discussion happening here regarding women’s looks and how they seemingly do not fit the cultural beauty standards decided partly by society, but also the participants within this cultural space, may be associated with symbolic annihilation. Symbolic annihilation is described as the maintenance of social inequality in the media and the underrepresentation of certain groups of people based on race, religion, sex, sexual orientation et cetera. The term has been used in feminist theory to describe how the media actively promotes a certain set of bodily stereotypes for women and girls (Gerbner and Gross, 1976). Especially fair skin, straight hair, larger breasts and hips with a thin waist are some of the stereotypes the media frequently promotes in Western contemporary society. This happen to exclude a large number, maybe even the majority of women who do not possess these specific bodily characteristics and it also excludes black women from being represented in mainstream media (hooks, 2006).

Another interesting finding that became apparent when collecting and analyzing my data was that the participants in the forum who were discussing issues of rape did not seem to specifically mention black women at all. As one might notice while reading this analysis, there were a lot of discussions regarding Western women and immigrant, Muslim and black men. The participants only discuss Western women, where one might assume that they specifically mean white women due to the importance whiteness holds antifeminist movements, or women in general with no racial distinctions at all. Therefore, it seems that black women have been made invisible to the participants in these particular discussions I have observed. Black women actually have a history of being anonymous and invisible to

\textsuperscript{24} The participant uses the expression "tap", which means to have sex with, https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Tap
society and the community when living in Western societies and their work often goes unnoticed (Barnett, 1993). It is also important to note that the media also promotes bodily stereotypes for boys and men as well as women and girls, and even though this paragraph focuses on women, it should not be perceived as an attempt to erase men’s experiences of the same issue.

Discussion topic: “Men hit by impotence epidemic”

Wro: “Impotence unattractiveness epidemic”

[Posts a picture of women with bodies that are larger than considered the beauty standard in contemporary society]

7rm: “When that land whale in the bed is what you have to plow, then hell who would not claim to be impotent.”

Jag: “’Impotence’ having a strong correlation with the global obesity epidemic. The weatherstick cannot lie.”

In this discussion, the participants are discussing an article that argued male impotence is becoming an epidemic in modern society. Reading the comments above, this did not seem to sit well with the participants who decided to engage in this discussion and it seemed like this was perceived as an unpleasant discussion that touched a nerve. Most of the participants instantly found arguments that shifted the blame of men’s impotence onto women, instead of for instance health related arguments. As shown below, this spiraled into a discussion where some participants argued that women cannot claim to be raped because men cannot get an erection around them, due to women’s “unattractiveness”.

Phx: “Yet all women are constantly being raped and harassed by horny men at all times and that’s ‘not okay!’”. Pound me too!
Now we giving women the “unwanted attention” that was apparently making them “fear for their lives constantly”.

If a woman isn’t getting any sex, it’s because she’s so fucking ugly that she’s the 1/5 women that aren’t being raped every 5 seconds. So ugly that no man can get it up.”
Dr: “What good is getting a hard on when you could get locked up for saying hello? Sorry ladies, but you’ll just have to depend on rapefugees for that seat on the cuck carousel.”

Above we see the participants making arguments such as if a woman is not having sex, the reason is that she is too unattractive, so men will not even rape her or cannot get an erection while around her. The participant Dr also illustrates a certain concern of approaching a woman or making sexual advances due to the fear of being accused of rape and therefore potentially sent to prison. He then continues to argue that women should rather approach refugees, or rapefugees as he refers to them in this comment, if they are looking for someone to engage in sexual activities. Here we see another example of the participants giving the comments not only a sexist dimension, but also, they add a layer of racism too. Calling refugees “rapefugees” refers to the conception frequently found in antifeminist forums that white men are not capable of real rape and real rape is only committed by men of color as discussed in the literature review and earlier in this chapter (Ging, 2017).

Im5: “Damn seems safer to use date rape drugs at this point. LOLZ”

Another example I wanted to include of how the participants use mocking as a strategy in the forum is this comment by Im5 above. Reading through the discussion where this comment was posted, I do not really see how it makes sense in the context of the discussion and in relation to the comments that were posted before this one. Therefore, I will not be discussing the context or the discussion where this comment appeared. The participant states, in a mocking tone, that using date rape drugs seems safer than simply attempting to have sex with a woman due to the “high occurrence” of false rape allegation. Adding the “LOL” at the end of the comment, in my opinion confirms that this is meant to mock or as a joke, however, joking about drugging someone before engaging in sexual acts and therefore joking about rape and sexual assault should not be perceived as funny. This may also be perceived as part of a rape culture that may be detected within this forum, which links back to the literature review, where I established that rape jokes were also to be included according to the definition I used in order to explain this concept (Rentschler, 2014).
4.6 The natural right

For the next category I will be presenting, I found that several of the participants also seemed to consistently utilize different arguments in order to justify rape of women without practically any objections from the other participants in this particular forum. As I will illustrate below, the participants used a variety of different arguments in an attempt to make rape of women more justifiable and that seemed to challenge legal systems. Some of the most common arguments I found were that sex is men’s natural right even if it is forced and that rape was how the early humans procreated and is therefore the reason why we as a species exists on earth today. This means that the participants are using discourses from biology and psychology studies as an attempt to strengthen the arguments they utilized in these discussions. Most of these comments appeared in one of the discussions regarding the fact that a female feminist argued on social media that men are not entitled to sex, which apparently caused a commotion amongst the participants who engaged in this discussion.

Lpb: “Rape ensured our survival of the Neolithic. Celebrate, Thank Your Neighborhood Rapist Day. Thanks Rapists!”

Gpi: “Scientifically speaking, its women’s natural right, to be RAPED. We do you the courtesy of having sex in the modern age. Never forget that. We didn’t make it through Ice Ages, asking for consent, lighting candles and buying you sexy lingerie. Nope, RAPE was the norm for the last 6 million years! Its as natural as breathing!”

Gpi: “We’re animals on this planet. We survived because we fucked a bitch. We didn’t ask for her permission, if we had, we’d be fossils! You want to talk about ‘Natural Rights”? LOL RAPE is as natural as breathing. That is your natural right ladies, you’re alllucky we’re ‘civilized’ now. We care about women enough to have invented four play [forplay], Vaseline and Valentine’s Day. In reality, WOMEN have ZERO natural rights and we will fuck you whenever we want. Its nothing personal, its BIOLOGY you dumb cunts. You are second best, embrace it. Embrace the fact that MEN are dominant.”
Aym: “Have ya seen some of the women we gotta rape to propagate the species? Fukn yuk man! We close our eyes to kiss for a reason.”

Misuse of biological and psychological theories, are frequently seen utilized in discussions by rape apologists (Jones, 1999). It is true that biology studies do explore the history of rape in the animal kingdom, which also includes the human species, from a biological standpoint. Along with the field of psychology, they do so with focus on the evolution of behavior25, amongst other theories. These studies explore if and how certain behaviors might have manifested in the genes of humans, and other animal species within the animal kingdom, throughout the evolution of the different species. However, the intent of this theory of behavior evolution, as well as biology studies as a whole, should not be perceived as an attempt at justifying why rape occurs in contemporary society similarly to how the participants above have attempted to steer these discourses in order to further their agenda or to conform to their own personal opinions (Ging, 2017; Jones, 1999). This may also relate to the concept of social constructivism, which is a sociological learning theory that are based on the argument that an individual’s development is situated in social interactions and new knowledge is constructed through the interactions an individual has with others (McKinley, 2015). This means that when the participants in this forum interact and further share knowledge with each other, they might construct new knowledges based on the interactions within this cultural space.

These arguments used by the three participants above, also relates to theories within Social Darwinism, meaning that they are using Darwin’s theory of nature’s natural selection in order to prove their own superiority as men and in order to justify a particular view of human social conditions. In this case, the participants use the argument of the long evolved and adapted male sexual aggression in order to justify rape of women in society today and it seems that the participants are basing their claims of the theory of survival of the fittest (Sanday, 2015). This is an example of how discourses and research within for instance the field of biology and psychology are misused in order to develop and further spread misleading information like Jones (1999) argues that rape apologists often engage in. According to researchers, the spreading of false or misleading information online is a common occurrence and due to the nature of the Internet, being such an accessible and open global space as long

25 The theory arguing that behaviors may have a genetic basis, without saying that all behaviors are genetic due to for instance sociocultural influence (Jones, 1999).
as an individual possesses the tools needed, the information spreads rapidly (Jones, 1999; Vicario et al. 2015; Vosoughi, Roy and Aral 2018). There are different means to spread false or misleading information online. Firstly, we have the dismissal of scientific research, which we have seen examples of throughout this section. Secondly, there are conspiracy theories, which include information that is viewed as controversial by the general public and often with lack of supporting evidence. And in the last category, we have “trolls” who intentionally spread sarcastic and false information as an aim to mock people’s naivety when it comes to information found online (Vicario et al. 2015).

In these last comments presented above we also see that the linguistic dynamic has shifted from the discussions that I have mentioned earlier in this chapter and suddenly “we” are the ones who are performing the act of raping women and not the “other”. Previously in this chapter we could see that the participants would argue that the only men capable of “real rape” were immigrants and Muslims, but in this discussion some of the participants are arguing by using “we”. I believe this dynamic changed due to the nature of the discussion topic presented here, because it seems that in these discussions they are debating rape as an act for the greater good and continuance of the human species, and the act of rape seems to have turned into something heroic men do even though they do not find the women they “have to” rape attractive.

Im5: “I really don’t think RAPE was the way of the land. I mean if you think about it, Women were the ones who NEEDED to be Taken care of. Not the other way around. And Man’s instinct to protect women and his kids is pretty strong. I would argue that it was even stronger back then with little else that mattered.

I don’t buy into this bullshit that men were savages. It just does not hold water. [...]”

Above, we see the only participant who seems to openly disagree with the utilization of biology arguments in this discussion. In my observations, disagreement within the discussions like we see an example of here was rare and happened on two occasions only. The participant seems to believe that the arguments presented above portray men as savages and that this does not correspond with the instinct he believes early human men had to take care of their women and children. Even though the participant seems to disagree on the basis of how
these arguments portray men, instead of on the grounds of being misuse of theories, this shows that there is actually room for disagreement and debate in the forum. To me, this raises further questions such as if the participants in the forum just generally agree on most of what is said or if participants do not feel comfortable or do not want to disagree with others in these particular discussions. Lin (2017) argues that disagreement does tend to occur in antifeminists online communities, however, she found in her research that the times disagreement occurs, it does not seem to disrupt the greater discussion, or the feeling members might have of belonging in the community.

Gpi: “To avoid being RAPED, women would submit to it anyway, that is also why you’re a bunch of submissive rape/fantasizing whores as well. Its better to enjoy it because we’re taking it anyway. This is nature, the thing you keep denying. LOL”

Instead of connecting issues of rape to the victims’, or even the perpetrators’ experiences and feelings, antifeminists in the discussion forum, participants in the forum seem to connect these issues to what they see as biological and hierarchical realities. Gpi, the participant above, had some strong opinions on this matter and this participant seemed to be one of the front runners of misusing biology studies in order to justify rape in the discussions from my data material. With comments such as “this is nature” and “it is women’s natural right to be raped”, he writes a lot of bold statements without any scientific references to support his claims. The participant also writes that women should just submit and agree to sex when approached about the subject, because he further states that “we’re taking it anyway” in the comment above, which in my interpretation makes it seem as if he could be referring to himself, along with other men, as rapists without using the exact words. Therefore, this is another example where there is a change in the discourse and “we” have become the rapists and not only “them”.

Further, some of the participants also seem to argue that the purpose of the female body’s existence is to produce children. They further suggest that therefore the women who have reached menopause are no longer perceived as being valuable to the society. In fact, we see an example below where a participant calls women who have hit menopause “obsolete”, meaning that they are “no longer in use” or “out-of-date”. This is a case of extreme marginalization based on women’s age and because these attitudes only apply to women, it is
intertwined with sexism as well. Further, this also links to theories of dehumanization since women’s reproductive functions are emphasized when they are being subject to animalization. This is one of the two distinct types of dehumanization, the other one being objectification as we have also seen examples of throughout this chapter where participants for instance refer to women as “things” or “that” (Tipler and Ruscher, 2019).

Cci: “I agree. The only purpose to a woman is to receive, nurture and produce a man’s seed. Their whole bodies are designed to grow that white stuff. Once menopause hits, they are obsolete. Hence most feminists are ugly and shrivelled, past their fertilization date.”

The findings in this comment, as well as some of the other comments we have seen throughout this analysis, may also be connected to some of Simone de Beauvoir’s arguments stating that in society women are defined by their bodies and their reproductive system. As women and people, they are defined by their ovaries, wombs and their ability to grow a new life inside of their own bodies (de Beauvoir, 2010 [1949]). This also reinforces the traditional idea that women’s place in society is in the reproductive and domestic sphere (Holter, 2005). Some of the attitudes illustrated and statements made in this section one might also relate to the narrative of the contemporary modern mainstream fiction television show and the book with the same name; The Handmaid’s Tale. The story revolves around a fictional patriarchal society that has been established in the United States where women have become severely oppressed, dehumanized and diminished into their bodies and reproductive systems and the women’s value are also determined by their ability to reproduce. The novel has been described as dystopian, meaning that it illustrates an undesirable or frightening society and seeing that there are people who do share attitudes that do in fact coincide with this fictional storyline might illustrate that this narrative might not be as far from reality as one would like.

Furthermore, some of the participants also justified rape of women because according to a few research articles they have found online and are sharing and discussing with each other in the forum, it is common for women to have rape fantasies. Also, to further this argument, one of the participants mentions the fictional movie The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo and in their interpretation, as shown further below, this movie portrays women’s desires. The argument seemed to be that because studies show that women tend to have rape
fantasies, with emphasis on the word ‘fantasies’, they must therefore want these fantasies to be carried out and to be raped in real life too.

Aym: “What happens when enough men walk away? Who is going to fulfill the wammens rape fantasy?”

Cc: “Proof women’s rape fantasies are real. According to the article it’s quite normal for a woman to have at least one rape fantasy. Which boggles my mind. [Posts link to an article]”

Vn: “I’m aware that women have powerful fantasies of being taken by force, but fantasies are never supposed to be realized. [...] Women certainly get off on the fantasy of being raped, but when they are actually raped it always proves traumatizing.”

The discussion regarding female rape fantasies was one of two places where I found a participant disagreeing with the rest of the participants. Above we can see Aym and Cc argue that that believe women do in fact have fantasies that involves being forced into sexual acts and Aym even asks who is going to fulfill these fantasies if men decide not to. Further, we can see Vn stepping into the discussion and argue that fantasies are not supposed to be fulfilled, meaning that even if a woman do fantasize about being raped this should not be carried out in real life due to the trauma that experiencing rape causes a victim.

Lpb: “The movie (The girl with the dragon tattoo) is funny because it reinforces what women actually want, to be beat up, raped and treated like shit…but then to be coddled by the nice guy all while somehow being more valuable than they really are.”

According to the participant’s interpretation of the movie The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo, which he pulls into the discussion, Lisbeth Salander is shown fantasizing about being forced into sexual acts and situations. On the contrary, it seems to be more common to interpret these scenes as flashbacks and nightmares that keep playing in Lisbeth’s head from

26 The movie’s main character and the character this participant discusses.
previous abuse and sexual abuse that she has endured (Forshaw, 2013; Schorn, 2013). This illustrates how the participants seem to create interpretations of certain situations in pop-culture, research and theories as I discussed with the misuse of biology studies or, as I will illustrate in the next section, in order to further their own agenda or their arguments and which fits their reality.

4.7 The gender traitors

Going into the last category, in my interpretation, the participants in the discussion forum seemed to frequently depict feminist men as gender traitors. During the months I was observing the forum, a student accused a well-known male feminist academic of sexual harassment and some of the participants in the forum had picked up on this and started a discussion thread. In this instance, the participants seemed to agree that he should be punished because he “obviously did it” and sexual harassment and rape went from being a non-existing phenomenon to a real issue. Women suddenly went from liars to telling the truth, but the difference in this case compared to the other cases discussed throughout this chapter is that the alleged perpetrator in the discussions presented in this section, are male feminists and it seems like cultural and racial background is suddenly no longer the determining factor for what should be perceived of as legitimate allegations.

Looking through my data at the comments I have collected, it seems like the participants in the forum actually despise or hate male feminists more than they seem to hate women. Further, similarly to the beginning of this analysis, I also found malevolent comments that were directed at a couple of male feminists. The participants described the cases of sexual harassment by male feminists as the women turning against them. Here, the participants display a case of double standards. The man went from always being represented as innocent to a rapist, while the women went from always lying to, in this case, telling the truth because they are open about being male feminists. The participants express that since these men are involved in furthering feminist agendas, they got what was coming to them and are deserving of having claims of sexual harassment made against them.

Ro: “Fuck that asshole. I hope he gets imprisoned for rape, and dies from a perforated rectum inflicted by his cellmate bubba, with 11 inches.”
Along with the clear malevolence expressed by the participant above against a certain feminist man and again at the hands of someone else, this comment also contains a prominent racial dimension, which also uncovered in the malevolent comments directed at women earlier in this chapter. The term “bubba” is a slang word used in order to describe a male prison inmate, usually black, who is big and tall with a large penis and who frequently rapes his fellow inmates. The usage of this expression and the definition can be seen in relation to theories regarding stereotypes of black men and their sexuality. Black men’s sexuality has had a history of being over-exaggerated and “their masculinity described as hyper-masculinity, which I defined in the footnotes on page 44. Black male sexuality has typically been characterized as being genitalia focused, with high frequency, a large number of partners and from an early age (Weinberg and Williams, 1988). As we see in the comment made by Ro, the participant makes a specific reference to the size of a black male's penis, which resonates with the theory of black male sexuality being genitalia focused.

Mp: “This professor cuck mangina, [name of professor], famous as a world-leading male feminist, has been accused by more than one former student. Great news – that’s what you get!”

The participant, Mp, above also seems to suggest that by declaring himself a male feminist, the accused had these accusations coming for him eventually, without giving any other reason than the fact that he is a male feminist. This reinforces the argument I made earlier regarding how according to the participants, feminist men are amongst the groups of men who are actually capable of what is perceived as real sexual harassment and rape in the forum. The participants have also chosen to use the expression “mangina” when referring to the accused professor. This term consists of the two words, “man” and “vagina”, which have been merged together. The term has been appropriated by the antifeminist movement and is used to refer to a man who supports women’s issues and accentuates feminist agendas in society. The glossary on the forum states that a mangina is a man who has been feminized by society and is now controlled by the feminist agendas, who apologizes for men’s suppression of women and actively seeks women’s approval in order to sleep with them.

28 Masculinity differs also amongst black men, when other variables such as sexual orientation and age are taken into consideration.
El: “This great news!

[Name of professor]!
Wow, just wow!
The rapist should be publicly executed!
Manginas are those who are gonna paying most the price!”

Psf: “I hope he get’s fired and has to spend a weak in jail because of some new allegation by a female student of true physical rape. And the pictures haven’t come out yet.”

Here we see a clear contrast to the earlier comments in the other sections of this analysis and the cases they discussed. Suddenly, men have gone from previously always being innocent and should always be believed when accused of rape or sexual harassment, to being rapists who should be prosecuted and sent to jail immediately. One of the participants also calls for the extreme measure of a public execution, with no question of the man’s innocence or any regards for the process of going through the justice system. This could be interpreted as the participant being angry with the man, simply because he is a male feminist and not due to the sexual harassment claim itself. Further, one might also argue that the participant wishes to demean the accused, due to the participant expressing a wish to put the accused male feminist through a public execution. Such punishment, has previously been used as a way of degrading people found guilty of crimes in the past, however this type of execution is no longer in practice in the parts of the world where these participants resides. Further, the participant “El” above clearly names the professor as a rapist and also Psf is arguing that these allegations are regarding rape in his comment, yet the sexual harassment accusations made by one student have so far never included any allegations of rape or sexual assault. This might show that the participants in the forum tend to find their own truth in some of the cases they discuss, which does not necessarily correspond with the facts of this case, in order to further their own agenda as I also argued earlier in this chapter.

Wro: “Yeah, El’s right. These pathetic little wimps who pander to women like [name of professor] are always the ones who are sexually harassing and raping women as they feel entitled to it as a reward for all the grovelling, pandering and boot-licking they do to women. One look at the pathetic little man makes it clear he couldn’t get laid any other way.”
This participant suggests that feminist men tend to be the one’s who rape and sexually harass women because they feel entitled to sexual advantages as a reward for the support they give to the feminist movements. The participant also attempts to belittle the professor in question by eluding his looks and argue that to become a feminist and fight for women’s rights would be the only way the professor would ever “get laid” as a reward for furthering feminist agendas despite being a man. The participant also refers to the professor as “little man”, which is yet another attempt to belittle him and possibly infantilizing him, similarly to the examples we had regarding infantilization of women earlier in this chapter. The findings in this section show that the tactics that are being used when discussing women in this forum such as lookism, name-calling, malevolence and impaired credibility, as I have shown examples of throughout this chapter, are also utilized in discussions regarding feminist men.

4.8 Other significant findings

Further, I will also be analyzing some of the linguistics features of the data that I collected. I found in my observations that several of the participants are purposely misspelling the word ‘Muslim’ and I argue that this is a method they are using as an attempt to humiliate people of Muslim descent. Religion is perceived to be part of people’s identity and therefore people might identify as Muslims. So, when this part of ones identity is deliberately misspelled by others in discussions where you are already a target for hateful comments due to your cultural, racial or religious background, this might be perceived as another tactic for personal attack (Trudel, Argo and Meng, 2016). Throughout my analysis, I found that the participants would also do the same to women and misspell the word as ‘whimyn’ or ‘waman’ and also feminists by writing ‘faminists’ instead and the same argument may be applied here. Being a woman is also considered a part of one’s identity and these misspellings may also in these cases be perceived as a personal attack and an attempt to degrade women based in their gender, especially when paired with the misogynist attitudes illustrated in this forum. Also, further as demonstrated in the excerpt below, which shows one participant misspelling ‘women’ while spelling ‘men’ correctly within the same comment. There is a pattern here, because the groups of people we see here in this paragraph who have been the target of deliberate misspelling of identity markers are also the ones who have been targets of abuse in general throughout this chapter.
Br: “Tears from whimyn = evidence of victimization
Tears from men = evidence of guilt.”

Further, I also found that the participants in the forum seemed to be using a form of “stammespråk”, or a sort of tribal language. This means that the participants use a linguistic form, which is characterized by terminology specific to a certain culture and subjective ways of expression. This makes the meaning behind the language hard to access for those who are considered or even consider themselves to be outsiders to a certain, very defined community (Faiz and Skaare, 2016). Throughout the process of this thesis, this has been the case for me as an outsider to the community I chose to research when entering and observing the forum and further studying the language used in this cultural space. This is the reason why I made the decision to utilize a user generated website for slang words and expressions in order to gain full understanding of the messages the participants in the forum were conveying through their comments in this particular forum. The use of such language within a cultural space might strengthen the unity and the sense of belonging to a community of like-minded people.

As shown in Table 1 on the next page and as we have also seen in the excerpts of comments I have provided throughout this analysis, the participants quite often used different words in order to describe the women they were discussing and women just in general. As I elaborated on earlier in this chapter, some characteristic words were related to women’s looks while others were used to describe women’s behavior. In this table, I have picked out the reoccurring characteristics that I found to be utilized the most in the particular discussion forum, and to clarify, there were a few words that were used only once and by one participant, but they are not included here because I do not consider them as part of the pattern within my data material. Out of the 204 comments in my sample, approximately half of them contained a negative connotated characteristic word used to describe women. Some of the participants also used more than one describing characteristic in the same comments, such as this comment I presented earlier: “Cunt whores making up false rape allegations again”
Looking at table 1, I found that “cunt” and “liar” stand out as the most commonly used characteristic words in my data sample from the forum. First, by referring to women as “cunts”, the participants are continuously using a word also describing women’s genitalia in order to deem them unpleasant or stupid. According to Dewaele (2018) “cunt” is perceived to be one of the most offensive words to exist in the English language. Using this word as describing a woman or her behavior is a form of sexualized misogyny and is used as a term of abuse and it is also considered a degrading word in reference to female genitalia (Dewaele, 2018; Jane, 2014; Murnen, 2000). This also corresponds with one of Ging’s (2017) statements arguing that it is common in discussion threads where antifeminists engage for women to be referred to as “cunts”. The forum’s glossary states that they also occasionally use the term “C.U.N.T” as an abbreviation for a confrontational, unreasonable, narcissistic tormentor.

Further, as we uncovered and discussed previously in this chapter in the section regarding impaired credibility, many of the participants portrayed a picture of women as untruthful and not trustworthy. The word “liar” was most commonly used as a marker for women’s characteristics throughout the data material and the analysis confirms the frequent use of this word.

The third most used characteristic word in my data sample was “bitch”, which is commonly used when referring to a female dog, however the word is also frequently used in an informal setting when describing an unpleasant, ill-tempered, spiteful, selfish or competitive woman (Gross, 1994; Kleinman, Ezzell and Frost, 2009). The word “bitch” has

Table 1: Name-calling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Used how many times?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bitch</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cunt</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumb</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liar</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slut</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ugly</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whore (hoe, ho)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

similarly to “cunt” been considered to be one of the most offensive words one might use to describe someone. The word’s definition is said to vary depending on what a man might find threatening about the woman he is referring to when utilizing the term and therefore researchers have argued that the word may function as a misogynist affiliation (Gross, 1994). As mentioned, the term “bitch” is also used when referring to a female dog. Therefore, when using the same term when referring to women, it also becomes yet another example of how women are being dehumanized and animalized through the use of language. This further reinforces women’s persisting oppressed state in society (Kleinman, Ezzell and Frost, 2009).

Further, other characteristic words that were used frequently as shown in table 1 were words referring to women’s sexuality or women as sexual beings. Firstly, several of the participants used the word “whore”, though also in various different spellings such as “hoe” or “ho”. These words are also synonyms with the word “prostitute31”. Second, the participants in the forum also frequently used the word “slut”, which is a word used when referring to a woman who currently has, or has previously had, a larger number of casual sexual partners. According to the forum’s glossary, a whore is a woman who deliberately withholds sex until she receives payment in return or certain conditions are met, while a slut refers to a woman who engages in casual sex without the display of any commitment from any of the various men. Female sexuality, and words that resonate with this, are in this forum being used in a negative context. These attitudes may be linked to how female sexuality has been culturally and socially suppressed throughout history at different times and women have further been alienated from their own sexual desires (Baumeister and Twenge, 2002). By using such words, one might argue that the participants contribute to reconstruct female sexuality as a taboo and therefore shameful subject in Western society once again. According to Gotell and Dutton (2016), the forums connected to the Manosphere are known for using misogynist language and the participants in these forums frequently refer to women as “cunts” and “whores”, which is similar to my findings here in this thesis.

During my observations, I also found one instance of doxing. Doxing is an online practice of exposing someone’s personal information that had previously been kept private (Chandler and Munday, 2012). Such personal information may include, but are not limited to full name, address, phone number(s) and personal e-mail address. Doxing are used as a form

31 A person who sells sexual services in exchange for money or other favors or goods.
of harassment and it is not necessarily the disclosure of the information itself that are considered harassment, but rather the actions that might follow. For instance, being terrorized over the phone, receiving e-mails to one’s private e-mail address or letters to your home address or people might even terrorize you, your family or your home (Mortensen, 2018). As illustrated in the example below, one participant has exposed the personal information of a particular feminist professor in gender studies. The participant posted both her email and her home address and encouraged other people to send her e-mails or letters and essentially harassing her in her own home.

Ro: “For those who want to email the cunt, her email is s*****.******@gmail.com

If you want snail mail, I believe her home address is [full address was exposed here]”

Following the doxing, another one of the participants posted the feminist gender researcher’s picture and the discussion continued as such:

Mtx: Email the CUNT this thread.

Tell her MTX thinks she’s a TOTAL FUCKING PSYCHOTIC CUNT.

Want a letter of apology and my resignation as MTX?

GO FUCK YOURSELF YOU USELESS BITCH.

#FUCKYOUUBITCH

Ro: “I second the motion. She’s into “gender fluidity”?

I’ll give her some gender fluid al over her ugly, post-wall hag face.”

Wro: “Her lack of attractiveness proves she has a tendency to dishonesty against men and has a hatred of men as a ‘gender studies’ zealot.”

Wro: “She’s clearly a liar, no man would ever sexually harass that.

It’s ridiculous that we even live in a society where a woman that ugly can claim to have been sexually harassed and not get laughed out of the room.”

Exp: “Instead of opening up a Hooters, she couls open up a ”Horrors”. ”
The participants in this discussion above illustrate several of the points that have already been discussed throughout this thesis. Firstly, Mtx calls the feminist scholar both a cunt and a bitch in the same comment, while he also calls her psychotic, which resonates with the questioning of her mental health. Ro on the other hand, takes the approach of sexual harassment by claiming that he will “give her some gender fluid”, referring to seminal fluid while calling her ugly and a post-wall hag. Here the participant is referring to her age as being post-menopause and therefore she is no longer attractive in terms of looks, but also regarding fertility as discussed earlier.

Further, the participant Wro also announces that he does not find her attractive. However, he directly links the woman’s attractiveness to her lack of ability to be honest in two separate comments. As discussed earlier in this chapter, other participants also saw a correlation between a woman’s attractiveness and credibility. The participant argues that a woman who looks like this feminist scholar who claims to have been sexually harassed should not be taken seriously, essentially erasing the women’s experiences and feelings. Also, Exp makes a remark stating how instead of opening a Hooters restaurant the gender studies professor should open a new restaurant and name it “Horrors”, referring to the professors looks. In this discussion we see a pattern of sexism intertwined with ageism and lookism and no participant opposed any of the statements made by any of the participants in this particular discussion.

Another significant observation I made was one participant starting a new discussion thread where they told other members about how they had tried to access the website in question at work, as they apparently would do frequently. However, on that particular day, the website had been flagged as “containing hate speech” on the workplace’s server and one could therefore not access it while on the workplace’s network any longer. This shows that even though the website has moderators who apparently let the various comments we have seen throughout this analysis pass through the moderation process, there are forces working from the outside to limit the access to the website, at least in certain settings such as a professional working sphere. This post caused uproar amongst several of the participants who decided to comment causing them to make statements arguing that real hate speech was in

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32 An American restaurant known for its beautiful female waitresses, which can be seen wearing minimal clothing as part of their work uniform.
fact coming from the feminists and that the feminists are the ones who should be silenced. One of the participants became so angry that they posted this chilling comment:

Ktr: This is why blood will flow. It’s not a matter of “if”, it’s a matter of “when”.

Without attempting to go too deep into the speculations of the meaning behind this participant’s statement or their mind, one might interpret this comment as some sort of threat in regard to causing serious harm or death and one could even relate it to the “incel shootings” mentioned in the second chapter of this thesis. This comment illustrates how angry some of these participants seem to be, especially when someone from the outside attempts to limit their public reach, like the case above. As I discussed in this thesis’ literature review, men linked to antifeminist movements have previously retaliated in forms of mass shootings and therefore one might argue that this comment could be seen as an incitement to similar attacks like we have seen happen on different occasions in the past. This makes it seem that this anger we see from this participant above, but also that have been illustrated by previous attacks on women while pledging allegiance to the beta-rebellion and incel movement, links to something deeper that will not be tamed by writing comments on an anonymous online forum.

Finally, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, I would like to discuss the participants in the discussion forum’s use of the self-made Manosphere-term “divorce rape”. On Urban Dictionary33, one of the users of this online slang dictionary has added this definition of the expression:

“Noun or verb used to describe a wife who uses the fact that divorce courts are sexist in favor of women, to personal advantage. For example by taking an unfair proportion of the husband’s assets or denying him access to children.” (Dave_Truth, 2015, https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Divorce%20rape)

As seen in this definition, many men apparently feel discriminated against in divorce and child custody cases and believe that the court tend to favor women and mothers due to the feminist grip on these institutions (Kimmel, 2013; Lin, 2017), and this is where the term has

33 https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Divorce%20rape
originated. As one of the final points to my analysis, I would like to take some time to discuss the use of the word “rape” in this context, which I observed frequently used in the forum. I found these discourses interesting due to the discussions regarding rape that we have seen examples of throughout this chapter. By creating an expression, which includes the word “rape” and therefore suggesting that the experience and feeling of being on the losing end in divorce courts both during the process and after, is equal to the experience of being raped and the emotions that may follow. In my opinion, this contradicts some of the attitudes the participants have portrayed in the discussions in the data material, such as rape not being a real phenomenon or that almost all rape allegations are false, but still they compare going through a divorce as equal to the experience of being raped.

Along with fitting under the different categories introduced in the beginning of this analysis, a large number of the comments presented in this chapter may also be seen in relation to the concept of *ressentiment*, which I explained in chapter two. This is due to the fact that the participants seem to illustrate forms of hatred that is based on resentment they seem to have towards women and also towards immigrants, Muslims and male feminists. Further, this concept along with several of the findings in this chapter, resonate with the wish of changing and reversing the current achievements of the feminist movements and also hinder them from making any more progress in favor of women, due to the fact that these particular achievements are perceived to have negative consequences for men’s life and will result in men losing their power (Kimmel, 2013).
5. Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to examine the discourses on rape found in an antifeminist online discussion forum. More specifically, I questioned in what context the participants utilized the word “rape” in their discussions and if the comments they made and attitudes they exhibit could be placed into different categories in order to detect a pattern in regards to the discourses on rape within this specific cultural space. As I have emphasized throughout the analysis in the previous chapter, dividing the comments I found during my ethnographic observations into different categories did in fact allow me to detect certain patterns in attitudes and opinions of the participants in the discussions regarding rape in this particular forum, which is a facet to the Manosphere. Even though they claim not to be affiliated with the Men’s Right Movement, some of the attitudes and interest areas seem similar maybe due to the variety of different people with different life experiences. I believe that people from several different strands of the antifeminist movement, such as incels, MRA’s, beta males and “geeks”, might have gathered and found unity within the particular forum that was observed for the purpose of this thesis.

As it became clear in the beginning of the analysis, the participants would often use the word rape in the context of malevolent comments. These comments were often built around statements made by the participants saying they wished for certain women, or just women in general, to be raped and also sometimes die. Furthermore, this was first and foremost at the hands of someone else, which often meant immigrants or Muslims. These attitudes did not only give the comments a misogynist and sexist dimension, but a racist dimension as well. However, in a couple of the comments I did find that the participants also used “we” in this context. From the data I gathered, it seems unclear who the participants consider when saying “we”. Do they mean all men, all white men, all of the people in the forum or all antifeminists? Either way, the participants only used “we” in this context when they portrayed rape as a heroic act, which they had to do for the greater good, such as procreating the human species. I also detected some similar patterns in the discussions regarding feminist men, though in these discussions it would only be malevolence at the hands of others, meaning men of color. Therefore, feminist men seemed to receive the same treatment, if not worse than women in this particular antifeminist forum.
Further, whenever someone started a new discussion regarding a woman who had accused a man of rape or sexual harassment, in a high-profile case or otherwise, the participants in the forum did not only dismiss her experience completely, but also utilized different tactics in order to impair her credibility. As it became clear in section 4.3 in the previous chapter, the participants shared attitudes that suggested that women are liars and untrustworthy, especially regarding accusations of rape and sexual harassment, but also in general. “Liar” was the word that was used most frequently to describe women in my data sample, so this also reflects the attitudes that the participants have in regard to women’s credibility. Other tactics that were used in the forum in order to impair women’s credibility were to blame them for their own rape or for being sexually harassed. For instance, some of the participants argued that women’s choices such as alcohol consumption, being in the company of men of color and their ways of dressing lead to them (allegedly) being raped.

Also, many of the participants in my data material seemed to have their own opinions on what they perceived of as “real rape” compared to some of the cases they would deem as false rape allegations. These real rape cases included for instance female perpetrators and male victims or cases where the victim was in fact female, but the perpetrator was a man of color, Muslim or a male feminist. All women who had accused a white, non-feminist male of rape or sexual harassment were deemed as liars in the forum or the participants decided for themselves that these experiences could not have been real rape or harassment due to the nature of the situation, usually blaming the victim. Some participants even denied the fact that rape is an existing phenomenon in contemporary Western societies. This means that they discussed issues of rape in a way that partly dismissed the women’s experiences of rape, the definition of rape, but also legislations and justice systems’ processes all at once, but also as an issue that only concern certain groups of people based on intersections of gender, ethnicity or what political movement one might identify with. Furthermore, some of the participants argued that rape has historically been essential to the survival of the human race and further proceeded to justify the fact that numerous of women are being raped in Western and non-Western contemporary societies too. This in some ways contradicts the previous arguments that was made by stating that rape is in fact a real phenomenon even though the participants seem to have ideas regarding rape that conflicts with the word’s definition and what should be legal or not when it comes to sexual interactions and consent.
Building upon that, I also found that several of the participants in the forum who did acknowledge rape as an existing phenomenon would utilize misconceptions of theories and research findings from different fields of study and also misinterpretation of popular culture in order to seemingly further their own agenda. Some of the participants were able to discuss and justify rape in contemporary society and support their claims by using misconceptions of theories studied within biology and psychology studies, such as evolution of behavior. Some of the participants argued that rape is part of the natural order and the way in which our male ancestors procreated, as another way of justification. Another argument that they attempted to support using research articles from the field of psychology, was that women tend to have rape fantasies as parts of their sexual fantasies and therefore this must mean that they subconsciously or even consciously want to have the experience of being raped in real life too.

While analyzing the data material I had collected, it became clear that a rape culture was well established within this particular forum. Even though members of the antifeminist movement tend to argue that the concept of rape culture is just a feminist concoction, some of my findings correspond with the concept’s definition given in the second chapter of this thesis. First, several of the participants in my data material, and as we saw examples of in section 4.2, seemed to encouraged people to rape women. Even though they did not specifically encourage explicit individuals in the forum to perform these acts, they did encourage people just in general and they were specifically addressing male immigrants and people with Muslim background, as well as African-Americans to perform these sexually based offences. Further, I also found that many of the participants made jokes about rape and about women advocating against rape and sexual harassment and according to the definition of rape culture, such jokes also assist in establishing, reinforcing and normalizing rape culture within a certain space and in a society as a whole.

Throughout the analysis, I found that the same groups of people were consistently the targets of abuse in this antifeminist discussion forum. These groups of people were women, immigrants, Muslims (particularly men), men of color and male feminists. These findings also correspond with previous research and their findings when studying the antifeminist movements and their presence online, which I elaborated on in the literature review. This has often given the comments in my data material an intersectional dimension due to the discriminatory attitudes being illustrated in these comments at the basis of demographic
features such as age, gender, racial background and religious background. We could see
evidence of these intersections in many of the comments presented in the analysis and also the
hatred the participants harbored against people based on these intersections and the choice
some men have made to identify with the antifeminist ideology’s opposition, feminism. The
participants seemed to display a sort of resentment toward women for gaining more societal
power, due to the perception that as women gain power, men lose power and therefore this
threatens the cultural definition of masculinity. The participants also seemed to hold
resentment towards ethnic minorities and immigrants for threatening the cultural
establishment of whiteness and the power and sets of privileges white masculinity holds in
society.

The participants illustrated definite unity in the selected data material, except on two
occasions where two participants disagreed with two separate discussions that were taking
place. The literature argued that antifeminist movements online is often to be considered a
misogynist male echo chamber where the participants are able to anonymously discuss topics
and issues they find important, interesting or even provocative and my findings correspond
with this. The participants in the forum are able do to this with a certain honesty that they
might not have been comfortable with in other public spaces or amongst family, friends or co-
workers. This creates a community, which may further promote a type of herd mentality
where participants are influenced to adapt certain attitudes and behaviors from others in the
discussion forum. Further, there are a small number of participants who seem to engage more
frequently than others in discussions about rape or use the word rape in their comments. So
even though the forum has 750 000 visitors each month, there seems to be a small number of
these members or visitors who engage in discussions regarding issues of rape, from I could
detect in my data material sample. However, many of these visitors might be participating in
other discussions in the forum with different topics or they might even just be silent
observers.

Even though the particular facet of the Manosphere I observed has its own platform in
terms of its own website and forum where members can participate in discussions, one can
also find the same strand of the antifeminist movement on other social media platforms where
people are also able to engage further. For instance, this particular movement have their own
subreddit on the social networking site Reddit, which may also be classified as a sort of
discussion forum similar to the one they have on their own website. They may also be found
on other social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and many advocates for this particular strand within the antifeminist movement also posts videos on YouTube. We can detect a similar pattern when looking at other parts or the antifeminist movement and this might be a strategy used by the movements in order to broaden their reach and spreading their ideas to as many people as possible. Further, these interactions that take place within these cultural spaces also have the potential to construct new sets of knowledge for people who engage in communicating or also for those who might visit this forum and read the interactions that have taken place by other participants. This production of knowledge might also assist in shaping people’s opinions and influence individuals’ ways of viewing the world.

Sorting the comments from my data material into different categories, along with allowing me to detect patterns in the discussions, also helped me answer my research questions. Some of the categories helped answer question number one while the others have provided some answers to the second question. Participants in this particular online antifeminist forum discuss issues of rape in a way that seem to always favor the white male, whether he is the alleged perpetrator or the victim in the different cases that were discussed. Furthermore, they aim at always attempting to undermine women’s credibility utilizing different tactics such as continuously referring to them as liars, questioning their mental state and victim blaming as well as utilizing different arguments in order to justify why women are being raped. Further, as I mentioned earlier, the categories I divided my data material into helped me detect a pattern illustrating in what context the participants in the forum most often used the word rape. To sum up, the participants used the term rape in the context of all of the different categories. However, in a couple of the categories the participants did not only discuss issues of rape but utilize the word in a way that seemed threatening. For instance in malevolent comments where they wished harm upon women and male feminists and also when mocking victims and advocate for issues of rape particularly in form of misogynist lookism and ageism.

Even though in this particular thesis I observed a space reserved for people who identify with a particular ideology within the antifeminist movement to discuss their own interests and opinions unfiltered and uninterrupted the discussions are open for anyone with access to the Internet to read, meaning approximately half of the world’s human population. This also includes the groups of people that the participants in the forum are expressing hateful attitudes towards, law enforcements and organizations that monitors hate groups online such as The
Southern Poverty Law Centre. Along with the use of hate speech, many of the comments I also perceive of as incitement to violence and the participants in the forum, as well as the administrators of the website seem to encourage each other, as well as other people who might venture into this space, to perform violent acts against certain groups people. And with the current rise of right-wing organizations and extremism in contemporary society and as we have seen the political gains of right wing parties in various countries around the world, such extreme attitudes illustrated within this antifeminist forum, an online public space, should be taken seriously by society as a whole.

5.1 Future research

One of the limitations to this research is due to the fact that this particular study focused on only one particular antifeminist forum. Thus, the findings in this research may not be perceived as representative for the Manosphere or antifeminist forums in general. Therefore, future research should in my opinion look at the possibility of exploring the research questions of this thesis in other similar antifeminist online forums or their presence on other social media platforms. This could be done in order to understand if the attitudes uncovered in this research correspond with attitudes in other similar forums that are related to the antifeminist movements and also how widespread the mapped attitudes are within the Manosphere, and if they meet with any substantial resistance or confrontation in similar cultural spaces.

Also, this research became very focused on the Western world due to the fact that the majority of the participants were actually located in Europe and North America according to the statistics regarding the website’s traffic. Therefore, I believe that it would be beneficial to this research field if future research could expand further on this study and explore if these same attitudes presented throughout the previous chapter can also be found in more diverse online forums. Perhaps conducting similar observations in forums with more diverse groups of participants with cultural and societal backgrounds from other parts of the world could unveil if these attitudes presented in this research could in fact be considered universal for antifeminists globally.

Finally, I chose methods and a research space for this thesis that would not, with certainty, allow me to know or figure out the participants in the discussion forum’s demographic
features such as gender, ethnicity or age. I found that this would not be relevant in regard to the research questions I raised in this particular study or the aims of this thesis and therefore decided not to pursue this knowledge, also partially due to the individuals’ right to privacy and anonymity. However, I do think future research should consider making an attempt at mapping this in correspondence with attitudes illustrated in the comments in a similar forum. Due to the anonymity that the Internet provides its users, however, this might be hard to achieve especially using the same methods to this study.
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