

“Comply or Goodbye”

Representations of Women in the Red Pill Discourse on Instagram

Emmi Levy

Master's Thesis

Degree Programme for Language Specialists, Department of English

School of Language and Translation Studies

Faculty of Humanities

University of Turku

November 2021

The originality of this thesis has been checked in accordance with the University of Turku quality assurance system using the Turnitin Originality Check service

Master's Thesis

Degree Programme for Language Specialists, Department of English

Emmi Levy

“Comply or Goodbye” – Representations of Women in the Red Pill Discourse on Instagram

Number of pages: 66 pages

This thesis examines the representations of women in a dataset collected from Instagram accounts that explicitly support the Red Pill ideology. The Red Pill is a prevailing ideology within various antifeminist groups that aims to reveal the true nature of feminism: according to the Red Pill, feminism is an oppressive system generated to subdue men, and consequently, the ideology provides advice for men to navigate within this oppression.

The objective of this study is to investigate the shared social cognitions of women within the Red Pill community and see how they are connected to the Red Pill ideology. The study also aims to connect the analysed discourse to the wider social context, by exploring the growing phenomena of online misogyny and linking the findings to other virtual domains where misogyny is mediated. The analysis is based on the principles of critical discourse analysis, and the main method that is used for analysing the data is van Dijk’s sociocognitive approach (2001), which allows the investigation of shared social cognition of a community as well as the examination of personal mental models of individuals.

The results of the analysis indicate that the Red Pill discourse on Instagram reproduces negative and even hostile representations of women and uses various strategies to generate the image of women as inferior. In addition, the results suggested that the Red Pill discourse on Instagram is softer and subtler in nature, compared to other anti-feminist online domains. The study also addressed the negative implications of sexist discourses and established that resentment towards women can be initiated by various factors, like women occupying domains formerly dominated by men, or it can be rooted in particular political stances. Antifeminist attitudes can also be sparked as a counteract for recent popularity of feminism and progressive politics. Regardless of the root cause, antifeminism can have severe consequences, and therefore online domains, especially popular social media platforms ought to address this issue.

Key words: sexist discourse, antifeminism, Red Pill ideology, Manosphere, Instagram, sociocognitive approach, critical discourse analysis

Table of contents

1	Introduction	5
2	Misogyny in online domains	9
2.1	The Manosphere	12
3	Red Pill Ideology	16
3.1	Red Pill and scientific theories	18
3.2	Red Pill as a community	20
3.3	Red Pill and Instagram	21
4	Theoretical Framework	25
4.1	Critical Discourse Analysis	25
4.1.1	Critical Discourse Studies on social media	27
4.1.2	Critical Discourse Analysis and Ideologies	29
4.2	The sociocognitive Approach	30
5	Material and Methods	33
5.1	Research Material	33
5.2	Ethical Considerations	36
5.3	Research Methods	37
6	Analysis	40
6.1	Topical Analysis	40
6.2	Representations of women	43
6.2.1	Polarisation between men and women	44
6.2.2	Women as controlled by their biology	46
6.2.3	Dehumanisation of women	47
6.2.4	Women as manipulative	50
6.3	Views on relationships with women	51
6.3.1	The insignificance of dating women	53
7	Discussion	55
7.1	Principles of Red Pill ideology in the dataset	55
7.2	Red Pill discourse on Instagram	57
7.3	Implications of sexist discourse	60

8 Conclusion

62

References

65

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MRA Men's Right Activists

MGTOW Men Going Their Own Way

PUA Pick-Up Artists

EP Evolutionary Psychology

SMV Sexual Market Value

TRP The Red Pill

CDA Critical Discourse Analysis

1 Introduction

The increasing use of social media and other interactive online platforms in the past few decades has revolutionised the ways people connect with each other, and the opportunity to find and create interest groups has long been a major asset of online domains (Banet-Weiser & Miltner 2016, 173). While these networking sites certainly have several positive aspects, the Internet has also given rise to new forms of hateful and polarizing speech by providing a platform for different radical and extremist groups, including, for instance, racist, political right-wing extremist, and misogynist movements to connect with each other and to spread their views further (Graff, Kapur & Walters 2019; Burris, Smith & Strahm 2000). Discourses produced at the grass-roots-level, like in social media platforms or other online communities, can create and reproduce conceptions about different social groups. This, in turn, can lead to increasing numbers of hostile discourse in the online world or even inspire abusive acts towards the subjected group in the offline world. Overall, as discourses both constitute and sustain situations and social relations (Fairclough & Wodak 1997, 258) everyday discourses and seemingly trivial instances of language use can have a major impact on severe social issues.

In this paper, one section of hostile online discourse is explored, as I examine sexist language use and misogynist discourse online. Online misogyny has grown to be a significant issue in recent years (see, for example, Franks 2012; Mantilla 2013; Megarry 2014), and therefore its implications ought to be recognised and investigated. In this study, I will focus on the so-called Red Pill ideology, which has gained notable popularity among sexist and antifeminist communities. The ideology is especially prominent within a myriad of online groups called the Manosphere, which consists of various movements promoting antifeminism and hegemonic masculinity. Most of the groups within the Manosphere seem to collectively support the Red Pill ideology, which makes the ideology an attractive topic for research. The Red Pill thus encompasses the whole Manosphere, and therefore examining the ideology gives insight on how these distinct communities justify and legitimise their misogynist attitudes.

The Red Pill ideology is based on an analogy of an enlightening red pill which reveals the unpleasant truths about society. According to this viewpoint, the hidden truth is that all men live in a feminist and misandrist delusion that oppresses men, and this assumption heavily saturates the members' attitudes towards women: women are therefore perceived as

manipulative oppressors of victimised men (Ging 2019). In addition, the Red Pill ideology attempts to justify their views and attitudes by using concepts from academic theories: for instance, economic ideology is applied to heterosexual relationships, where women are seen as the “sellers” and men as the “buyers of sex” (Van Valkenburgh 2021, 14). It should be noted that the ideology seems to focus predominantly on heterosexual relationships and binary gender definitions, which also reflects the “traditional” gender values that are appreciated among the Red Pill supporters. As the notion of the Red Pill has evolved to represent a certain distinct philosophy, it contains several aspects that could be studied in more detail. To keep the scope of this study manageable, the current study will focus predominantly on the attitudes towards women, and on the ways the community portrays women in their discourse.

More specifically, I will analyse the Red Pill discourse in the domain of Instagram, which is one of the most popular social media platforms worldwide, having established a presence in everyday lives of millions of individuals (statista.com 2021), and the discourses produced within this domain thus have the potential to reach extensive audiences. In addition, Instagram is not the most prominent domain for antifeminist or other extremist groups, as the platform publicly condemns overt hate speech and offensive discourse (Instagram 2021). Therefore, the discourse in the platform cannot be extremely obtrusive in nature, if the participants do not wish to be banned or excluded completely from the platform for violating the terms of usage. For these reasons, I believe that the platform is an interesting domain for research on antifeminist and sexist hate speech and holds the potential for discovering new features of the Red Pill discourse. Even though the data of this study is collected from Instagram, where the content is generally expressed in image format, the analysis will focus solely on the linguistic elements of the posts. The reason for this choice is that the collected posts contain little to no visual aids, and therefore they could be treated like text posts.

The main objectives of this study are expressed as the following research questions:

1. How are women portrayed in the Red Pill discourse on Instagram?
2. How does the Red Pill ideology create the image of women as inferior?
3. How does the Red Pill discourse on Instagram connect to the larger phenomenon of misogynist discourse online?

While previous research has acknowledged the Manosphere and the hegemonic masculinity it promotes (e.g. Hermansson 2020; Ging 2019; Marwick & Caplan 2018) as well as several of the subgroups within the Manosphere and their qualities (Byerly 2020; Jones, Trott & Wright 2020; Cosma & Gurevich 2020), fewer studies have focused specifically on the Red Pill ideology and its significance (but see Dignam & Rohlinger 2019; Van Valkenburgh 2021; Mountford 2018). Furthermore, these studies have studied the ideology and the Red Pill discourse on specific Red Pill forums, where the language use could be expected to be more extreme and explicit. I have not come across a study that has examined the Red Pill discourse on popular social media domains, which is the objective of the current study. In my view, the Red Pill ideology and its linguistic manifestations as well as its social implications ought to be studied more extensively, considering the ideology's predominant status within various antifeminist coalitions.

To address the Red Pill discourse on Instagram, I utilise perspectives adopted from critical discourse analysis, which is a framework suitable for identifying and examining various social problems, like instances of discursively expressed sexism. More specifically, I analyse the research material by using van Dijk's sociocognitive approach (2001), which highlights the importance of social cognition in the production and analysis of discourse. Therefore, this approach is especially useful when examining different social communities that share a certain ideology, as shared social cognitions can be rooted on commonly accepted ideologies, which, in turn, can affect the personal mental models of individuals. I argue that studying the Red Pill discourse on Instagram is important, as it is alarming that there exists a wide spreading of essentially misogynist and prejudicial content on popular social media platforms. Conducting a critical analysis on this type of discourse could help in understanding the phenomenon, the potential consequences of it and possibly some of the reasons behind it. Considering the implications that misogynist and sexist speech and ideologies can have, I believe this phenomenon to be an important social issue worth investigating.

The following background section explores the prevalence of misogynistic communities online and addresses the negative effects of these groupings. Section 3 provides information on the Red Pill ideology, including the main principles and objectives of the ideology. The scientific theories that have influenced the ideology are explored in section 3.1. Section 4 will present the theoretical framework of this study by introducing the discipline of critical discourse analysis and consider the distinct nature of critical discourse studies that use data

gathered from social media. Section 4.2 introduces the more specific methodology for the analysis of the current study, van Dijk's sociocognitive approach. Section 5 starts with descriptions of the research material, which is followed by the ethical considerations that were taken into account when conducting this study. The analysis of the data is provided in section 6, followed by discussion of the results and their implications in section 7. Finally, I will conclude my findings, evaluate the current study and suggest ideas for future research in section 8.

2 Misogyny in online domains

The following background sections situate the current study in the framework of earlier research. I first examine the existence of misogynistic communities online and discuss the potential effects of these networks. I then introduce a prominent antifeminist coalition operating in online domains, called the Manosphere. Finally, I move on to explore the Red Pill ideology, which is a significant philosophy uniting the different subgroups of the Manosphere.

As established in the Introduction, Internet has allowed different hate groups to connect and communicate in new, more feasible ways. Schafer (2002) notes that among extremist groups, virtual platforms are abundantly used and utilised for various purposes, like communicating with fellow members or attempting to recruit new supporters. In addition, websites can be used for publishing and reinforcing the group's own worldviews, but also as ways of pushing their beliefs to the general public, this way "educating" others (Gerstenfeld, Grant & Chiang 2003, 30). Internet can also aid the establishment of international extremist communities and connect existing groups with each other (Burriss, Smith & Strahm 2000).

One branch of extremist groups operating mainly online consists of various misogynist alliances. Gender-based discrimination and misogynist values are not new phenomena, quite the contrary, as they have existed for centuries. However, in recent years, it seems that the growing visibility of feminism has caused an antifeminist countermovement towards gender equality, and this movement sees feminism as a threat to men's "rightful place in social hierarchy" (Banet-Weiser & Miltner 2016, 172). The aggressive spread of online misogyny has been widely recognised, and scholars have developed various terms to refer to this issue, including "popular misogyny" (Banet-Weiser & Miltner 2016), "gendered e-bile" (Jane 2016) and "global antifeminism" (Graff, Kapur & Walters 2019).

There are many explanations for the rise of virtual antifeminist movements, both practical and cultural. Banet-Weiser and Miltner (2016, 171) argue that while factors like anonymity, insufficient legal aspects and online platform structures and policies could have contributed to the increased hostility towards women online, deeply embedded cultural features and naturalised misogyny within Western society play the main role in this issue. Furthermore, in their paper, Graff, Kapur and Walters (2019) propose that the rise of right-wing populists in the Western political sphere has contributed to the spreading of misogynist ideologies, and

they see traditional gender roles and resistance to gender-equality being among the core sentiments in the political and ideological value system of “the global right”. They also note that promoting antifeminism could be one of the sources of the right-wing’s popularity: in their propaganda, right-wing populists have established a dichotomy between lay people and gender-equality enforcing liberal elites, and by taking the side of the people and simultaneously criticising the gender views of the elite, the right wing has managed to gain popularity, especially among “the grass roots” (Graff, Kapur and Walters 2019, 544). Consequently, as Graff, Kapur and Walters (2019) summarise, populism and misogyny exist in a mutualistic relationship, this being one of the reasons why both phenomena are thriving in contemporary society.

Hostility towards women can also be sparked when women aim to enter domains that were formerly dominated by men (Banet-Weiser & Miltner 2016, 172- 173). One example is an incident known as Gamergate. In short, Gamergate took place in 2014 when an ex-boyfriend of game designer Zoe Quinn published a detailed blogpost where he negatively described their relationship, falsely hinting that Quinn had gained her success and positive media coverage by having an affair with a game journalist (Massarani 2017, 334). As a reaction to these seemingly questionable ethics in gaming journalism, vast amounts of attackers began to systematically abuse and harass Quinn on several virtual platforms (ibid.). In addition, other female game developers, academics, and writers who stood up for Quinn or criticised the movement were also attacked, and as the targets were almost entirely women, the movement was clearly anti-women in nature (Jane 2016, 286). Accordingly, Banet-Weiser & Miltner (2016, 173) argue that Gamergate was essentially a pushback reaction, and an attempt to prevent women from participating in the male dominated gaming community.

Within these antifeminist movements, feminism and female participation is thus seen as an attack towards men’s status and male-dominated domains in the Western society, and this disrupts the perceived “natural gender order” (Dignam & Rohlinger 2019, 589). The traditional and prevailing views of gender are beneficial for male dominance, and therefore changes in gender traditions can provoke feelings of fear, anger, and loss among some men (Ferber 2000, 30 - 31). Furthermore, Graff, Kapur & Walters (2019, 546) point out that resistance towards gender equality can be linked to underlying feelings of nostalgia and a desire for “a more peaceful, harmonious time” in the past. They also note that this wish to return to the outdated gender traditions does not concern only men, but can be appealing for

some women, too (2019, 546). In addition, progressive gender views can provoke hostility among men because they contradict with feelings of male entitlement: Ferber (2000, 53) proposes that these masculinist ideologies can “appeal to privileged white men who feel they have been denied what they were taught they were entitled to”, as if feminism had delegitimised their perceived “birth-rights”. It can be concluded that feminism unhinges some of the most fundamental values of certain antifeminist groups, and therefore their hostility towards gender equality can be so appreciable.

While this study focuses primarily on misogynist ideologies and discourses targeted towards like-minded individuals among these groups, the antifeminist views reproduced by extremist groups can culminate to targeted online harassment, like happened in the aforementioned Gamergate. Online abuse can include death threats, rape threats or other sexualised abuse, actions to which women are disproportionately the targets, even to the point where they may consider it being ordinary behaviour in online networks (Henry & Powell 2015, 759; Marwick & Caplan 2018, 545). Especially publicly known women, like politicians or journalists, are often targets of substantial online harassment (see, for example Fuchs & Schäfer 2020; NATO Strategic Communications of Excellence 2021), but in addition to the harassment aimed towards specific individual(s), the harassment can also be more generalised, for instance aimed towards all women.

It is important to note that virtual phenomena like virtual harassment are connected to the offline world as well: Ging & Siapera (2018, 516) report that experiences of virtual abuse can cause the victim to feel that their physical safety is compromised. Accordingly, Henry & Powell (2015, 773) observe the significance of virtual harassment, and argue that virtual abuse and its consequences should not be viewed as a separate phenomenon from offline abuse; “[t]here is a false dichotomy between “real” and “virtual” harms, which is increasingly problematic given the ways in which the techno social world has become deeply embedded in both contemporary subjectivity and social interaction.” They add that virtual harm can be at least as damaging as physical harm, and thus digital abuse needs to be considered as a serious threat and treated accordingly (Henry & Powell 2015, 765). Unfortunately, according to Jane (2016, 292), there is still a considerable lack of remedies and institutional support for the targets of cyber-abuse. Some coordinated virtual attacks towards women have been linked to a myriad of misogynist and antifeminist movements known as The Manosphere, and I will now move on to explore this alliance and its influence further.

2.1 The Manosphere

The Manosphere can be defined as a loose gathering of mostly online groups that promote men's rights, antifeminism and masculinity. The coalition especially values hegemonic masculinity, which can be defined as an extreme form of masculinity, aiming to return men's dominant position by subordinating women by various means, often by discrimination or even violence (Mountford 2018, 2). The term Manosphere was first used in a blogpost in 2009 to describe a grouping of websites advocating men's interests, and later the term was adopted in the popular discourse (Ging 2019, 639). The Manosphere covers several different movements and groups, including Men's Rights Activists (MRA), Involuntary celibates (Incels), Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW), and Pick-Up Artists (PUA). Some scholars also include certain communities within the political alt-right movement¹ and the gaming community under the umbrella term of the Manosphere. Many of the subgroups overlap with each other and share very similar values, and therefore the borders between the groups can be fuzzy (Ging 2019). According to Jane (2017), all these movements tend to depreciate women by highlighting women's perceived unattractiveness, sexual histories, and "incorrect" political opinions. In addition, the groups within the Manosphere share a strong "underdog outsider" identity and a feeling of entitlement to sexual relationships with women (Jane 2017, 667).

The fundamental belief shared by the members of the Manosphere is that feminism actually enhances and promotes misandry, not gender equality (Hermansson et.al. 2020, 163). This relates to the victimisation of men, which is a widely accepted notion within the Manosphere. According Blais & Dupuis-Déri (2012, 26), many masculinist groups believe that there is a distinction between two naturally different sexes, which "justifies the hierarchy of the values, attitudes, and behaviours associated with each of the sexes". Feminism is perceived as denying these seemingly very underlying differences and consequently inhibiting men from embracing their "natural" features like aggressiveness, competitiveness, and hierarchy (ibid). Therefore, men's suffering (whether real or perceived) is to be blamed on feminism and often women in general (Hermansson et.al. 2020 163). Dignam & Rohlinger (2019, 592) point out that these masculinist groups actively deny and delegitimize structural and social issues concerning women, like domestic and sexual violence or gender inequality within the

¹ The alt-right could be defined as an ideologically united network supporting neo-conservative logics and "the counter-cultural rehabilitation of the white male individual through a hostile rejection of liberal left-discourse". (Kelly 2017, 69)

workforce. In addition, the subordination of women throughout human history is perceived to be an illusion, and a fabricated notion that promotes the exploitation of men, referred as the “Myth of Female Oppression” (Van Valkenburgh 2021, 89). Thus, while portraying themselves as the oppressed group fighting against the destructive force of feminism, antifeminist groups invalidate the existing gendered power relations, and turn them around to serve their purposes. However, as Blais & Dupuis-Déri (2012, 29) point out, these antifeminist movements in fact belong to the dominant group, and their fighting for equality can be seen merely as a defensive reaction against a supposed threat to their existing privileges.

The early foundations of the Manosphere were established when the communities of Pick-Up Artists and Men’s Rights Activists emerged in the early 90’s (Hermansson et.al. 2020, 164). The PUA community, centred around seduction and sexual manipulation tips, started to grow rapidly in online discussion forum sites (ibid.). The movement of Men’s Rights Activists, in turn, was established as a counteract to second-wave feminism, but Marwick & Caplan (2018, 545) note that MRA has its roots already in the early 1970s, in the Men’s Liberation movement, which was in fact supportive towards feminism and emphasized the *harms* of traditional masculinity. Later on, however, the movement split to subgroups, one of them growing to be the MRA, which embraced traditional gender roles and respectively despised feminism and liberalism (Marwick & Caplan 2018, 545). The origins of the Incel community can also be regarded as surprising: the movement started as a seemingly positive support group for individuals experiencing frustration by lack of romantic or sexual companionship and was, in fact, founded by a woman (Hoffman, Ware & Shapiro 2020).

Even though some of the movements were not initially hostile or antifeminist in nature, their position began to change in the early 2000s: the PUA community started to gain more publicity, and at the same time, the nature of the Incel community changed drastically: it adopted hostile antifeminist values, and consequently, an extreme branch of the movement began to rise to the surface (Hermansson et al. 2020, 166). At that time, other movements also began to shift towards radicalisation: more extreme positions and amplified forms of misogyny were adopted by each of these communities and some of the members of the PUA started to develop theories according to which their difficulties in the dating sphere were the result of social issues, mainly feminism and liberal movements (ibid.), which is nowadays a widely supported notion in the Manosphere. In addition to MRA, PUA and Incel

communities, Jane (2017, 666) sees the Manosphere's foundations to be built around groupings of "subcultural trolling communities", defined as rapidly expanding coalitions, consisting mostly of socially marginalized males who tend to use the argument of free speech to justify their offending, over-the-top language use, including overt forms of sexism and racism.

The Manosphere can be considered politically united to some extent: Hermansson et.al. (2020 163) point out the significance of right-wing populists in the antifeminist groups and argue that far-right political movements and their notions of gender roles and hierarchies as well as the valuation of hypermasculinity overlap with many of the values shared in the Manosphere. Dignam & Rohlinger (2019) also see the potential political viability within the Manosphere: they argue that the antifeminist movements and the Red Pill ideology were factors facilitating Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 US presidential election. Based on their study of a Red Pill forum on the discussion site Reddit, the members of the forum encouraged each other to support Trump by "linking community ideals of neoliberal alpha masculinity to Trump's public image as a powerful, independent deal maker" (Dignam & Rohlinger 2019, 605), this way creating the idea of Trump as the advocate of *alpha masculinity*, which is a concept that is discussed further in section 3 of this study. Hoffman, Ware & Shapiro (2020, 572) also recognise the integration of misogynistic communities and far-right political activism and see it as an alarming and escalating phenomenon. However, Hermansson et. al (2016, 173) note that there is considerable variation in regard to how politically invested the groups of the Manosphere are, and some groups in fact discourage or reject collective political action completely. Thus, it can be said that there is no single commonly accepted political stance within the Manosphere, even though many of the members seem to support masculinity-emphasizing right-wing movements.

In addition to systematic virtual abuse, like the aforementioned Gamergate incident, what has caused the media to recognise the Manosphere has been the movement's association with explicit misogyny and extreme acts of violence (Dewey 2014, Ging 2019). Perhaps most notable cases have been the ones where individuals associated with the Manosphere have committed fatal mass-shootings in the U.S., including the attacks in Santa Barbara in 2014, Oregon in 2015 and Florida in 2018 (e.g., Hoffman, Ware & Shapiro 2020). These incidents, which were linked especially to the Incel subgroup, showcased the extremely serious risks of hateful online communities. However, since only a small minority of the members have

committed such extreme acts, the Manosphere cannot be proclaimed as a violent grouping. Nevertheless, Marwick and Lewis (2017) and Krendel (2020, 628) note that exposure to antifeminist communities and discourses online could have radicalising effects, or it can at least encourage some members to express hostility towards women, also in the offline world. Even if the communities would not encourage or support collective actions towards targeted groups, these networks can act as catalysts for lone actors (Hoffman, Ware & Shapiro 2020), which showcases the significance of antifeminist online groupings and the misogynist discourse they produce.

The members of the Manosphere operate within various domains of the web: they utilise forums, blogs, websites and video-sharing platforms to share their views and to communicate with others (Hermansson et.al. 2020, 163). Especially Reddit.com, a semi-anonymous discussion site where users can create discussion threads on various topics, has been a prominent domain among the members of the Manosphere: Dignam & Rohlinger (2019, 595) argue that compared to some popular alt-right forums, Reddit is more feasible to access and open for everyone, which could have increased its popularity among antifeminist groups, and in their paper, Massanari (2017) argues that Reddit has evolved to be a prosperous centre for misogyny and antifeminism, and even the site's design and policies facilitate these types of activism.

While there are indeed some differences between the subgroups of the Manosphere, most of the movements seem to share a common worldview, as they support the so-called Red Pill ideology, occasionally also called the Red Pill philosophy or the Red Pill Theory. The ideology is antifeminist in nature and uses various behavioural theories to support its agenda. The following section will introduce the ideology and its principles.

3 Red Pill Ideology

The Red Pill ideology originated from a subforum /r/TRP (The Red Pill) on Reddit.com, where it quickly spread into the different subgroups of the Manosphere (Ging 2019, 645). The idea of an enlightening Red Pill stems from the 1999 film *the Matrix*, where the protagonist is offered two pills, red and blue. Taking the blue pill means continuing to live in comfortable delusion, whereas taking the red pill reveals the ugly truths of life. The symbolism of an enlightening pill is also reflected in the metaphor of *truth is medicine*, which indicates that the truth can be unpleasant, and thus “a hard pill to swallow” (Waśniewska 2020, 68). In the context of the Manosphere, this fictional narrative of enlightenment is applied to gender roles and feminism in real life. Thus, phrases like “taking the Red Pill” or “being red-pilled” refer to being enlightened and adopting a new, antifeminist worldview (Ging 2019; Wright, Trott & Jones 2020). The Red Pill ideology’s purpose is to reveal feminism’s “true nature”, that is, feminism being in fact oppressive and hostile towards men (Dignam & Rohlinger 2019, 595). As Wright, Trott & Jones (2020, 909) put it, “members of the Manosphere claim to be ‘red-pilled’ because they are now able to see that the world is dominated by privileged women”. According to this viewpoint, all men live in a feminist and misandrist delusion, which has been built upon male oppression.

Consequently, the main objective of the Red Pill ideology is to give men more power to pursue sexual relationships within this oppression, by giving advice on things like seduction and relationships (Van Valkenburgh 2021, 89). Thus, the Red Pill can be viewed as a specific sexual strategy for men, and a countermovement against feminism, while feminism is perceived to be “a collective female tool for securing desirable mates and economic resources” (ibid.). As explained by nickname *pk_atheist*, the creator of the /r/TRP subforum:

Feminism is a sexual strategy. It puts women into the best position they can find, to select mates, to determine when they want to switch mates, to locate the best DNA possible, and to garner the most resources they can individually achieve. The Red Pill is men’s sexual strategy. Reality is happening, and we need to make sure that we adjust our strategy accordingly” (pk_atheist, 11/8/2012, “Introduction” in Dignam & Rohlinger 2019, 598)

As stated in the Introduction of this paper, the Red Pill ideology is an intriguing research topic for studies considering sexist ideologies, since it seems to unite the groups within the Manosphere. The Red Pill can therefore be seen as an overarching and fundamental philosophy in the context of sexist and antifeminist communities. Accordingly, Ging (2019,

45) argues that the spread of Red Pill ideology has even created a sense of communality and belonging among the different subgroups.

Being developed within the Manosphere, The Red Pill ideology is largely based on the already mentioned beliefs and principles about gender roles that are widely accepted within antifeminist communities. The Red Pill philosophy aims to return men's rightful status, and longs for a past where "masculinity could be performed purely through physical, economic, and sexual prowess" (Dignam & Rohlinger 2019, 598). The Red Pill ideology thus emphasizes extreme forms of masculinity and traditional gender roles, suggesting that men suffer greatly from progressive gender divisions. This "crisis of masculinity" calls for traditional gender roles and a boosting of male superiority (Mountford 2018, 4). Accordingly, the Red Pill offers guidance for navigating in the modern world, where traditional masculinity is rejected. However, in contrast to some antifeminist groups that call for collective action, the Red Pill ideology focuses principally on personal growth and self-improvement of the red-pilled individuals (Dignam & Rohlinger 2019, 601).

Another prominent feature of the Red Pill ideology, which is also prevalent in almost every corner of the Manosphere, is the alpha-beta puzzle. The ideology divides all men into betas, "who are subservient to wives and girlfriends" and alphas, "who hook up with multiple sexual partners without romantic commitment, control women through emotional manipulation, and possess a (predominantly sexual) agentic self" (Dignam & Rohlinger 2019, 600). Alpha males are thus viewed as strong, independent leaders, who fulfil the criteria of hegemonic masculinity, whereas beta males are perceived as non-masculine, weak and without sexual agency. The common position within the Red Pill community is that the alpha male status is the ideal to which every red-pilled individual ought to strive for. Hence, the beta men are (or they should be) in an ongoing pursuit of their personal transformation into alpha males. However, Ging (2019, 650) notes that even though alpha status is idealised within the community, the matter is not always straightforward: some parts of the Manosphere, like some geek and gamer movements, have in fact rejected the desire of the alpha male ideal, embracing their identification as beta males to highlight their difference, in what Ging calls "beta-victimhood discourse".

Alongside the alpha-beta terminology, some of the Red Pill adherers utilise a specific jargon which is also shared with other groups within the Manosphere. Ging (2019, 648) explains that

the community utilises “uniquely misogynist, heterosexist, and racist lexicon”, and mentions terms like *cuck*, referring to “a weak man whose girlfriend cheats on him, usually with black men” and *negging*, which means “giving backhanded compliments designed to undermine women’s confidence”. Furthermore, in the Red Pill discourse, a sexually active and attractive alpha male is either a *Chad*, *Tyrone*, or *Chang*, depending on whether the ethnic background of the individual is classified as Caucasian, African or Asian (Waśniewska 2020, 72). Individuals outside the Red Pill community are often referred to as *normies*, but the term is used to describe “average-looking” males, too (Waśniewska 2020). Hence, the Red Pill discourse’s lexicon showcases the inherent misogyny of the ideology, but also its prevalent racist values, as well as the evident fixation with appearance.

3.1 Red Pill and scientific theories

The Red Pill ideology is largely influenced by surface-level interpretations of evolutionary psychology (EP) and the sexual economics theory, and concepts from these approaches are used to justify many disputable views and attitudes. In a study of the Red Pill discourse on Reddit subforum r/TRP, Van Valkenburgh (2021) discovered that alongside the glorification of hegemonic masculinity, scientific discourses are deeply integrated in the Red Pill ideology, especially in the seduction strategies (referred also as *game*) embraced by the members. Accordingly, new users of the Red Pill subreddit are expected to familiarise themselves with certain biological and social theories, and to only post content that agrees with these commonly accepted views (Van Valkenburgh 2021, 86). This exemplifies the significance of these theories and accepted social “truths” within the Red Pill discourse.

The Red Pill philosophy and especially its seduction strategies are heavily saturated with assumptions derived from EP, as concepts from evolution and biology are used to explain both female and male sexual behaviours and endeavours. Ging (2019, 648) argues that within antifeminist movements, the interpretations of these theories are superficial, and the concepts are used merely to legitimise the negative perceptions of women, like their undeniable irrationality and imperative desire to pair with alpha males. According to Van Valkenburgh (2021, 90) the Red Pill ideology views human nature as essentially unchangeable, since it is heavily based on biology. Furthermore, the Red Pill ideology shares an assumption of the sexes having certain natural roles that are based on biology and physical features (Mountford 2018, 2). Following the principles of EP, Red Pill philosophy is established on the belief that “human behavior and psychology have evolved to maximize gene reproduction” (Van

Valkenburgh 2021, 90). This notion assumes that the differences between reproductive interests explain the sexual selection of individuals, but also the very fundamental differences in personality between men and women. Understanding EP principles is thus necessary for the Red Pill members for two reasons: to recognize the true nature of women and to develop successful tactics to seduce women.

From EP, the Red Pill philosophy has also adopted the notion that due to biological reasons, women seek to have sexual relationships with certain types of men but wish to marry different types of men: within the Red Pill ideology, “women are thought to have a contradictory biological drive to sleep with men who will provide them with “good genes” but who won’t necessarily help support offspring” (Van Valkenburgh 2021, 92). Women are thus expected to act exclusively on their collective biological and evolutionary instincts when choosing a partner, this way securing their reproductivity. The assumption of a biology-based female mating strategy is also connected to the alpha/beta distinction among men. According to the Red Pill philosophy, even though women want to use alpha males for sex, they still wish to marry a beta male, who will support their children emotionally and financially (Van Valkenburgh 2021, 92). Relationships and partner selection are thus surveyed solely from the perspective of reproduction and practicality, while emotional needs and connections are ignored completely. Based on this logic, the ideology also holds a strong presupposition of the traditional narrative of heterosexual relationships, entailing marriage and having children.

Alongside EP, the Red Pill community has utilized neoliberal economics and the rational actor -theory directly to explain relationships and sexual relations (Van Valkenburgh 2021). The Red Pill ideology has adopted the sexual economics theory (Baumeister & Vohs 2004), which, in a nutshell, sees heterosexual pairing as a marketplace, where women are the sellers and men the buyers of sex. Thus, sexual relations are perceived to exist in the context of a social system, where the laws of supply and demand apply, and relationships are affected by the actions of other participants in the market. Furthermore, following the market logic, sexual interactions are not equal relations: sexual intercourses are occasions where a man gets something from a woman, and can give “material gifts, consideration and respect, commitment to a relationship as desired by her, or other goods” in exchange to make the instance “equal” (Baumeister & Vohs 2004, 340). Hence, the theory holds a very practical and utilitarian view on sexual relations.

Within the sexual marketplace, one's market value can also be determined. The sexual market value (often abbreviated as SMV) of an individual is largely based on appearance and perceived attractiveness, and it can be described by units from 1 – 10 (Van Valkenburgh 2021, 98). This way, individuals are viewed essentially as objects and commodities, who can be exchanged and whose value can be increased by “improving” their physical appearance. Applying economic discourse to relationships causes sexual relationships to be valued only by their quantity, and consequently, the Red Pill philosophy essentially applies capitalist logic on relationships, where intimacy and emotional needs are again entirely overlooked (Van Valkenburgh 2021, 99). Rudman & Fetterolf (2014, 1439) also accurately point out that the sexual economics theory and the perception of sex as female commodity effectively reflect and maintain the patriarchy, as they portray women as fundamentally unequal to men. The sexual economics theory thus matches with the underlying values of the Red Pill community.

3.2 Red Pill as a community

It could be concluded that adherence to the Red Pill ideology does not concern any specific group within the Manosphere. Instead, the ideology covers a whole spectrum of antifeminist subgroups and individuals. Therefore, it could be argued that individuals following the Red Pill ideology do not necessarily form a coherent, organized *community* per se: the individuals could be members of different subgroups inside the Manosphere, or they could simply believe in the Red Pill philosophy without identifying with any of the antifeminist groupings.

However, I argue that since all of the Red Pill supporters share the same core beliefs about the ideology, including the assumption of gynocentric social order and feminist delusion, it could be justified to group them together under the (albeit loose and unofficial) concept of a Red Pill community. To further support this notion, it could be argued that the Red Pill supporters constitute a certain *discourse community*, a concept developed by Swales (1990), who defines discourse communities as groupings of people united by certain common goals and beliefs and having means of communication to fulfil these goals. In addition, Swales (1990) lists the acquisition of specific shared lexis as one of the defining characteristics of a discourse community. As the Red Pill supporters share similar belief system, have common goals (e.g., exposing feminism and enforcing men's hegemonic status) and have acquired specific jargon, the grouping does reflect several qualities of a discourse community. Additionally, (Borg 2003, 400) notes that among discourse community, new members “must conform to the expectations of the community in order to enter it”, which matches with the Red Pill

community as well: new supporters of the Red Pill ideology are expected familiarise themselves with the commonly accepted social theories before participating to the discussion, as was established in the previous section of this paper.

For these reasons, I will use the term Red Pill community to refer to the supporters of the ideology in the current study. In my view, the Red Pill (discourse) community covers the whole Manosphere and its subgroups, but also scattered individuals adhering to the Red Pill philosophy. Furthermore, the Instagram accounts analysed in this study all seem to share the adherence to the Red Pill ideology, but do not explicitly identify with any of the subgroups within the Manosphere. For this reason, I see that these kinds of accounts associate with this more generalised Red Pill community, which unites different antifeminist subgroups and red-pilled individuals.

3.3 Red Pill and Instagram

Some of the Red Pill discourse takes place in virtual domains which are restricted, difficult to access, and possibly unfamiliar to the general public. For instance, possibly the most prominent domain for Red Pill discourse has been the aforementioned TRP subforum on Reddit.com, which has been “quarantined” (considered as controversial and therefore hidden in Reddit searches) since October 2018 (Krendel 2020, 608). However, in recent years, the ideology has spread from such relatively marginal domains into mainstream platforms, including Instagram. The ideology breaking new territory is an alarming indication that online antifeminism is indeed becoming more virulent than before. In the current study, I focus on the Red Pill discourse on Instagram, and I analyse Instagram accounts that express explicit support towards the Red Pill ideology. Instagram is perhaps not the most appealing platform for misogynist or other extremist groups, as these groups tend to discuss in relatively covert and private domains, where the community consists mostly of like-minded individuals, and where more extremist views and explicit language use are tolerated or even encouraged. In contrast, Instagram is more open, public and an extremely popular platform that is not intended for spreading extremist or hostile attitudes, and therefore, the domain is not the most obvious choice for conducting this type of research. However, I argue that Instagram offers some potential advantages for misogynist groupings that could have increased their participation on the platform, which also makes the choice of using this domain beneficial for

my research. I introduce the domain of Instagram and these advantages in the following sections.

Instagram is a photo-sharing platform that is primarily designed for mobile devices. The platform allows its users to take and upload pictures, videos, reels, or more temporary stories that disappear after 24 hours. Even though Instagram is essentially a picture sharing application, it has social dimensions as well: the platform can act as a route to connect with others, either through commenting on other user's posts, or via private messages between users. The users can also add hashtags to their content, so that other users searching for or following the particular hashtag can easily find the post. Hence, it is possible to reach wide audiences and make new connections by using hashtags. Instagram has over a billion registered users, and 500 million active users daily, making it one of the most popular social networking applications worldwide (statista.com 2021). The application is especially popular among younger users: most of the members are below the age of 35 (ibid.). With such a substantial number of active users, Instagram is a relatively open and well-known domain, in contrast to specific discussion forums or even quarantined websites.

Instagram takes an overt stance against abuse and hate speech, stating that hate speech is prohibited on the platform and such content will be deleted (Instagram 2021). The definitions of hate speech are not always clear, and for instance, Mills (2008, 39) argues that it is debatable whether sexism and misogyny count as hate speech, as sexism is fundamentally different from other types of discrimination, due to the relationship with men and women within societies, as opposed to the position of other discriminated groups. However, according to Instagram's guidelines, hate speech is defined as "a direct attack against people on the basis of what we call protected characteristics: race, ethnicity, national origin, disability, religious affiliation, caste, sexual orientation, sex, gender identity and serious disease" (Facebook community standards 2021), which indicates that Instagram does classify overtly misogynist discourse as hate speech. In addition, the app condemns "violent or dehumanizing speech, harmful stereotypes, statements of inferiority, expressions of contempt, disgust or dismissal, cursing and calls for exclusion or segregation" (ibid). Moreover, Instagram's official website claims that Instagram takes action whenever it detects hate speech, and the app is constantly improving its tools and algorithms to automatically identify abusive content (Instagram 2021). Continuous publishment of abusive content can also lead to the user's account being disabled for a period of time, or even deleted completely.

For these reasons, Instagram could not be beneficial domain for antifeminist groups: when operating in the platform, the content should not be “too extreme” or “too offensive”, otherwise the posts could be removed and the accounts might get disabled, according to Instagram’s guidelines. Adhering to the community regulations poses a potential problem for Red Pill supporters on Instagram, considering the fact that they often express fundamentally offensive content. They might therefore have to reduce the level of aggressiveness to continue their activity on the platform. It is, however, difficult to pinpoint when a content is too offensive for Instagram, as the boundaries of what is classified as hate speech can sometimes be blurry and up to interpretation. Expressing Red Pill ideologies on Instagram can thus be risky, as the content or the whole account could be removed from the platform.

Despite of this, I argue that there are motives for expressing and spreading such extremist ideologies via Instagram. One reason could be the fact that Instagram allows the supporters of the specific extremist ideology to access this type of content very easily, possibly alongside their daily social media consumption. Moreover, with features that allow content to be shared for large audiences, the platform could be an effective tool for recruiting new members and simultaneously spreading the ideology even further. In addition, I view that content on social media sites, like Instagram, is more digestible and more appealing than the content on more closed domains, especially for potential new supporters of the Red Pill ideology: it can feel more “acceptable” to follow these accounts, and in this way support the ideology in a more subtle manner, as opposed to participating in discussions on extremist forums or sites.

Similar subtler domains have been observed within extremist groups in earlier research as well: in their study of white supremacist network sites, Burris, Smith, and Strahm (2000) found several less explicit white supremacist sites (which they termed “softcore-sites”) that e.g., emphasized immigration restrictions and glorified Euro-American history instead of promoting more radical views. They believed that these subtler sites were central in recruiting new members for the movement, as the moderate sites could be appealing to potential supporters “who might be put off by the content of hardcore white supremacist sites” (Burris, Smith & Strahm 2000, 231). Accordingly, Schafer (2002, 72) points out that individuals can initially be against extremist ideologies, but if they are introduced to the ideology through more moderate issues, they might adopt even the extreme values and beliefs of the group over time. However, the “softer” and more moderate sites are still most likely organized and held by the extreme supporters of the supremacist organizations, as noted by Burris, Smith & Strahm (2000, 232), so it could be deduced that the softer appearance of these sites could be

merely a disguise, and a way of spreading the propaganda for wider audiences. In the context of Red Pill ideology, I see that Red Pill related Instagram accounts can be classified as being in the softer end of the continuum of explicitness within Red Pill related domains, and therefore effective for spreading the ideology and recruiting new supporters.

4 Theoretical Framework

In this section, I present the theoretical basis of this study and define some central concepts and terms used in this research. I introduce the term discourse and explore the key principles of critical discourse analysis. Lastly, I outline the framework of sociocognitive approach, which is the main method of the analysis.

Before moving to the precise theoretical basis of this research, one of the central terms, discourse, should be introduced. Definitions of the term are manifold, but in the scholarship of discourse studies, the meaning of discourse generally refers to language use as a form of social practice (Locke 2004, 13). The term can also be used to refer to communicative events, including both text and “any other ‘semiotic’ or multimedia dimension of signification” (van Dijk 2001, 98). Accordingly, van Dijk sees discourse as a “multidimensional social phenomenon”, covering a variety of processes including linguistic actions, social practices, communicative events and cultural products (2014, 393). In addition, Fairclough (2010, 59) emphasises that discourse consists of three dimensions: social practice, discursive practice and text (be it written or spoken). Thus, discourse analysis is not merely textual analysis, but it requires exploration of each of these three elements and their relations. Hence, the definition of discourse is complex, but in this study, I adopt the definition of discourse as a social phenomenon and use the term to describe the linguistic means by which the Red Pill community members reproduce their socially shared values. I also utilise the wider social and cultural contextualisation of discourse, as I scrutinise the Red Pill discourse in relation to the wider social context of online misogyny.

4.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is one way of examining text and discourse. The theory’s roots originate in the 1970’s when the discipline of critical linguistics was established, and in the early 1990’s, this critical viewpoint evolved into the nowadays internationally recognized approach of CDA (van Dijk 2008, 7 – 8). CDA can be defined several ways, and different scholars might have slightly distinctive views of the theory and its principles. Locke (2004, 26) explains that these varying definitions exist because critical studies, and especially the branch of CDA, are based on different schools of research, like neo-Marxism, poststructuralist deconstruction, or postmodernism. However, the main factor that unites the variations of

critical discourse studies is the objective to examine the “discursive reproduction of social power” (van Dijk 2008, 8). It should also be noted that, against the common understanding, CDA is not a specific method of analysing discourse and discursive practices. Rather, it could be defined as a perspective, covering a variety of approaches, all of which emphasise the critical stance in analysing language use (van Dijk 2016, 63). The discipline of CDA also highlights the need of interdisciplinary work in order to thoroughly understand how language is used to exercise power, and therefore CDA is often connected to several other subjects, like linguistics, sociology, politics or economics (Wodak & Meyer 2016, 7; Fairclough 2010, 4).

Critical, in the context of CDA, refers primarily to the viewpoint from which the researcher conducts their analysis (van Dijk 2016, 63). This critical look is connected to certain ethical values and views of a “good” or adequate society, which is generally thought to consist of values like justice, freedom, and the fulfilment of basic needs (Fairclough 2010, 7). CDA evaluates societies and aspects of the social world based on these values and investigates the gap between what societies should be and what they are (*ibid.*). CDA thus aims to identify and address social problems, like discursively expressed forms of power abuse, oppression, injustice, or inequality. Furthermore, CDA does not only aim to analyse the sources and causes of these problems but also attempts to explore their possible solutions. (Fairclough 2010, 231). Wodak & Meyer (2016, 2– 3) point out the notion that, in contrast to what is frequently assumed, the term “critical” is not synonymous with “negative”, and critical discourse scholars do not have to judge or negatively evaluate the investigated subject. Instead, they note that critical investigation involves challenging and questioning existing social phenomena.

Like other forms of discourse studies, CDA is not merely analysis of discourse, but it also includes analysis of the relations between discourse and other aspects of social processes (Fairclough 2010, 10). In addition, van Dijk (2003, 352) argues that CDA “rejects the possibility of a ‘value-free’ science”, meaning that critical discourse analysts have awareness of their own socio-political stance in society. The explicit aim of exposing power relations to support the oppressed or dominated groups, and the overt expression of the researcher’s own socio-political position are features that distinguish CDA from other scholarship on language (van Dijk 2001, 96). It is clear, then, that CDA is socially committed, and does not aim to be entirely neutral, as it explicitly recognizes its aims and objectives.

As I have chosen CDA as the methodological basis of my study, my own socio-political position as a researcher should also be addressed. In this study, I explicitly aim to critically examine and uncover the representations of women in the Red Pill discourse and study the various shared cognitive structures about women that are prevalent in the community. I see that the Red Pill ideology is essentially based on imbalance of power and that the Red Pill community has appropriated gendered power relations to acquire a sense of victimhood and establish an image of men as an oppressed group. Therefore, this study, like other CDA studies, cannot be viewed as entirely neutral or value-free. However, the analysis in section 6 will be predominantly based on the findings derived from the dataset, and I support my own inferences by linking them with earlier research as well.

4.1.1 Critical Discourse Studies on social media

CDA methods and principles can be applied to studies concerning language use on social media, as will be done in this study, but it should be noted that social media poses some issues for research that need to be considered. Khosravinik & Unger (2016, 211) describe social media as interactive and user-centred in nature, as opposed to traditional media, which produces unidirectional, “official” content, from producers to masses. These producers hold institutional power over the masses, and therefore traditional media can be regarded as a form of expert discourse (*ibid.*). In social media, however, the power relations are different: the content is mainly user-generated, and participants produce content primarily for each other. The expert role of the producer is reduced, as the position of the content creator is (generally) open for every participant. Hence, data from social media can be fruitful when analysing topical social issues from the grass-roots perspective. In addition, Khosravinik & Unger (2016, 216) point out that scholars cannot consider digital texts as existing in a distinct virtual reality, separated from the physical world: they are produced by individuals existing in the social reality, even though digital texts have distinct features that could influence the analysis process.

Internet and social media have transformed the process of data-gathering: web-based platforms allow the creation of extensive sets of natural language data, that would previously have been collected using interviews, ethnographic observation, or other more traditional data-obtaining methods (Koteyko 2010). Internet offers a variety of domains where different forms of data can be obtained, and the collection process is often relatively fast and

straightforward (Koteyko 2010, 658). Holtz, Kronberger & Wagner (2012, 56) note that virtual platforms offer comparatively natural data: there are no concerns of the researcher inferencing or influencing the language use that is taking place on the internet. This makes data from social media suitable for CDA research.

While having several advantages, data from social media can cause several potential concerns for researchers. Issues like representativeness, replicability and ethical concerns are something that researchers need to address when working with data from virtual domains. For instance, it could be argued that internet domains are intended to be private and using these domains as data for scientific research would therefore be unethical. However, data from social media ought to be treated similarly to data obtained via other methods: no personal or identifiable information from the participants should be provided (Bainotti, Caliandro & Gandini 2020, 5), which mitigates this concern. In addition, conceptions of privacy can vary according to context: Holtz, Kronberger & Wagner (2012, 57) point out that e.g., posts by various interest groups are usually designed for wide audiences and could thus be classified as “public behaviour”, which reduces the ethical problems.

Moreover, in online domains, users can unreservedly express and support radical views without exposing their real identities (Dignam & Rohlinger 2019, 592). It would be difficult to gather realistic data regarding these ideologically “sensitive” views, like different forms of hate and discrimination, in face-to face interactions, where individuals would most likely be more concerned about social desirability than they would be in the virtual world, and therefore would not communicate as openly (Holtz, Kronberger & Wagner 2012, 56; Lyons 2017). Replicability, then, is a complex issue, as virtual data is often dynamic in nature: data available at one moment could be quickly changed or deleted by the author. Common solution to this problem is to download the data from the platform and save it for research purposes (Koteyko 2010, 659). When it comes to representativeness, it is not possible in most cases to provide a completely representative sample of data, and studies examining Internet-based data are no exception. The aspect of representativeness must be considered in relation with the scope of the particular study, and it should also be noted that especially qualitative studies aim to study specific cases of different phenomena, not to cover them in their entirety. I will address the potential concerns related to research ethics and representativeness in the context of the current study in section 5.1.

4.1.2 Critical Discourse Analysis and Ideologies

As the focus of the current research is to study a certain sexist ideology, I now introduce the concept of ideologies and explain how they can be studied in the perspective of CDA. Several scholars have emphasized the significance of understanding ideologies, for instance, Fairclough (2010, 8) highlights their role in critical research and in the production and maintenance of power relations and inequalities, and van Dijk (2001, 103) writes that CDA research often focuses on “ideologically biased discourses”, as in texts that are (either overtly or covertly) based on certain ideology.

Ideologies can be defined as representations of the world from certain perspectives of interest (Fairclough 2010, 46). Reisigl & Wodak (2016, 25) in turn, describe ideology as “a system composed of related mental representations, convictions, opinions, attitudes, values and evaluations, which is shared by members of a specific social group”. Within different social groups, there are usually certain dominant ideological representations that are accepted by the majority, and these ideologies are prone to becoming naturalised, meaning that they are recognized as non-ideological truths, even as common sense that is not questioned (Fairclough 2010, 30). This perceived non-ideological and opaque nature enhances the effectiveness of naturalised ideologies, and therefore one of the objectives of CDA is to expose and deconstruct such ideologies (ibid.). The notion of hegemony is also related to ideologies, especially naturalised ones. According to Locke (2004, 33), hegemonic ideologies are widely supported, and the ideology is reinforced by the high social status of its subscribers. He adds that the naturalised position of an ideology “secures” its hegemonic nature (2004, 34).

Ideologies can be expressed through language use, and therefore aspects of language and discourse can be ideologically invested and hence reveal the ideological position of the language user: lexical meanings, presuppositions, metaphors, implicatures and other aspects of meaning can be used to express and reproduce different ideologies (Fairclough 2010, 60). Therefore, it is important for critical discourse analysts to recognize and evaluate the ideological structures located in discourse, and in this way expose possible implicit forms of power abuse. Like other forms of power distribution, power relations between men and women and the discursive reproduction of sexist ideologies can be examined from a critical perspective, which will be the focus of the current study.

For my research purposes, I use the critical perspective from CDA, since the current study focuses on power abuse and inequality that are expressed through sexist ideologies. The main objective of my study is to critically evaluate and investigate the representation of women in such discourse. However, as was mentioned, CDA is essentially a perspective for research, not a readily applicable theory, and therefore it should be combined with other approaches and methods, selected according to the goals of the study in question. Therefore, for a more specific methodology, I have chosen to utilise van Dijk's sociocognitive approach which will be introduced in the following section.

4.2 The sociocognitive Approach

The sociocognitive approach is one method for analysing discourse, located under the umbrella term of critical discourse analysis. The approach highlights the mental processes of language users as well as the relations between discourse and society. Because of this, the sociocognitive approach is especially useful for studying different cognitive and social phenomena, such as different social groups and their shared ideologies: the approach can be used to evaluate the usage of concepts like socially shared knowledge and beliefs in different communities (Sumin & Cheatham 2020, 4). Thus, the approach can be utilised to the Red Pill community as well; In this study, I critically analyse the discourse and the socially shared conceptions that stem from the Red Pill ideology among the members of the Red Pill community. Therefore, the method matches well with my goals of research.

According to van Dijk (2016, 64), discourse and society are cognitively mediated, meaning that discourse structures and social structures are related through the cognitive processes of language users. The sociocognitive approach highlights the importance of cognitive processes taking place in the minds of language users: it presumes that different socio-political contexts can influence discourse, but only through the mental representations of language users (Sumin & Cheatham 2020, 4). As Van Dijk himself explains:

Thus, social interaction, social situations and social structures can only influence text and talk through people's interpretations of such social environments. And conversely, discourse can only influence social interaction and social structures through the same cognitive interface of mental models, knowledge, attitudes and ideologies (Van Dijk 2016, 64).

This notion of cognitive mediation is fundamental in critical analysis of communicative practices. All discourse structures are not necessarily observable, because they are fundamentally language user's cognitive interpretations, and thus van Dijk emphasises that discourse analysis should not be limited only to observable features of discourse (van Dijk 2001; 2016). van Dijk (2001, 98) sees discourse, cognition, and society as tightly interconnected, and existing in a triangular connection. Under the term cognition, he includes mental structures and processes like knowledge, beliefs, goals, and emotions that are involved in social interactions, and finally, by society, van Dijk refers to not only global societal institutions and processes in the macrolevel, but also to local interpersonal interactions of participants in the microlevel (ibid.).

Naturally, focusing solely on mental processes does not constitute a comprehensive practice of discourse analysis: in addition to cognitive and social elements of discourse, van Dijk (2014, 392) notes that discursive analysis should focus on linguistic structures as well. He explains that the sociocognitive approach can focus on discourse characteristics like specific topics, negative descriptions of social groups, arguments or word-choices, which are then analysed in relation to underlying *mental models*, attitudes and ideologies of language users (2016, 64). Thus, while analysing linguistic elements, the sociocognitive approach presumes that mental models are always involved in language use. These cognitive models are not objective representations of the events or situations that are observed, rather they are unique and subjective, representing the ways language users themselves interpret the discourse (van Dijk 2008, 59). Mental models therefore reflect the opinions and emotions of language users, and this way the models impact text and talk.

The wider social conditions of analysed discourse are also evaluated in sociocognitive analysis: van Dijk (2001, 96) points out that detailed analysis of discourse provides explanations on how discourse reproduces domination and resistance within society. Consequently, the sociocognitive approach can be used for locating and exposing the structures of discourse that are involved in the reproduction of power abuse. These ideological structures often reflect underlying and possibly unconscious attitudes and ideologies. Especially discourses of different social groups and communities are fruitful ground for sociocognitive analysis: communities often share specific *social cognition* and shared *social representations* that stem from certain commonly accepted ideology or ideologies, and these shared social cognitions can influence the personal mental models of individuals within that

community (van Dijk 2014, 397). Van Dijk (2014, 392) emphasises that relating the analysed discourse with the shared social knowledge and socially shared representations within group members is an important aspect of sociocognitive research.

In addition to outlining the triangular relationship of discourse, cognition and society, van Dijk (2016) has proposed an ideological square, a model including the perceived oppositions between self and others, which can be used for evaluating participants' discourse positions. As Sumin & Cheatham (2020, 9) formulate, the square consists of following strategies: "proposing positive self, in-group descriptions and negative other, out-group descriptions while de-emphasizing negative self, in-group representation and positive other, out-group representation". As the square can be effective in recognizing ideologically biased and polarised discourse, where other social groups or opposing ideologies are presented in a negative light, it is a suitable addition for the methodology of the current study. The materials and methods that were utilised in the analysis will be introduced in the following section.

5 Material and Methods

In this section I present my research material and explain the reasons for choosing the specific dataset for the current study. After that, I introduce my research questions and discuss more specifically the ways I apply the main method of analysis, the sociocognitive approach, into this set of research material. I also consider the ethical aspects of this research, which are important factors in studies where the data is collected from social media platforms

5.1 Research Material

For my material, I have chosen to analyse posts from three Instagram accounts that explicitly support and reproduce the attitudes and objectives of the Red Pill ideology. The selected accounts are relatively popular (7000 –76 000 followers at the time the data was gathered), and they post content that is (supposedly) aimed to be inspirational and motivational, for the other members of this community. The accounts were selected based on their very evident support of Red Pill ideology, as well as their popularity, since accounts with high follower count have wide audiences and can therefore be seen as influential and having high status in the community. I believe that these three accounts provide a relatively representative sample of the Red Pill discourse, since they are followed, and thus ideologically accepted by a large number of users. The data was gathered manually from the public Instagram accounts of these users on May 2nd, 2021, by screenshotting 30 most recent posts from each account, which makes the total size of the dataset 90 posts. Considering the scope of the current study, a more extensive dataset would not have been achievable since the analysis is qualitative in nature.

The accounts posted both original as well as forwarded content. Especially one of the accounts often used quotations from influential individuals within the Manosphere, like quotes from popular writers or podcasters. All the accounts used various hashtags in their posts, presumably to widen the audience of their postings. The hashtags were related to various groups within the Manosphere, which suggests that the ideas expressed by these accounts are suitable for most of the subgroups. In addition, hashtags like #Psychology, #Behaviour, #datingadvice and #selfimprovement were used, most likely to reach individuals outside the Manosphere. This way, for instance, users who are interested in psychology or self-help content could encounter these accounts and their posts. This usage of hashtags supports the assumption that the Red Pill ideology covers the whole Manosphere, as well as other individuals interested in the ideology, creating a particular Red Pill community, which

was discussed in section 3.2. An example of an Instagram post published by one of the selected accounts is provided in Figure 1. The username of the account is omitted from the example.

Chasing Women

Who are the truly unhappy males? They are those who live for women's desire.

These include the Nice Guys, the Players, and anyone who dresses, talks, and even puts their profession at what 'women want'.

These guys have no sense of self when a woman stands before them.

– Pook, *The Book of Pook*



4,365 likes

#RedPill #MGTOW #PUA #Game
 #Psychology #Behavior #Evolution #Pook #SoSuave
 #TheBookOfPook #RolloTomassi #RationalMale
 #FreeAgentLifestyle #Marriage #Dating #Divorce
 #Relationships #Masculinity #Strength #Confidence
 #Courage #Charisma #Discipline #Order #Stoicism

Figure 1: Example of an Instagram post from the collected dataset.

The focus of this study is limited to the posted images only, and therefore the stories, videos or other material posted by these accounts were not included in the analysis, to keep the scope of the study controllable. In addition, the captions and hashtags of the posts were excluded from the analysis. Even though captions do constitute to the overall discursive meaning of an Instagram post, I claim that including the captions and hashtags would have added unnecessary complications to the analysis process. The captions of the analysed posts varied noticeably: some accounts used relatively lengthy captions, whereas others did not always include captions at all, and used only hashtags. However, the majority of the captions seemed to repeat and underline the message expressed in the posted image, and therefore I argue that including the captions in the analysis would not have added significant value to this study,

and it was possible to obtain a representative example of the Red Pill discourse on Instagram by focusing solely on the textual elements of the images.

Even though the data of this research is gathered from Instagram, a platform intended primarily for photo-sharing and where images and visual language play the most prominent role, I do not include the visual aspects of the posts in my analysis. In other words, the analysis will not be multimodal in nature, but the focus lies solely on the textual elements and the language use of these posts. This is due to the fact that while the posts are in an image format, they contain primarily textual content and not much visual aids are utilised (as demonstrated in Figure 1). Perhaps the most prominent visual feature of the dataset is an image that one of the accounts includes in every post. The image portrays a jar filled with red pills, evidently indicating the support of the Red Pill ideology. The other two accounts did not utilise images in their posts.

Due to the lack of visual imagery, I view that the posts could be viewed essentially as text posts. It could be argued that for my research purposes, it would be more justified to analyse material that is originally in a text format, for instance data gathered from a discussion forum, but I see that studying data gathered from Instagram has several advantages for my research, which influenced the decision to choose this specific set of data. As discussed earlier in this study, Instagram is currently an extremely popular platform, and therefore, the potential audience of these posts is significantly wider than it would be in a specific, more marginal discussion forum of this community, which would be a relatively closed domain: people who are not interested in the ideology would not, in general, visit these sites. In contrast, on Instagram, individuals may come across this content more easily, even by accident. Instagram as a platform can therefore be used to spread the Red Pill ideology even further, reaching potential new supporters and recruiting new members in the community. Furthermore, I was interested in the assumption that the Red Pill supporters cannot use as explicit and offensive language on Instagram as they could on some other forums or discussion sites without risking their accounts from being deleted or banned, which could make the discourse in Instagram “softer” in nature. Due to these reasons, the Red Pill discourse on Instagram can have some distinctive features that make the domain interesting for my research purposes.

Another aspect that encouraged the selection of this type of data is my interest in the fact that these posts are not misogynist discourse or gendered harassment in the most “traditional”

sense: the posts can be interpreted as a form of motivational and nearly inspirational speech, since they are expressed as images which can be easily saved and shared with others, and since the posts offer advice on how to apply the principles of the Red Pill ideology to different real-life situations. The texts often address the reader directly, as in giving advice precisely for them and encouraging them to follow the advice, and this way the accounts attempted to connect with the reader. The analysed accounts posted almost daily during the time of data-gathering, so I presume that their aim was to give motivational content to their followers on a regular basis, in an easily readable and compact format.

5.2 Ethical Considerations

Several issues were considered to ensure this study's research ethics. To begin with, the data used in this study is collected from public accounts, which are available for every Instagram user. Instagram does allow their users to make their account private if that is desired, and private accounts are visible only to the accepted followers of the account. Public accounts can thus be viewed as publicly available data that is suitable for research purposes. In addition, the analysed accounts all used a variety of hashtags to widen the audience of their posts, which suggests that the posts are intended to reach as many users as possible. The posts were also not ephemeral in nature, like for instance Instagram stories are, which would have made the ethics of the dataset more complicated.

Furthermore, the privacy of the analysed accounts was considered: no personal information about the users is shared by the accounts, and thus the individuals behind the accounts will maintain their anonymity. I will not use any more information about the users in my study that is necessary to conduct the analysis. Accordingly, Holz, Kronberger & Wagner (2012, 57) write that in studies with data from social media, "the privacy of the users should not be compromised more than necessary", meaning that factors like usernames should not generally be included in studies, and researchers should usually avoid including direct quotes from social media data in their studies, to maintain their informants' anonymity. However, Holz, Kronberger & Wagner (2012, 57) admit that there is a "trade-off issue" between securing privacy of the informants and ensuring the transparency and accessibility of the data. I argue that demonstrating the discourse on these accounts with examples is an important factor in the context of my study, and therefore including direct quotes from the data could be considered justified. In addition, because the data can be classified as "public behaviour" (as defined by

Holz, Kronberger & Wagner 2012, 57), I believe it to be adequate to use direct quotations from my data in the analysis.

When collecting the dataset, I did consider whether consent from the users would be necessary for this study. Ravn, Barnwell & Barbosa Neves (2020, 41) propose that when data is considered public, “informed consent from users is not necessary according to most institutional ethics committees”. However, they note that not all publicly available data is in fact intended for the public, and hence advocate for a more “considerate approach to using and reproducing data from social media platforms of the publicity” (2020, 44). While I agree with this view, I argue that in the context of my dataset, the posts are indeed aimed for large audiences, instead of private purposes. In addition, the posts do not contain factors that could reveal personal information about the users or other possible individuals involved. The analysed posts merely express the contents of the Red Pill ideology, and therefore I assert that analysing this set of data is justified in terms of research ethics, even without the consent from the users.

5.3 Research Methods

The collected data will be analysed qualitatively, and I will conduct a critical textual analysis, utilising the critical look from CDA, overlapping with van Dijk’s sociocognitive approach, which is effective in analysing and exposing ideologically loaded texts. I will also utilise the critical perspective from critical discourse analysis, as I aim to address a contemporary social problem, that is, reproducing sexist ideologies online. The research questions to which I aim to answer by my analysis are:

1. How are women portrayed in the Red Pill discourse on Instagram?
2. How does the Red Pill ideology create the image of women as inferior?

And finally,

3. How does the Red Pill discourse on Instagram connect to the larger phenomenon of misogynist discourse online?

The aim of the analysis is to identify the representations of women and examine how the Red Pill ideology is used to create these images. As the focal point of the analysis is on the textual elements of the Instagram posts, I have transcribed the contents of the posts into textual form while including their original emphasis. Possible emojis were omitted from the examples.

Sociocognitive analysis of certain discourse can be conducted several ways, but in my analysis, I will mainly follow the recommendations of van Dijk. When examining subjects like sexist discourses, van Dijk (2001, 99) sees that focusing the “content” of the discourse, like topics, propositions and lexical items would be crucial, since these aspects of language are directly linked to sexist attitudes and ideologies. Thus, the initial step in my analysis is a topical analysis of the text, that focuses on identifying the topics and examining what they represent. Topics can be defined as semantic macrostructures that represent the “gist” of the discourse (van Dijk 2001, 102). In other words, topics are “the global meaning that language users constitute in discourse production and comprehension” (ibid.). While the concept of topics is sometimes used to describe high-level or even abstract principles, and often applied to longer sections of discourse, I will use the term topic in my analysis to express what each of these collected posts is about, i.e., the primary content of each post.

After the topical analysis follows an identification of the macrostructures concerning women in the Red Pill discourse. Even though sociocognitive analysis could be conducted by examining the local structures of a discourse, like lexical choices, metaphors, collocations, or argumentation strategies (van Dijk 2016), in this study, I will focus predominantly on identifying and analysing the broader discursive representations of women in the Red Pill discourse. I argue that focusing on these macrostructures is an effective way to adequately consider the ideological aspects and the shared cognitions that emerge from the discourse, and therefore this analytic choice matches with the objectives of this study. I will categorise the reoccurring representations of women, and discuss the implications and backgrounds of these representations, which provides answers to the first research question. I also consider how the discourse participants position themselves on the ideological square (van Dijk 2016), and how they create the ideological polarisation between “us” and “them”, in this case, men and women.

The third step is to interpret and examine the representations of women in relation to the socially shared attitudes and socially shared cognition of the community and discuss how the Red Pill community members mediate between shared social cognition and text and talk. I analyse the identified representations of women in relation to the shared social cognition of the Red Pill community, that is, the underlying beliefs and values the members share with each other, and this way answer to the second research question. I will also discuss how the

shared cognitions influence the personal mental models of the individual members. Furthermore, a significant part of conducting a sociocognitive analysis is linking the findings to a wider social context. In the current study, I contemplate how the discourse of the analysed dataset relates to the expanding phenomenon of sexist discourse online and discuss the wider sociocultural implications of the Red Pill discourse on Instagram in the Discussion section, addressing the third research question.

6 Analysis

In this section, I analyse how the shared social cognition of the Red Pill community manifests in selected set of data from Instagram accounts explicitly supporting the Red Pill ideology and examine how the Red Pill discourse constructs the ideology of women as inferior. I also provide examples from the data that support my inferences. I start with the topical analysis of the collected dataset, after which I move on to examine the representations of women in more detail. The fundamental beliefs and principles of the Red Pill ideology and the Manosphere in general were introduced in sections 2 and 3, and sufficient background knowledge of the attitudes and ideologies of the Red Pill community is essential for adequate interpretation and analysis of the dataset.

6.1 Topical Analysis

After conducting a close reading to the collected dataset, I identified three most prominent topics (defined as the most prominent content of the discourse) that emerged from the analysed posts. These topics were: 1) self-improvement or motivation 2) women and their actions 3) relationships. To illustrate how I identified the topics, one example of each will be provided: example 1 exemplifies the topic of *self-improvement or motivation*, whereas example 2 depicts the topic of *women and their actions*, and finally, in example 3, the prominent topic is identified to be *relationships*.

(1) Strong confident men are a dying breed
 You want to be in the top 1% of men? Start by getting in shape
 Enough of the excuses. Get in the gym and stay consistent
 You owe it to yourself to Become the best version of you there is.
 “You can have results or excuses, not both”

(2) The hottest women aren’t the best in bed. Oftentimes, they are the worst.

(3) You don’t need a girlfriend to get laid. You can sleep with lots of women without being in a relationship.

The topics sometimes overlapped with each other, and therefore boundaries of the classifications were flexible. Especially the distinction between the topics of *women and their actions* and *relationships* was not always clear cut, and many of the posts addressing relationships also discussed women and their behaviour, as will be demonstrated in the examples of section 6.3 of this paper. In addition, some of the posts could even be interpreted as addressing each of the enlisted topics, as showcased in example 4 below.

(4) Imagine losing your hard-earned money by taking a woman you barely know on a date, when all she's gonna do is play games.
 Have a "she gonna have to earn that date with me" mentality, and realize that if she's holding sex over your head, that's all she has to offer
 Instead, save your money and invest in you.

Example 4 contains features of the topic of *self-improvement and motivation*: it directly addresses the reader and offers them advice by encouraging them to have a specific mentality when dating women. The post also contains description of *women and their actions*, as it implies that (all) women are going to "play games" with men and manipulate them (a notion that will be discussed further in section 6.2.4). Furthermore, the post addresses *relationships and dating*, but essentially encourages men to "save your money and invest in you", implying that men should not see dating women as a priority, but instead, invest in themselves (see section 6.3.1).

Posts that combined several topics were classified as belonging to several categories, which means that example 4 was categorised as concerning each of the three enlisted topics. While this example demonstrated the occasional blurry and overlapping lines between the topics, it should be emphasised that the main objective of the topical analysis was to uncover the most prominent and reoccurring themes of the dataset, instead of placing the posts into rigidly fixed categories. The topical analysis was thus conducted to illustrate which themes or issues the Red Pill community finds important. Since these enlisted topics were the most frequent, and almost all of the collected posts addressed at least one of them, the topics can be seen as reflecting the shared ideological values of the community. I will now examine these three topics further in the following sections, while providing more examples of each.

The first frequent topic that was identified from the posts was *self-improvement or motivation*: posts under this topic focused on inspiring, advising or motivating the reader to be better versions of themselves, both mentally and physically, this way pushing them to achieve the status of an alpha male. The prevalence of this topic matches with the findings of Dignam & Rohlinger (2019), who argued that the Red Pill ideology is predominantly focused on the self-development and "improvement" of its supporters, instead of encouraging collective actions against perceived injustice in society. Based on the frequency of this topic, it seems that one of the main goals of these accounts is to give the readers advice and inspiration on how to transform themselves into the alpha ideal, or how to feel more powerful and motivated in general. This implies that the accounts share a belief that any man can

become an alpha, if they have enough motivation and strength to change their life, which highlights men's own responsibility with their lives, aligning with meritocratic values (see O'Neill 2015). Thus, it can be deduced that these accounts reject the notion of men accepting or, worse still, embracing their beta position.

Contrarily, the alpha status and overt expressions of masculinity and power are valued in the analysed discourse. Several posts, including the examples 5 – 8, expressed advice on how to become more confident, disciplined, powerful, and unemotional (or “cold”). These are features that are often associated with ideals of traditional or hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005), and thus the discourse reproduces and promotes the principle of men fulfilling the criteria of hegemonic masculinity. The prominence of this topic in the Red Pill discourse could be related to the notion that there exists a certain “crisis of masculinity” (Mountford 2018), according to which masculine features and values are being threatened and undermined by feminism and gender equality in contemporary society. This view can be regarded as a certain shared social cognition within the members of the Red Pill community, as it is widely accepted and perceptibly often reproduced. Consequently, this mental model of masculinity deprivation is reflected in the Red Pill discourse in the form of advice and self-help content on how to perform hegemonic masculinity in everyday life, this way fighting against the “feminine” values, as showcased in the examples:

(5): Alpha is an ideal to strive for. It is the perfect platonic form of a masculine leader. There are very few “true alphas” out there. But you should try your best every day to live up to the Alpha ideal.

(6): 5 Things to Make You Cold

1. Kill the beta, your inner bitch.
 2. Get in the best shape of your life.
 3. Master a skill or trade.
 4. Always seek to gain more knowledge.
 5. Take The Red Pill.
- StephIsCold

(7): The world needs more masculinity. Boys need father figures to show them how to be a man. We are now being told masculinity is “toxic” But in reality, they don't want us to reach our full potential. We need to look after each other brothers This is a cruel world.

(8): Toxic Masculinity

Toxic masculinity is a first world problem. **It's a tactic used by women to shame men for using their natural instincts.** Because the quicker you put males and females in survival situations, the quicker they're going to revert to their natural gender roles.

You're not going to call me toxically masculine if someone breaks into the house and I start spraying. **No one was called toxically masculine when they were staying on the Titanic to die.**

- Andrew Tate, Fresh & Fit Podcast

In addition, it is notable that the concept of toxic masculinity is actively invalidated in the Red Pill discourse. As summarised by Jones, Trott & Wright (2020, 1906), toxic masculinity results from promoting and idealising the negative and “toxic” traits of masculinity, such as violence, domination, and suppression of women. The concept of toxic masculinity is thus constructed of the negative and destructive features of hegemonic masculinity. The examples show that the Red Pill discourse dismisses the harms of toxic masculinity by branding it as an artificial problem: according to example 7, calling masculinity “toxic” is a way to prevent men “reaching their full potential”, where the “full potential” presumably refers to the overtly masculine alpha status that is glorified within the community. On a similar vein, example 8 asserts that the concept of toxic masculinity is merely a “tactic used by women to shame men for using their natural instincts”, establishing a notion of toxic masculinity as an imaginary concept that is made up specifically by women, while adding that the toxic traits of masculinity are, in fact, natural for all men. I argue that these views are linked to the shared cognition of men being victims of female manipulation, and to the belief that feminism and liberal political environment have subverted the “natural gender order”, and this change has not been beneficial for men. Consequently, feminism is viewed as a movement that is fundamentally against men, attempting to delegitimise men’s deserved rights.

6.2 Representations of women

In addition to the masculinity-emphasising self-improvement content, the other dominant topics were *women and their behaviour*, and *relationships* (with women). Since the representations of women in the Red Pill discourse is the main focus of my study, I will now investigate these topics in more detail, and categorise the prominent strategies how the Red Pill discourse constructed the image of women as inferior to men and discuss how these strategies relate to the shared social cognition of the Red Pill community.

In total, 47 posts of the collected 90 posts concerned either women and their behaviour, or relationships with women. Hence, more than half of the collected posts included discourse about women, which showcases the significant role of women in the Red Pill discourse. Even though the supposed aim of the ideology is to help individuals to become “better” versions of

themselves by providing self-help content and advice, as was noted in the previous section, a large portion of the discourse in the dataset was devoted to discussion about women. This is, however, not surprising, since the Red Pill ideology is heavily based on antifeminist and sexist values.

6.2.1 Polarisation between men and women

In line with the misogynist nature of the Red Pill ideology, the analysed Red Pill discourse describes women as a group and their behaviour very negatively. With these representations, the discourse establishes a clear ideological polarity between men and women, emphasizing the apparent negative traits of women and femininity, while dismissing the negative traits of men and masculinity. The Red Pill discourse tends to be extremely polarized in nature, as it views women and the surrounding feminist society as the sources of men's suffering, and therefore dispelling women is seen as justified. The discourse often suggests that there exist certain underlying and unchangeable differences between the sexes and constructs an ideological polarisation between men and women by utilising various othering attitudes to differentiate the Red Pill community members from the out-group members, in this case, from women (for polarisation and othering attitudes, see van Dijk 2016). The Red Pill discourse thus overtly employs the positive-self-negative-other -strategy, where out-group members are described negatively, and in-group member's positive traits are highlighted. Hence, the participants of this discourse position themselves as opposed to women, but also as above women in the ideological square (van Dijk 2016).

(9) DON'T kiss and tell. That is what women do. Not men.

(10) **Women Talk, Men Do**

Men are made; women are born. You need to do the work on yourself if you want to be successful with women.

Never forget that women have always viewed **men** as success objects, whereas men have always viewed **women** as sex objects.

- Rich Cooper, The Unplugged Alpha

This underlying ideological polarisation is visible in the analysed dataset: according to example 9, the Red Pill discourse positions that there are, for instance, negatively evaluated actions or behaviours that are characteristic only for women, and not for men. In addition, example 10 contains a statement "men are made; women are born", which creates an assumption that women are born as certain way, and simply cannot change their nature, whereas men *can* change and develop themselves for the better by "making" themselves

successful. Men's nature and identity is thus not predetermined, and men are capable of adopting new identities and acquiring new worldviews, and this notion is reflected in the principles of the Red Pill ideology, too: according to the ideology, men can adopt a new worldview by "swallowing the red pill", and they can (and should) transform themselves to match the alpha ideal. This type of transformation is seemingly not possible for women: according to Van Valkenburgh (2021, 91) the Red Pill ideology asserts that because women simply cannot use logic or rational thinking, they cannot acquire the Red Pill philosophy, at least not in its entirety. Understanding and adopting the ideology requires logic and critical thinking, which deemed to be impossible for women.

The dataset demonstrated that the attitudes concerning the very underlying differences between the abilities and features of men and women are reproduced in the Red Pill discourse. This discursive polarisation could stem from commonly accepted notion within the Manosphere that there exists a certain natural hierarchy of the sexes which justifies the differing attitudes towards the roles and abilities of men and women, as discussed in section 2 of this paper. In addition, the interpretations of evolutionary psychology, which emphasise the biological differences between the sexes and use them as an explanation for female or male behaviour, have influenced the shared social cognition and the personal mental models of the members of the Red Pill community, as these interpretations are deeply rooted in the Red Pill ideology. Overall, this ideological polarisation, justified by biological "facts", is a useful tool in promoting antifeminist values. By acquiring the attitude that men are inherently different and naturally superior to women, men can rightfully position themselves ideologically as above women.

Another feature that arose from the analysed dataset was the evident homogenisation of women, which is also linked to the polarisation strategies, as homogenisation of the opposed group can enforce and aid polarisation. The dataset showed that the Red Pill discourse seems to deny any individual differences among women, grouping them into homogeneous group, sharing certain universal characteristics inherent to all women. Women are portrayed as acting and behaving very collectively, which is showcased in essentially all of the examples concerning women in this analysis. This implies that according to the Red Pill ideology, men should not believe their own personal perceptions of women, instead, men ought to accept the notion of all women being fundamentally alike each other.

Accordingly, Van Valkenburgh (2021, 96) notes that in the Red Pill Reddit subforum (r/TRP), an abbreviation AWALT (all women are like that) is used, which showcases that the social cognition of female homogeneity is firmly established in the Red Pill community.

Furthermore, this view is supported by Krendel (2020), who studied the TRP subforum on Reddit and focused on the representations of different social actors. The results showed that the female gender role was represented more homogeneously than the male gender role in the TRP discourse, and women “were judged negatively for features that were represented as innate to all women” (Krendel 2020, 627). This belief of a certain fated female nature is extremely problematic, as it depicts the entire gender as a homogeneous group that even has a collective aim, that is, manipulating and exploiting men. Again, portraying women as a homogeneous and coherent group and actively denying their individuality can be an effective strategy for spreading antifeminist ideologies: if the goal is to dispel all women, it is more feasible and effective to attach negative features to women as a group, instead of viewing women as individuals with distinct features.

6.2.2 Women as controlled by their biology

The data demonstrated that women are viewed as operating almost solely based on their biological needs or instincts, especially when they interact with men, and this interaction between the sexes is perceived to be motivated exclusively by sexual relationships and genetic reproduction: example 11 implies that women choose their “mating” partners solely based on their reproductive interests. Therefore, women are attracted to men with “high social status, including intelligence, confidence, ambition, the ability to produce and defend resources and social dominance” i.e., features often associated with alpha males. In contrast, traits like submissiveness, laziness and weakness are perceived negatively, as they are the opposite of the ideal of (traditional) masculinity, and therefore women would avoid and even be “disgusted” by these features. In addition, women would “punish” all “weak” (unmasculine) men by treating them poorly.

(11) **Evolutionary Mating**

Women hold a universal preference for men who exhibit cues associated with **high social status**, including **intelligence, confidence, ambition**, the ability to **procure** and **defend** resources, and **social dominance**.

Few women throughout our evolutionary history were driven to sexual frenzy at the prospect of mating with an apathetically **lazy, pear-shaped, nasal-voiced, submissive, cowardly, whiny** man.

- Gad Saad, The Parasitic Mind

(12) Women Punish Weak Men

Women treat submissive men terribly to punish them for existing. Disgusted by the idea of their genetic offspring, **females punish the dutiful coward hoping to inspire *some* masculinity in the form of resistance.**

Females do not want weak babies **from weak fathers.**

- Andrew Tate

These representations of women in examples 11 and 12 stem from the interpretations of evolutionary psychology theories, and match with the assumption that women have an uncontrollable biological drive to have sexual intercourses with males who would provide “good” genetic offspring, as discussed in section 3.1. This representation of women as controlled by their biology actively denies women’s sexual agency, since according to it, female sexuality cannot be consciously controlled by women themselves (Denes 2011, 415), but is regulated by some universal biological needs.

6.2.3 Dehumanisation of women

Some of the collected posts used dehumanisation as a strategy to create an image of women as being intellectually and emotionally subordinate to men. Example 13 describes women like they simply cannot use logic or rational thinking. In addition, the post encourages men to “cut off all contact with her” in order to “let her think about it” if they should have arguments or conflicts with women. This behaviour should then make women “comply” and submit to men’s wills, apparently regardless of the reason for the conflict. Example 13 also suggests that women crave men’s attention to the point that they cannot bear being without it, which inevitably causes women to “fall back in line”, should this attention be declined. These descriptions parallel women with children, or even with animals, that have little to no emotional maturity, and should thus be educated or trained to act certain ways. Moreover, example 13 suggests that women ought to be submissive, or the relationship should be ended. Example 14 also compares women to children and animals, implying that women, children, and dogs receive (possibly undeserved) unconditional love, as opposed to men, who must provide something in order to be loved.

(13) Comply or Goodbye

Do not argue with women. They will not let a thing like logic or reason get in the way of their emotional hissy fit. You set the boundary, then cut off all contact with her for about four to five days to let her think about it.

Remember, attention is the coin of the realm of women, so when you remove it, they lose their mind and will usually automatically fall back in line. **She will either comply, or it’s “Goodbye.”**

- Rich Cooper, The Unplugged Alpha

(14) **Conditional Love**

Women, children, and dogs are loved unconditionally.

A man is only loved under the condition that he provides something.

- Chris Rock

Moreover, in the Red Pill discourse, women are viewed through the sexual economics theory; Women are portrayed as commodities, that can be more or less “marketable”, and this sexual market value is presumably determined by women’s appearance. According to example 15, women “become less marketable” in their 30s, which implies that women’s perceived attractiveness, and simultaneously their market value, inevitably decreases as women age. On the other hand, example 15 states that men can “become more attractive and powerful in their 30s and 40s”, which contains a supposition that men can have other factors that increase their market value, such as (social or physical) power. The example also implies that men’s appearance can, in fact, increase with age, which is not possible for women.

(15) **Why Women Lose The Dating Game**

1. Many attractive women in their 20s reject all but the most attractive and powerful men.
2. Many of those rejected men go on to become more attractive and powerful in their 30s and 40s.
3. When those women turn 30, they become less marketable and are surprised to learn that the top men don’t want them – *because they’re now chasing the women that they used to be.*

A woman’s SMV is not something women themselves are in control of, but their SMV is essentially determined by the subjective perceptions of men, the “buyers” of sex, following the capitalist-economic logic (Van Valkenburgh 2021, 98). According to this view, men are therefore in position of power over women in the sexual marketplace. Consequently, women can “lose the dating game” as their market value decreases. Applying the sexual economics theory to women is another strategy that dehumanises and objectifies women, as it indicates that women’s value is determined solely by their perceived sexual attractiveness, making their appearance the most significant resource a women can bring to a relationship (Rudman & Fetterolf 2014, 1446).

According to earlier studies, dehumanisation of women is prevalent in the discourse of the whole Red Pill community, as in other parts of the Manosphere as well: in a corpus study of the Red Pill subreddit, Krendel (2020) noted that women were often dehumanised, and their value was reduced to their physical appearance only. Denes (2011) also observed

dehumanisation of women in the analysis of Pick-up Artists' texts and noticed that women were conceptualised as being without sense of logic and morality and were often compared to controllable and trainable animals (Denes 2011, 415), which, as established, were visible notions in the discourse Red Pill community on Instagram, too. Another way of dehumanising women within the Pick-up Artist discourse was to remove women's personhoods, emotions and agency completely and equate them with machines, consequently creating a picture of women as "passive domestic servants", with men as their controllers (ibid). This supposition of women being passive and submissive was also reflected in example 13.

Hence, dehumanisation can be seen as a common strategy within the discourse of the Red Pill community. The strategy is an extreme way of attempting to subordinate women: as dehumanisation parallels women with animals or objects, it essentially implies that women are not even same species as men, and men can control women as they wish. This attitude could be rooted in evolutionary psychology, as the notion of females belonging to different "species" than males is one of the most radical interpretations of EP literature (see, for example, Trivers 1972, 153). Based on the analysis of the current study and earlier research, this attitude that women are not logical beings but act solely on their instincts, is a shared social cognition within the Red Pill community, which manifests itself in the form of strategies like dehumanisation. Contrarily, the community shares a cognition that *men* are logical, can acquire and conceptualise scientific theories and ideologies, and consequently are able to understand the "true" state of society, where men are living under the oppression of women.

Furthermore, the notion of men having to provide something in order to be loved, which was reflected in the example 14, could stem from the victimisation of men, which is also a shared cognition in the Red Pill community. This view assumes that women are in a privileged position just because they are women, whereas men are judged for being men, thus having to fight against feminism to reclaim their deserved rights and privileges. The shared cognition of male victimisation can also stem from the feeling that nowadays traditional and hegemonic forms of masculinity are threatened by feminism and progressive politics, which then awakens feelings of victimhood among individuals who value masculinity and traditional gender roles, as discussed earlier in this paper.

6.2.4 Women as manipulative

Examples 16 - 18 depict women as manipulative and selfish: women are “toying” with men, “playing dumb”, and “using” men for attention and validation. Men, on the other hand, are depicted as the “orbiters” of women, who are trying to pursue (sexual) relationship with women but failing because women are merely manipulating men to believe they would have a “shot” with these women. The expectation that women ought to offer sexual relationships for men could stem from the feeling of entitlement to sexual relations with women, which is a shared notion in the Manosphere: Jane (2017, 667) proposes that members of the Manosphere generally assume that “women derive power from exploiting men’s desires by cynically ‘withholding’ physical intimacy for the purposes of manipulation”, and that view is visible in the Red Pill discourse on Instagram, especially in examples 16 and 18. In addition, examples 16 – 18 portray men as the oppressed victims of female manipulation, which again can be seen as related to the shared cognition of the victimisation of men. The victimisation thus occurs both at the microlevel (within personal relationships with manipulative women) but also at the wider macrolevel (within the surrounding society built on feminist delusion and male oppression).

(16) Used Goods

For every woman who complains she was used for sex, there are *hundreds* of male orbiters a woman used for attention whom she didn’t intend to fuck, but made them think they had a shot.

(17) Women are very intuitive when it comes to reading people

She can instantly tell when another woman wants her man

That also means she can instantly tell when a man wants her as well

She knows her orbiters want to dig her out, she’s just playing dumb so she can keep them around for attention

(18) A good presentage of women you meet are simply toying with you

You think she wants you when she only really wants your time, energy, attention and validation

She wants you texting her, swiping up on her stories and answering all her FaceTimes. But when you want to link in person, she has an excuse What does that sound like to you?

It is worth noting that, as established in the section 6.2.3, the Red Pill discourse compares women to animals or machines and portrays women without capability of reasoning or having logic. Nevertheless, according to the examples 16 – 18 and to the social cognition that men are actually oppressed by women, women are able to control and manipulate men without

trouble. Consequently, women have even established the current social order that suppresses men. Women are thus seen as both unintelligent and having essentially no intellectual abilities, but also as extremely calculating and manipulative, which makes the logic of the Red Pill ideology very contradictory. Shared social cognitions can thus clash with each other, but this contradiction was not addressed in the analysed Red Pill discourse.

6.3 Views on relationships with women

The third frequent topic of the analysed posts was *relationships*. It is assumed that these posts concern relationships with women, as women and their behaviours were often mentioned in these posts, and because the Red Pill philosophy in general seems to focus mainly on heterosexual relationships. Since descriptions of women often overlapped with descriptions of relationships, some examples considering relationships have already been examined, including examples 11 and 15, which revealed that the Red Pill discourse holds a very practical view on relationships. Relationships are seen to be based on evolutionary “mating” purposes and on the sexual economics theory, which describes relationships as a marketplace, where the laws of supply and demand apply.

In addition, the discourse often described (romantic) relationships in a belittling manner: example 19 asserts that men do not even wish to engage in romantic relationships with women, but only seek to pursue sexual relations with them. Moreover, even though the Red Pill ideology holds a strong presupposition about marriage (by emphasizing that women wish to sleep with alpha males and respectively marry beta males) example 20 describes marriage very negatively, as it proposes that marriage reduces men’s rights, but also increases their duties. Relationships that are not solely based on sexual intercourses and include, for instance, emotional intimacy or commitment are thus perceived negatively, as something men do not (or should not) even need. Views like these could be connected to the Red Pill community’s valuation of extreme masculinity and the alpha male status, which includes the expectation of having multiple sexual partners without commitment, but also to the sexual economics theory, which dismisses the emotional connections within relationships.

(19) Men want to get laid. Women want relationships. The two sexes want very different things. Never forget this fact when interacting with women.

(20) **Unhappily Ever After**

Marriage means to **halve** one’s rights and **double** one’s duties.

- Arthur Schopenhauer

(21) **“I Have a Boyfriend”**

If a girl tells you she has a boyfriend, **that’s like saying she breathes or has boobs.**

You should not let it faze you or stop you, because in two short weeks she’ll be single or out with a new guy.

If she’s going to cheat on her boyfriend, it might as well be with you and not some other guy. Only unless a woman says she’s *married* should you let it deter you.

- Aaron Clarey, Bachelor Pad Economics

(22) **Beauty Is Temporary**

If a woman relies solely on her looks and beauty for validation, she is setting herself up for inevitable misery. Unfortunately, with social media, that’s most young women today.

Beauty has a shelf life. *There will always be someone younger and prettier.* When looks fade, a woman’s personality and character remain. Those are the qualities that matter most in a successful relationship.

Example 21 claims that men should not be deterred if a woman tells them they have a boyfriend, because that is essentially insignificant information, and men should nevertheless try to seduce that woman. However, if the woman is married, the situation is different, and men should retreat. The example also implies that a woman is inevitably either going to cheat on her boyfriend or be single “in two short weeks” if she is not married, which echoes the shared cognition of women as manipulative and merely “toying” with men. In addition, it is noteworthy that marriage is perceived as a bond that ought not to be broken, whereas other forms of relationships do not hold similar value. This notion of marriage being a binding commitment could also be reflected in example 20, where marriage is seen as something that reduces men’s rights, like the “right” to have multiple sexual partners without commitment.

Moreover, example 21 indicates that the Red Pill community holds problematic attitudes towards consent: the example asserts that being in a relationship is not a sufficient reason for a woman to reject men, and therefore men should not let that “faze” them. Disturbing attitudes towards consent has been noticed in other subgroups of the Manosphere as well, and therefore they could be a shared social cognition within the Red Pill community: Denes (2011, 418) analysed Pick-Up Artist discourse, and discovered that the community views that woman’s consent should be evaluated solely based on their body language and bodily responses: according to the Pick-Up Artist seduction scripts, “if the body remains present and physical resistance is not employed, consent is granted”. This encourages men to ignore any verbal rejections expressed by women, which is an extremely alarming attitude that essentially denies the autonomy of women. I believe that these attitudes could be related to the notion of

entitlement towards sexual relationships, discussed in the previous section, as the assumption that sexual relationships should be granted for men could enforce the indifferent attitudes towards women's expressions of rejection.

It is also worth mentioning that the example 22 differs noticeably from other posts about relationships: it highlights the importance of women's personality and character, which are features that are not often addressed in the Red Pill discourse. The post also dismisses the importance of women's appearance, and this notion contradicts sharply with the shared values in the Red Pill discourse about women's appearance, and with the logic of the sexual economics theory. In addition, the post does not suggest that sex or sexual desire is the most significant part of a successful relationship and places mental connection above sexual connection, which diverges this example from other posts concerning relationships. The example thus clashes radically with the commonly shared cognitions about relationships in the Red Pill community, which showcases that the members of the Red Pill community can possess distinct personal mental models, that go against the dominant view of that community. However, even though the example 22 diverges from other posts concerning women, the example does include a generalising negative assumption about women, implying that "most young women" rely solely on their looks for (men's) validation.

6.3.1 The insignificance of dating women

The Red Pill ideology is heavily revolved around seducing women: especially sexual intercourses with women are valued, and one prominent reason why the members of the Red Pill community aspire to achieve the alpha male status is to pursue more sexual relationships with women. Nevertheless, some of the analysed posts described relationships with women as fundamentally useless and unnecessary, as illustrated in the examples 23 – 25:

(23) STOP GIVING A FUCK

An abundance mindset and learning to be alone will help you develop that mentality
 Women have no power over you when you can walk away without giving a single fuck
 Be a lone wolf. Chase purpose

(24) Women want a man with purpose...but not a man whose purpose is to get them.

(25) Only once you stop worshipping women, will you find true fulfillment as a man.

The notion of relationships being insignificant and unnecessary for men conflicts with the prevalence of seduction and dating advice in the Red Pill ideology. According to the examples

23 – 25, men should find a certain profound “purpose” in their life, but that purpose cannot be women or relationships. The discourse emphasises that women should not be the priority of men’s lives, and that men should stop “worshipping” women. I believe this strategy is used to highlight the perceived differences in women’s worth compared to men’s worth: women’s actions, interests and behaviours are seen as essentially insignificant, and therefore men should not value the relationships or emotional bonds with women.

Moreover, example 23 implies that engaging in relationships with women could give women power over men, but women will not have that power if a man is able to distance themselves emotionally, and “be a lone wolf”. This repeats the dismissal of emotional ties and relationships which are not purely sexual, discussed in section 6.3. According to Van Valkenburgh (2021, 96), “the rejection of emotional sensitivity” is a prevalent notion in the TRP subforum on Reddit, which suggests that the valuation of emotional indifference is also a shared social cognition in the Red Pill community. Expressions of vulnerability and emotional intimacy are thus viewed negatively in the Red Pill discourse, and they are perceived as something that should be avoided in order to establish or maintain the emotional dominance and position of power over women. In addition, it is likely that emotional sensitivity and vulnerability are viewed negatively in the Red Pill discourse because they are notions that are traditionally associated with women and femininity, and therefore do not match with the Red Pill community ideal of alpha male status and the traditional values of (hegemonic) masculinity.

7 Discussion

The results of the analysis are discussed in the following sections. I first elaborate the findings derived from the analysis and explore the dynamic nature of the Red Pill ideology. Then, I discuss the distinct features of the Red Pill discourse on Instagram and consider how it relates to other types of misogynist discourse online. I also explain why I see this discourse especially alarming, despite its “casual” nature. Finally, I connect the findings to the wider social context, by contemplating the potential social consequences of sexist discourse. I also provide answers to my research questions throughout the discussion section.

7.1 Principles of Red Pill ideology in the dataset

Based on the analysis, the Red Pill discourse utilises polarisation tactics to establish a clear ideological polarisation between men and women, and several other strategies to construct an image of women as inherently inferior to men. These strategies of subordinating women discursively stem from various social cognitions that are shared with the members of the community. The Red Pill ideology is a collection of shared attitudes and social beliefs about gender relations, and the ideology is used to legitimise the sexist views and attitudes of the language users, which aligns with van Dijk’s (2014, 397) observation that ideologies are often used to legitimise power abuse. In the context of the Red Pill ideology, the existing gendered power relations are reversed to establish the division of women as the manipulative oppressors and men as their miserable victims.

Overall, the Red Pill discourse on Instagram seems to be heavily based on the main principles of the Red Pill ideology, which are reflected both in the shared social cognitions, and in the personal mental models of the community members. The personal mental models manifest themselves as these Instagram posts that portray women as homogeneous, manipulative and controlled by their biology. Women were also paralleled with children, animals or even machines, and this way the discourse denies the very humanity of women. Furthermore, romantic relationships with women were viewed as essentially trivial or unbeneficial for men, which signifies the apparent insignificant role of women in men’s lives. The discourse thus positions that women cannot offer men anything more than sexual relations. Many of these mental models of women and relationships with women stem from the shared social cognitions of the community, as these views were reproduced frequently by various members of the community. The social cognitions, in turn, are based on the core principles of the Red

Pill ideology, which were discussed in the background sections of this study. However, it was notable that some of the shared social cognitions about women contradicted with each other, like the assumption of women as simultaneously very calculating and manipulative but also as possessing little to no logical ability or intelligence. The Red Pill ideology is thus based on notions which essentially repeal each other, but these contradicting cognitions are still widely accepted within the community. This suggests that the ideology can offer contradictory or even illogical views to its members, but these views are nevertheless accepted, possibly because they offer enough justification for hostile attitudes towards women, and possibly because the “academic” nature of some views (especially evolution-based interpretations) could enforce their acceptance within the community, even though these notions were contradictory. It could also be argued that the Red Pill ideology has attained an almost naturalised status (see section 4.1.2) among the Red Pill community members, and consequently, the contents of the ideology are perceived as non-ideological truths and therefore accepted without questioning.

While the shared social cognitions were inconsistent, the personal mental models of the Red Pill community members also diverged from each other: some views expressed on the analysed posts were almost contradictory, like the attitudes towards relationship and women’s value that were expressed in examples 15 and 22. This suggests that the discourse that reproduces the Red Pill ideology is inconsistent at times, because the ideology can have different interpretations, which manifest themselves as different personal mental models of the individual members. As van Dijk (2008, 59) mentions, language users may have “overlapping but different” mental models, which stem from the same ideology. It should also be remembered that individuals do not have to adopt every aspect of a certain ideology: as Dignam & Rohlinger (2019, 592) explain, from ideologies, individuals “can pick, choose, and customize ideas that resonate with their lives”. Therefore, it could be argued that there exists not one original Red Pill ideology, but as many versions of it as there are supporters, since every member interprets and applies the ideology to their lives in distinct ways. As was mentioned in section 4, mental models are not objective representations of ideologies but instead, very subjective, and they represent language users’ own interpretations, which are influenced by their personal experiences. It is therefore not surprising that the members of the Red Pill community have distinct and even contradictory interpretations of the ideology, and consequently, possess varying mental models about women. Moreover, the Red Pill discourse shapes the ideology, as much as the ideology shapes the discourse: the members of the

community can, for instance, adopt new insights from each other. These insights then shape the personal mental models of the individual, which can influence the discourse they (re)produce. Thus, the ideology is dynamic in nature, and the members are constantly shaping it according to their own interpretations.

7.2 Red Pill discourse on Instagram

It is worth noting that even though the discourse was heavily saturated by explicit sexism, which was demonstrated by the representations of women, the accounts utilised only “neutral” lexical items when they referred to women. In contrast, when studying TRP subreddit, Dignam & Rohlinger (2019, 599) found that the forum users employed overtly offensive lexicon when referring to women, including slurs like *slut*, *cunt*, or *bitch*, which can be classified as local structures that explicitly state the ideological position of the language user. Such slurs or other forms of explicit, ideologically loaded lexical items were not found in the analysed posts: lexical items that referred to women were words that appear neutral, including *woman/women*, *female(s)*, *girl(s)* and *they*. It should be noted, however, that these lexical items are not always used neutrally, for example in contexts where all women are referred to as *girls*, as opposed to *women* (while men are referred as *men*, not *boys*). Nevertheless, in general, these words are not ideologically loaded, or even conspicuous without context. As was assumed, the analysed accounts presumably cannot utilise explicit or particularly offensive language, like slurs, due to the community standards of Instagram. Hence, it can be deduced that the Red Pill discourse on Instagram is not as extreme as it could be on other platforms.

Based on the analysis, I thus argue that the analysed discourse is located on the “softer” end of the Red Pill discourse in online domains. For instance, the collected posts did not use much explicit language, and I did not locate any overt expressions of violence. As mentioned, the posts cannot be too aggressive in nature in order to be accepted on Instagram and not to be classified as hate speech. The discourse could be softer for “recruiting” purposes, too: like I argued in section 3.3., the Red Pill discourse on Instagram is more easily digestible and more appealing to the potential new members of the community, and these types of less extreme domains can be important in pushing ideologies to the wider audiences and in recruiting new members. The new potential members could be introduced to the ideology via these domains more feasibly, and over time, they could adopt even the most extreme views of the ideology.

I also considered the Red Pill discourse on Instagram in relation to the wider context of gendered online abuse. According to Barak (2005), verbal (sexual) abuse online can be either active, where a particular victim is targeted usually by offensive messages, or passive, where harassing messages are not targeted to specific individuals, but to potential receivers. While Barak (2005) notes that while passive harassment is less intrusive for an individual, it is nevertheless damaging, and the targeted audience can be very extensive: for instance, the target could be all women collectively. The analysed Red Pill discourse on Instagram fits better to the passive harassment category, as it abuses women collectively, and does not address more specific targets. This feature distinguishes the Red Pill discourse on Instagram from other Red Pill domains, where the harassment could be also active. Nevertheless, I see that the Red Pill discourse on Instagram can still be defined as a form of online misogyny and online harassment due to its fundamentally hostile nature, even though the harassment is not aimed at a single target.

It is, however, worth noting that the analysed Red Pill discourse did not generally aim to harass or insult women per se (at least not by the published posts). Rather, the posts offered advice and guidance to other supporters of the ideology, and simultaneously expressed and reproduced the sexist and hostile views of women. At the local semantic level, the posts often used the pronoun *you* to directly address the individual reader and utilised direct commands to convey the instructions. Thus, it is evident that these posts are mainly intended for like-minded, “red-pilled” individuals, who share socially shared notions of the Red Pill community. At times, the inclusive pronoun *we* was used, presumably referring to all red-pilled men to create a sense of fellowship. In addition, lexical items like *brothers* and *fellas* were used to describe other members of the Red Pill community, which also establishes positive feelings and communality with the reader and other members. This indicates that these discourses are not, indeed, intended for women, but they could more likely be ways of advising others and establishing a sense of fellowship between the members, while also reproducing and strengthening the shared sexist values of the community. Moreover, Dignam & Rohlinger (2019, 598- 599) note that the Red Pill community sees that their strategies (primarily seducing women) work best when the outside world is oblivious of the ideology, and therefore the community does not desire “mainstream success” but offers solutions and advice for individuals. This implies that women are not supposed to be aware of the Red Pill ideology, which strengthens the notion that the Red Pill discourse on Instagram is not intended for women.

As established in the background sections of this thesis, sexism and gendered harassment online can be very extreme, and could include threats of violence or even death threats to its targets. On the other hand, Jones, Trott & Wright (2020) introduced that sexist discourse can also be “casual and banal” in nature, especially if it has no specified targets, and no extreme language is utilised. According to them, this type of sexism is more inconspicuous and thus “less likely to be called out and condemned” (Jones, Trott & Wright 2020, 1914). Therefore, compared to for instance, some Incel domains where violence against women is accepted or even encouraged (e.g., Byerly 2020), or other more explicit Red Pill domains (such as the TRP subreddit), I assert that the Red Pill discourse on Instagram can be considered as a subtle or even a casual form of harassment in the context of antifeminist groups, as it does not have specified targets, and does not utilise explicit language or encourage readers to perform extreme behaviour. However, I argue that the sexism reproduced by these accounts is still overt and direct, as attitudes about women were expressed explicitly, e.g., no overt signs of humour or irony, which are typical features for indirect sexism (Mills 2008, 12), were used to downplay the sexism. The discourse thus overtly mediates misogyny by using various strategies of portraying women as inferior, and the accounts do not attempt to cover their ideological positions: they explicitly express their adherence to the Red Pill philosophy and its values.

I claim that this type of discourse and the “casual” sexism it reproduces could be especially dangerous as it could be less noticeable and surreptitious. The Red Pill discourse on Instagram is essentially disguised as motivational speech for men, and it is expressed on a platform which is increasingly popular, especially among young social media users. Hence, users searching for various self-help or self-improving content could come across the Red Pill discourse, and consequently, some users could learn and adopt the principles of the Red Pill ideology, including the sexist attitudes, and start to reproduce them themselves. This way, the Red Pill community members on Instagram can influence users that were not previously integrated to the community and promote this ideology further. Moreover, Jones, Trott & Wright (2020, 1915) propose that forms of casual and passive sexism can aid the normalisation of sexism and gender stereotypes. I agree with this view and underscore that this type of discourse on domains like Instagram normalises sexism, as it brings sexist and misogynist views onto popular platforms and disguises them as a form of self-help content for

men. I see that this type of sexism could be defined as almost *everyday* in nature, as it exists on such a popular platform and can be (re)produced at a low threshold.

The discourse also presents its views as they were “scientific” truths or even common sense, for instance by basing its claims on theories derived from evolutionary psychology and presenting the varying negative views on women as established facts, instead of individual experiences or personal opinions. Moreover, according to the ideology, “swallowing the Red Pill” means acknowledging and accepting the (unpleasant) *truths* about women and the gynocentric social order. As was exemplified in the analysis, the representations (or apparent “truths”) of women were extremely negative and generalising, and hence it is alarming that the accounts express such radical attitudes as facts on Instagram on daily basis, having thousands of followers who they potentially influence.

7.3 Implications of sexist discourse

Sexist discourse can be considered as an alarming and potentially very harmful phenomenon, as hostile sexist groupings online can encourage their members to perform abusive or even violent acts towards women, both online and offline. As discussed in section 2, adopting and accepting radical perceptions of gender hierarchy that essentially dehumanise women can lead to expressions of overt and targeted online harassment, which can, and often does, have serious consequences in the offline world. Virtual abuse can cause severe harm for the victim, and at worst, these hostile attitudes can contribute to the acceptance of physical, sexual, or psychological violence against women. Acquiring sexist and misogynist views has been a contributing factor in, for instance, some coordinated incidents of online harassment, and in the fatal attacks towards women enacted by members of the Manosphere, which were addressed in section 2.1 of this paper.

In addition to the attacks against women in general, acceptance of sexist views can also lead to violence in more personal level, even within close relationships. Canto et al. (2020, 9) found that adopting hostile sexist attitudes was linked to the justification of violent actions against women by their male partners, and these attitudes can lead to “expressing a hostile attitude towards certain types of women who are seen as sexually manipulative and who provoke male aggression in the context of intimate relationships”. Intimate partner violence against women is a significant social issue due to its severe psychological and physical consequences, and the harmful effects of the phenomenon encompass the victim themselves,

but also the surrounding society (Canto et al. 2020), which showcases the grave nature of sexist attitudes and the extreme consequences of misogyny.

Even though the representations of women and the implications of sexism towards women are in the centre of this study, it ought to be noted that this type of discourse affects men too, as it maintains and reproduces the traditional views and values associated with gender. As was demonstrated in the analysis, the members of this community perceive alpha status as the male ideal to strive for, and hegemonic, or even toxic features of masculinity are valued. The valuation of toxic masculinity has evident negative implications, like the assumption that men ought to deny their vulnerability and suppress their expression of emotions. Furthermore, the glorification of extreme masculinity and alpha status include a constant pressure to be “better”, to constantly develop yourself to match the (possibly even unrealistic) alpha ideal. In addition, concepts like the sexual economics theory and the application of market logic into relationships also affect men: they hold a presupposition that men ought to possess market value (like appearance or high status) to be successful in the sexual marketplace, and that men should provide something for women in exchange for sexual relations. The market logic thus posits a very pragmatic view of relationships, which affect both men and women. Overall, even though the Red Pill discourse aims to be beneficial for men and help them to reach their “full potential”, the discourse has apparent negative implications for men, too.

Due to these aforementioned reasons, sexism and antifeminism taking place on internet domains ought to be recognised as significant issue, and virtual platforms need to take increased actions against the phenomenon. Admittedly, regulating discourse on virtual domains is complicated at the least: as Barak (2005, 87) accurately points out, applying legal procedures on virtual domains is difficult, if not impossible, and due to the limitless scope of the internet, changing the culture of online discourse is equally troublesome. However, they note that establishing clear social standards and actively endorsing anti-harassment policies through messaging, informing, and implementing adequate sanctions for standard violations could make a difference within specific domains (Barak 2005, 86). It is evident that sexism and antifeminist views cannot be erased from the web completely, but I argue that popular and widely used domains, like Instagram, should be places where sexism and hostility towards women (even when it is disguised as motivational content for men) are not tolerated.

8 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine the representations of women in the Red Pill discourse on Instagram and discuss how these representations connect to the principles of the Red Pill ideology. The collected dataset was analysed using the sociocognitive approach by van Dijk (2001), which allowed the shared social cognitions that were related to the Red Pill ideology to be under scrutiny. The study also addressed the expanding phenomenon of online misogyny and placed the Red Pill discourse on Instagram in the wider spectrum of misogynist discourses online. The results of the analysis showcased that the Red Pill community utilised various strategies to portray women negatively and placed them ideologically as opposed to men, but also as subordinate to men. The discourse was also very polarised in nature, as it attempted to establish clear divisions between men and women. In addition, a notion that frequently arose from the analysed posts was the victimisation of men by oppressive women, which enforces the ideological polarisation between men and women, and suggests that the status of victimhood is a deeply rooted concept in the shared social cognition of the community. The members of the Red Pill community perceive this oppression occurring both in their personal relationships but also within the surrounding society.

The strategies in portraying women as inferior were the homogenisation of women and denying their individuality, attributing women's behaviour solely on their biological needs and instincts, and various forms of dehumanisation of women. In addition, women were branded as manipulative and abusive towards men, and women's right for autonomy was essentially denied by dismissing the value of women's expressions of rejection towards men. Women were also portrayed as commodities that can have a larger or smaller "market value" in the eyes of men, which is determined by women's appearance. These strategies illustrate the extremely sexist nature of the Red Pill ideology. The analysed discourse also contained some very alarming notions, like the promotion of indifferent attitudes towards women's (verbal) expressions of rejection. The representations of women were tightly connected to the principles of the ideology, and many of them had their roots in scientific and academic theories on evolution and social relationships. Even though the interpretations of these theories can at times be even contradicting in nature, they offer the needed "scientific" justification for sexist and hostile views towards women for the members of the community.

The study also discovered that the Red Pill discourse on Instagram could be subtler in nature, in comparison to other antifeminist domains, and addressed the dangers of the subtler forms of sexism that take place on popular social media domains: the softer domains can be effective for antifeminist groupings in recruiting new members, who can, eventually, adopt even the most radical views of the surrounding community. Additionally, considering the significant foothold that social media has established in the lives of millions of individuals, it is crucial to notice and examine misogynist and other hostile communities operating in these widely used platforms: seemingly insignificant or subtle forms of sexism can aid in the normalisation of sexist attitudes and values, which, in turn, can have serious implications both in the virtual and social reality. The extreme sexism that Red Pill ideology mediates is clearly extremely harmful for women, but hypermasculinity and the very utilitarian view on relationships that the ideology promotes have negative implications for men too. Therefore, I claim that being one of the most popular social media applications worldwide, Instagram ought to take more effective actions towards hateful speech and the spread of hateful ideologies that is taking place in the platform. As established in section 3.3 of this paper, Instagram does claim to take measures towards hateful speech, harmful stereotypes, dehumanising speech, and other types of statements of inferiority. Nevertheless, groupings like the Red Pill community have established a presence on Instagram, and the discourse this community (re)produces utilises many of these condemned hostile narratives towards women.

The analysis and the interpretations of the results provided satisfactory answers to my research questions. However, this study covered only a small part of the Red Pill community, as it examined a dataset gathered from three Red Pill supportive accounts on Instagram. Therefore, the findings cannot necessarily be applied for the whole community, as my broad definition of the Red Pill community covers several antifeminists coalitions as well as unorganised individuals. Additionally, since the Red Pill community on Instagram seems to utilise subtle forms of sexism in the context of antifeminist groups, the findings are not completely comparable with the Red Pill discourses on other platforms. The study also focused solely on the images of the Instagram posts, and captions and hashtags were omitted from the analysis, and consequently, the Instagram posts were not analysed in their entirety. However, the aim of this study was to examine the representations of women in the Red Pill discourse, and I contend that this was possible even though the focus was on the textual elements of the images only. In my view, the discourse expressed in the posts did offer an adequate example of the discourse of this community on Instagram. Further research of the

subject is still needed, and future studies could address the Red Pill discourse on Instagram more comprehensively, possibly examining the captions, hashtags, and comments as well. Additional studies could also take an intersectional look in the discourse of the Red Pill community and address other forms of discrimination that the ideology produces, focusing for instance on the racist values that are prevalent in the ideology.

References

- Bainotti, Lucia, Alessandro Caliendo, and Alessandro Gandini. 2020. "From Archive Cultures to Ephemeral Content, and Back: Studying Instagram Stories with Digital Methods." *New Media & Society*, (September 2020). doi:10.1177/1461444820960071. Accessed May 15, 2021
- Banet-Weiser, Sarah, and Kate M Miltner. 2016, "#MasculinitySoFragile: Culture, Structure, and Networked Misogyny." *Feminist media studies* 16, no. 1: 171–174. doi:10.1080/14680777.2016.1120490. Accessed May 31, 2021
- Blais, Melissa, and Francis Dupuis-Déri. 2012. "Masculinism and the Antifeminist Countermovement." *Social movement studies* 11, no. 1: 21–39. doi:10.1080/14742837.2012.640532. Accessed 3 June 2021.
- Barak, Azy. 2005. "Sexual Harassment on the Internet." *Social science computer review* 23, no. 1: 77–92. doi:10.1177/0894439304271540. Accessed 27 September 2021.
- Baumeister, Roy F. and Kathleen D Vohs. 2004. "Sexual Economics: Sex as Female Resource for Social Exchange in Heterosexual Interactions." *Personality and social psychology review* 8, no. 4: 339–363. doi:10.1207/s15327957pspr0804_2. Accessed 20 April 2021.
- Byerly, Carolyn M. 2020. "Incels Online Reframing Sexual Violence." *The communication review* (Yverdon, Switzerland) 23, no. 4: 290–308. doi:10.1080/10714421.2020.1829305. Accessed 28 September 2021.
- Borg, Erik. 2003. "Key concepts in ELT: Discourse communities". *ELT Journal* 57/4. 398–400. doi:10.1093/elt/57.4.398.
- Burris, Val, Emery Smith, and Ann Strahm. 2000. "White Supremacist Networks on the Internet: White Supremacy and Hate Crimes." *Sociological focus* (Kent, Ohio) 33, no. 2: 215–234. doi:10.1080/00380237.2000.10571166. Accessed 28 May 2021.
- Canto, Jesús M, Macarena Vallejo-Martín, Fabiola Perles, and Jesús San Martín. 2020. "The Influence of Ideological Variables in the Denial of Violence Against Women: The Role of Sexism and Social Dominance Orientation in the Spanish Context." *International journal of environmental research and public health* 17, no. 14: 1–11. doi:10.3390/ijerph17144934. Accessed 27 September 2021
- Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. 2005. "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept." *Gender & Society*, 19(6), 829–859. doi:10.1177/0891243205278639 Accessed 13 September 2021

- Cosma S, Gurevich M. 2020. Securing sex: Embattled masculinity and the pressured pursuit of women's bodies in men's online sex advice. *Feminism & Psychology*. 30, no. 1: 42-62. doi:10.1177/0959353519857754 Accessed 29 October 2021
- Denes, Amanda. 2011. "Biology as consent: Problematizing the scientific approach to seducing women's bodies." *Women's Studies International Forum*, 34(5), 411–419. doi:/10.1016/j.wsif.2011.05.002. Accessed 2 September 2021.
- Dewey, Caitlin. 2014. "Inside the 'Manosphere' That Inspired Santa Barbara Shooter Elliot Rodger." *The Washington Post*, May 27. Accessed 23 April 2021.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2014/05/27/inside-the-manosphere-that-inspired-santa-barbara-shooter-elliott-rodger/>.
- Dignam, Pierce Alexander and Deana A Rohlinger. 2019. "Misogynistic Men Online: How the Red Pill Helped Elect Trump." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 44, no. 3: 589–612. doi:10.1086/701155. Accessed 15 April 2021
- Facebook Community Standards. 2021. "Hate speech"
https://www.facebook.com/communitystandards/hate_speech. Accessed 20 April 2021
- Fairclough, Norman. 2010. *Critical Discourse Analysis : the Critical Study of Language*. 2nd ed. Harlow: Pearson education.
- Fairclough, Norman, and Ruth Wodak. 1997. "Critical discourse analysis" in *Discourse Studies : a Multidisciplinary Introduction. Volume 2, Discourse as Social Interaction*. London. edited by Teun A. van Dijk. 258-84. London: SAGE
- Ferber, Abby L. 2000. "Racial Warriors and Weekend Warriors: The Construction of Masculinity in Mythopoetic and White Supremacist Discourse." *Men and masculinities* 3, no. 1: 30–56. doi:10.1177/1097184X00003001002 Accessed 6 June 2021.
- Fuchs, Tamara and Fabian Schäfer. 2020. "Normalizing misogyny: hate speech and verbal abuse of female politicians on Japanese Twitter" *Japan Forum*, doi:10.1080/09555803.2019.1687564 Accessed 12 April 2021.
- Franks, Mary Anne. 2012. "Sexual Harassment 2.0." *Maryland law review* (1936) 71, no. 3 (2012): 655- 704. Accessed 29 May 2021.
- Gerstenfeld, Phyllis, Diana R. Grant & Chau-Pu Chiang. 2003. "Hate Online: A Content Analysis of Extremist Internet Sites." *Analyses of social issues and public policy* 3, no. 1: 29–44. doi:10.1111/j.1530-2415.2003.00013.x. Accessed 3 April 2021.

- Ging, Debbie. 2019. "Alphas, Betas, and Incels: Theorizing the Masculinities of the Manosphere." *Men and masculinities* 22, no. 4: 638–657. doi:10.1177/1097184X17706401. Accessed 10 April 2021.
- Ging, Debbie, and Eugenia Siapera. 2018. "Special Issue on Online Misogyny." *Feminist media studies* 18, no. 4: 515–524. Accessed 5 April 2021.
- Graff, Agnieszka, Ratna Kapur, and Suzanna Danuta Walters. 2019. "Introduction: Gender and the Rise of the Global Right." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 44, no. 3: 541–560. doi:10.1086/701152. Accessed 28 May 2021.
- Henry, Nicola, and Anastasia Powell. 2015. "Embodied Harms: Gender, Shame, and Technology-facilitated Sexual Violence." *Violence Against Women* 21 (6): 758–779. doi:10.1177/1077801215576581. Accessed 29 May 2021.
- Hermansson, Patrik, David Lawrence, Joe Mulhall, and Simon Murdoch. 2020. "From Anger to Ideology: A History of the Manosphere." *The International Alt-Right*, 163–180. 1st ed. Routledge. Taylor & Francis. doi:10.4324/9780429032486-12. Accessed 2 June 2021.
- Hoffman, Bruce, Jacob Ware, and Ezra Shapiro. 2020. "Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence." *Studies in conflict and terrorism* 43, no. 7: 565–587. doi:10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459. Accessed 18 August 2021.
- Holtz, Peter, Nicole Kronberger, and Wolfgang Wagner. 2012. "Analyzing Internet Forums: A Practical Guide." *Journal of media psychology* 24, no. 2: 55–66. doi:10.1027/1864-1105/a000062. Accessed 31 May 2021
- Instagram. 2021. "Introducing new tools to protect our community from abuse" <https://about.instagram.com/blog/announcements/introducing-new-tools-to-protect-our-community-from-abuse>. Accessed 27 May 2021
- Jane, Emma A. 2016. "Online Misogyny and Feminist Digilantism." *Continuum* (Mount Lawley, W.A.) 30, no. 3: 284–297. doi:10.1080/10304312.2016.1166560. Accessed 2 June 2021.
- Jane, Emma A. 2017. "Systemic Misogyny Exposed: Translating Rapeglish from the Manosphere with a Random Rape Threat Generator." *International journal of cultural studies* 21, no. 6: 661–680. doi:10.1177/1367877917734042. Accessed 15 August 2021.
- Jones, Callum, Verity Trott, and Scott Wright. 2020. "Sluts and Soyboys: MGTOW and the Production of Misogynistic Online Harassment." *New media & society* 22, no. 10: 1903–1921. doi:10.1177/1461444819887141. Accessed 20 September 2021.

- Kelly, Annie. 2017. "The Alt-Right: Reactionary Rehabilitation for White Masculinity." *Soundings* (London, England) 66, no. 66: 68–78. doi:10.3898/136266217821733688. Accessed 15 September 2021
- Khosraviniq, Majid & Johann W. Unger. 2016. "Critical Discourse Studies and Social Media: Power, Resistance and Critique in changing Media Ecologies" *In Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*. edited by Ruth Wodak & Michael Meyer. 206 - 233. 3rd edition. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Koteyko, Nelya. 2010. "Mining the Internet for Linguistic and Social Data: An Analysis of 'Carbon Compounds' in Web Feeds." *Discourse & society* 21, no. 6: 655–674. doi:10.1177/0957926510381220. Accessed 31 May 2021.
- Krendel, Alexandra. 2020. "The Men and Women, Guys and Girls of the 'manosphere': A Corpus-Assisted Discourse Approach." *Discourse & society* 31, no. 6: 607–630. doi:10.1177/0957926520939690. Accessed 15 August 2021.
- Lim, Sumin, and Gregory A Cheatham. 2020. "A Sociocognitive Discourse Analysis of Monolingual Ideology and Bias in Special Education Partnerships." *Remedial and special education*: 74193252093034. doi:10.1177/0741932520930340. Accessed 20 August 2021.
- Locke, Terry. 2004. *Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Continuum.
- Lyons, Matthew N. 2017. *Ctrl-Alt-Delete: The Origins and Ideology of the Alternative Right*. Somerville: Political Research Associates.
- Mantilla, Karla. 2013. "Gendertrolling: Misogyny Adapts to New Media." *Feminist studies* 39, no. 2: 563–570. ProQuest Central: 1508764583 Accessed 29 May 2021.
- Marwick, Alice E, and Robyn Caplan. 2018. "Drinking Male Tears: Language, the Manosphere, and Networked Harassment." *Feminist media studies* 18, no. 4 : 543–559. doi:10.1080/14680777.2018.1450568. Accessed 2 June 2021.
- Marwick, Alice E, and Becca Lewis. 2017. *Media Manipulation and Disinformation Online*. Data & Society Research Institute. https://datasociety.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/DataAndSociety_MediaManipulationAndDisinformationOnline-1.pdf Accessed 1 September 2021
- Massanari, Adrienne. 2017. "Gamergate and The Fappening: How Reddit's Algorithm, Governance, and Culture Support Toxic Technocultures." *New media & society* 19, no. 3: 329–346. doi:10.1177/1461444815608807. Accessed 3 June 2021.

- Megarry, Jessica. 2014. "Online Incivility or Sexual Harassment? Conceptualising Women's Experiences in the Digital Age." *Women's studies international forum* 47: 46–55. doi:10.1016/j.wsif.2014.07.012. Accessed 10 April 2021.
- Mills, Sara. 2008. *Language and Sexism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Mountford, J.B. 2018. "Topic Modeling the Red Pill." *Social sciences (Basel)* 7, no. 3: 42. doi:10.3390/socsci7030042. Accessed 26 April 2021.
- Nato Strategic Communications of Excellence. 2021. *Abuse of power: coordinated online harassment of Finnish government ministers*. <https://www.stratcomcoe.org/abuse-power-coordinated-online-harassment-finnish-government-ministers> Accessed 23 March 2021.
- O'Neill, Rachel. 2015. "The Work of Seduction: Intimacy and Subjectivity in the London 'Seduction Community.'" *Sociological research online* 20, no. 4: 1–14. doi:10.5153/sro.3744. Accessed 15 October 2021.
- Ravn, Signe, Ashley Barnwell, and Barbara Barbosa Neves. 2020. "What Is 'Publicly Available Data'? Exploring Blurred Public–Private Boundaries and Ethical Practices Through a Case Study on Instagram." *Journal of empirical research on human research ethics* 15, no. 1-2: 40–45. doi:10.1177/1556264619850736. Accessed 31 May 2021.
- Rudman, L. A., & Fetterolf, J. C. 2014. "Gender and Sexual Economics: Do Women View Sex as a Female Commodity?" *Psychological Science*, 25(7), 1438–1447. doi:10.1177/0956797614533123. Accessed 30 August 2021.
- Schafer, J. A. 2002. Spinning the web of hate: Web-based hate propagation by extremist organizations. *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*, 9(2), 69–88. <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12389/20723>. Accessed 29 September 2021.
- Swales, J. M. 1990. *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tankowska, H. 2021. "Instagram - Statistics & Facts" <https://www.statista.com/topics/1882/instagram/> Accessed 27 May 2021.
- Trivers, R. L. 1972. "Parental Investment and Sexual Selection." In *Sexual Selection and the Descent of Man, 1871–1971*, edited by B. G. Campbell. 136–179. Chicago, IL: Aldine.
- van Dijk, Teun A. 2016. "Critical Discourse Studies: A Sociocognitive Approach." In *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*. edited by Ruth Wodak & Michael Meyer. 62 – 85. 3rd edition. Los Angeles: SAGE.

- van Dijk, Teun A. 2014. "Discourse, Cognition, Society." In *The Discourse Studies Reader: Main Currents in Theory and Analysis*, edited by Johannes Angermuller, Dominique Maingueneau and Ruth Wodak. 388–399. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- van Dijk, Teun A. 2008. *Discourse and Context : a Sociocognitive Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- van Dijk, Teun A. 2003. "Critical Discourse Analysis." In *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, edited by Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen, and Heidi Ehernberger. 352–371. Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- van Dijk, Teun A. 2001. "Multidisciplinary CDA: A Plea for Diversity". In *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. edited by Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer. 95-119. London: SAGE Publications.
- Van Valkenburgh, Shawn P. 2021. "Digesting the Red Pill: Masculinity and Neoliberalism in the Manosphere." *Men and masculinities*. 24(1): 84-103.
doi:10.1177/1097184X18816118. Accessed 18 April 2021.
- Wodak, Ruth & Michael Meyer. 2016. "Critical Discourse Studies: History, Agenda, Theory and Methodology" in *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*. edited by Ruth Wodak & Michael Meyer. 2 – 22. 3rd edition. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Wright, Scott, Verity Trott, and Callum Jones. 2020 "The Pussy Ain't Worth It, Bro': Assessing the Discourse and Structure of MGTOW." *Information, communication & society*. 23, no. 6 : 908–925. doi:/10.1080/1369118X.2020.1751867. Accessed 3 May 2021.
- Waśniewska, Małgorzata. 2020. "The Red Pill, Unicorns and White Knights: Cultural Symbolism and Conceptual Metaphor in the Slang of Online Incel Communities." In *Cultural Conceptualizations in Language and Communication*, edited by Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk. 65–82. Springer International Publishing.
doi:10.1007/978-3-030-42734-4_4. Accessed 20 September 2021

Finnish Summary

Tämä pro-gradu -tutkielma käsittelee Red Pill -diskurssissa Instagramissa ja diskurssin representaatioita naisista. Tutkimus keskittyy diskursseihin, jotka ovat kytköksissä misogynyniseen eli naisvihamieliseen aatteeseen, Red Pill -ideologiaan. Ideologian nimi juontaa juurensa *The Matrix* -elokuvaan, jossa päähenkilöllä on mahdollisuus valaistua ja nähdä yhteiskunnan todellinen tila, jos hän nielee punaisen pillerin. Tämän narratiivin pohjalta naisvihamieliset yhteisöt ovat kehittäneet oman maailmankatsomuksensa, jonka mukaan punaisen pillerin (Red Pill) metaforan tasolla nielaistuaan yksilö näkee piilotetun ”totuuden” yhteiskunnasta, joka on rakennettu feminististen arvojen pohjalta naisille edulliseksi mutta miehiä alistavaksi järjestelmäksi (Ging 2019). Ideologia arvostaa perinteisiä sukupuolikäsityksiä ja -rooleja, ja sen mukaan maskuliiniset arvot ovat heikentyneet yhteiskunnassa, aiheuttaen miesten heikentyneen aseman, ja ideologian tavoitteena onkin paljastaa feminismin ”todelliset” tavoitteet ja palauttaa miesten oikeutettu asema naisten yläpuolella (Dignam & Rohlinger 2019). Koska Red Pill on vallitseva ideologia monen antifeministisen ryhmittymän keskuudessa, aihetta ja sen yhteiskunnallisia vaikutuksia on syytä tutkia.

Tutkielma tarkastelee Red Pill -aatteeseen pohjautuvia diskursseja Instagramissa, joka on maailmanlaajuisesti erittäin suosittu sosiaalisen median palvelu. Instagram valikoitui tutkimuskohteeksi juuri nykyisen suosionsa sekä avoimuutensa takia: Instagram on sosiaalisen median alustana avoin kaikille, ja palvelu eksplisiittisesti tuomitsee vihapuheen, loukkaavan kielenkäytön ja erilaiset halventavat ilmaukset muista sosiaalisista ryhmistä. Tämä saattaa tehdä antifeministisen aatteiden levittämisestä Instagramissa haastavaa. Antifeministisiä ryhmiä ja heidän diskurssejaan on usein tutkittu käyttämällä aineistona marginaalisempia, yhteisölle ominaisia keskustelufoorumeita, jossa seksistiset ja naisvihamieliset diskurssit ovat yleisempiä ja jopa toivottuja muiden yhteisön jäsenten keskuudessa: Red Pill -ideologiaa ja sen piirteitä on aiemmin tutkittu esimerkiksi tarkastelemalla Reddit.com -sivuston alafoorumia r/TRP (The Red Pill), sillä foorumi on suosittu ideologiaa kannattavien yksilöiden keskuudessa (esim. Van Valkenburgh 2021, Dignam & Rohlinger 2019).

Tutkimuskysymykset joihin tutkielma pyrkii vastaamaan ovat:

- 1) Miten naisia kuvataan Red Pill diskurssissa Instagramissa?
- 2) Kuinka Red Pill -ideologia luo kuvaa naisista vähempiarvoisina?
- 3) Miten Red Pill -diskurssi Instagramissa kytkeytyy laajempaan kontekstiin virtuaalisesta naisvihapuheesta?

Viime vuosina virtuaalinen naisviha ja erilaiset antifeministiset Internet-yhteisöt ovat olleet kasvava ilmiö, joka on herättänyt myös tutkijoiden huomiota; esimerkiksi Banet-Weiser & Miltner (2016), Jane (2016) ja Graff, Kapur & Walters (2019) ovat tutkineet ilmiötä ja sen vaikutuksia ja tunnistaneeet ilmiön maailmanlaajuisen ongelmallisuuden. Verkossa leviävään antifeminismiin on monia syitä, ja ilmiön kasvua ovat vauhdittaneet esimerkiksi oikeistopopulististen liikkeiden suosio sekä yhteiskunnallisten rakenteiden muuttuminen (Banet-Weiser & Miltner 2016; Graff, Kapur & Walters 2019). Naisten osallistuminen aiemmin perinteisesti miesvaltaisina pidettyihin aloihin ja yhteisöihin on lisännyt tietyissä yhteisöissä ja yksilöissä vihamielisyyden tunteita naisia kohtaan (Banet-Weiser & Miltner 2016, 172–173). Lisäksi feminismi ja liberaalit arvot voidaan nähdä uhkana miesten valta-asemalle ja perinteisille sukupuolirooleille, joka voi aiheuttaa pelon, vihan ja menetyksen tunteita, ja sitä kautta lisätä naisvihamielisiä asenteita sekä naisvihapuhetta (Ferber 2000, 30–31).

Virtuaalimaailmassa tapahtuvalla naisvihalla on usein vakavia seurauksia myös reaali maailmassa, ja siksi ilmiötä tulisi pitää todellisena uhkana sekä yksilölle että yhteiskunnalle (Ging & Siapera 2018; Henry & Powell 2015). Osa koordinoituista virtuaalihuokkäuksistä on kytköksissä virtuaalimaailmassa toimivaan naisvihamieliseen ryhmittymään, Manosfääriin (Manosphere), joka koostuu useista antifeministisistä alaryhmistä. Manosfääri on saanut osakseen mediahuomiota sekä virtuaalimaailmassa (esim. Massarani 2017) että reaali maailmassa (Dewey 2014; Ging 2019) tapahtuneiden naisiin kohdistuneiden vihamielisten ja jopa väkivaltaisten huokkäuksien ansiosta, jotka on yhdistetty Manosfääriin tai sen alaryhmiin. Nämä alaryhmät eroavat tavoitteeltaan ja menettelytavoiltaan toisistaan, mutta kaikkia ryhmiä yhdistää antifeministiset arvot sekä Red Pill -ideologian noudattaminen.

Red Pill -ideologian mukaan miehet ovat alisteisessa asemassa naisiin nähden, ja siksi ideologia pyrkii tarjoamaan miehille ohjeita ja neuvoja tässä sortotilanteessa operoimiseksi. Red Pill onkin eräänlainen seksuaalinen strategia miehille, jonka avulla he voivat kehittää

itseään ja saavuttaa lisää (seksuaalisia) suhteita naisten kanssa. Red Pill -ideologia perustuu vahvasti tiettyihin ”akateemisiin” teorioihin, kuten taloustieteen teorioihin sekä tulkintoihin evoluutiopsykologiasta. Evoluutiopsykologiaa käytetään selittämään naisten ”paritutumiskäyttäytymistä”, ja taloustieteen konsepteja sovelletaan sellaisenaan ihmissuhteisiin, jolloin ihmissuhteet nähdään eräänlaisena markkina-alueena, jossa jokaisella yksilöllä on tietty markkina-arvo.

Tutkimuksen metodiksi valittiin kriittinen diskurssianalyysi (critical discourse analysis) joka keskittyy erityisesti diskursiivisen vallan käyttöön ja sen uusintamiseen (van Dijk 2008, 8). Diskurssien kriittinen tarkastelu tarkoittaa, että tutkija kiinnittää huomiota mahdollisiin sosiaalisiin ongelmiin, joita diskurssit tuottavat ja uusintavat, kuten vallan väärinkäyttöön, tietyn ryhmän alistamiseen ja epäoikeudenmukaisuuteen (Fairclough 2010, 7.) Tästä syystä kriittinen diskurssianalyysi on sopiva metodi juuri seksististen diskurssien tutkimiseen, sillä seksistinen kielenkäyttö on yksi tapa väärinkäyttää valtaa ja tuottaa epäoikeudenmukaisia rakenteita. Kriittinen diskurssianalyysi ei ole koskaan täysin neutraalia tai arvovapaata, vaan tutkijan oma sosiopoliittinen kanta on selkeä: tutkija pyrkii sekä tunnistamaan että arvioimaan diskurssissa esiintyviä sosiaalisia ongelmia, samalla esittäen niille myös mahdollisia ratkaisuja (van Dijk (2003, 352). Tässä tutkimuksessa oma kantani tutkijana on tunnistaa vallan väärinkäyttö Red Pill -diskurssissa ja kriittisesti tarkastella niitä tapoja, joilla naisia kuvataan tässä diskurssissa.

Kriittinen diskurssianalyysi ei kuitenkaan itsessään ole riittävä metodologinen pohja tutkimukselle, sillä se viittaa ensisijaisesti tutkijan kriittiseen asennoitumiseen tutkittavaa aihetta kohtaan, eikä siksi ole tarkka tutkimusmetodi. Tarkemmaksi analyysimetodiksi valikoitui van Dijk (2001) kehittämä sosiokognitiivinen metodi (sociocognitive approach) joka keskittyy kielenkäyttäjien mentaalisiin prosesseihin, sekä korostaa yhteyttä diskurssien ja yhteiskunnan välillä. Sosiokognitiivista metodia käyttämällä tutkija voi keskittyä esimerkiksi diskurssissa ilmeneviin kielellisiin elementteihin, kuten topiikkeihin (topics), kuvauksiin muista ryhmistä tai sanavalintoihin. Näitä elementtejä analysoidaan suhteessa kielenkäyttäjien mentaalisiin prosesseihin, kuten mentaalisiin malleihin (mental models), asenteisiin ja ideologioihin (van Dijk 2016, 64). Van Dijk (2008, 59) määrittelee mentaaliset mallit tarkoittamaan kielenkäyttäjien henkilökohtaisia, subjektiivisia kognitiivisia malleja, jotka heijastavat kielenkäyttäjien omia tulkintoja tietystä diskurssista tai tapahtumasta. Koska mentaaliset mallit kuvastavat kielenkäyttäjien mielipiteitä ja tulkintoja, niillä on selvä

vaikutus kieleen ja diskursseihin. Sosiokognitiivinen metodi sopii erityisen hyvin erilaisten sosiaalisten ryhmien tuottamien diskurssien analysointiin, sillä yhteisön jäsenet usein jakavat tiettyjä sosiaalisia kognitioita (social cognition), jotka voivat olla peräisin yhteisössä yhteisesti hyväksytyistä ideologioista. Nämä jaetut kognitiot ovat keskeinen osa sosiokognitiivista analyysiä, sillä ne vaikuttavat myös yhteisön jäsenten henkilökohtaisiin mentaalisiin malleihin. Näistä syistä metodi sopii tutkimuksen tavoitteisiin, sillä pyrkimyksenä on selvittää, miten Red Pill -ideologia vaikuttaa yhteisön diskurssiin ja kuvauksiin naisista.

Analyysin pohjana oli aineisto, joka koostui kolmen Red Pill -ideologiaa avoimesti kannattavan Instagram-käyttäjän julkaisuista. Aineistoon kuului yhteensä 90 kuvakaappausta kyseisten käyttäjien Instagram-julkaisuista. Tutkimuksesta pyrittiin tekemään mahdollisimman eettinen esimerkiksi anonymisoidulla aineisto ja huolehtimalla siitä, että tutkittavien käyttäjien yksityisiä tietoja ei löydy analyysistä. Analyysiosiossa käytettiin kuitenkin esimerkkeinä suoria lainauksia aineistosta, sillä ne olivat tärkeitä havainnollistajia Red Pill -yhteisön diskurssista. Analyysi keskittyi julkaisuihin kuviin, tarkemmin kuvien tekstuaalisiin piirteisiin, eli analyysi ei ollut luonteeltaan multimodaalista. Tämä valinta tehtiin, koska julkaisut eivät juurikaan sisältäneet visuaalisia elementtejä, vaan koostuivat miltei kokonaan tekstistä. Tutkimus ei rajoitetun laajuutensa vuoksi ottanut huomioon julkaisujen kuvatekstejä, hashtagia tai kommentteja.

Analyysin perusteella aineistosta nousi esiin kolme päätopiikkaa, eli aihetta, jota kukin julkaisu ensisijaisesti käsitteli. Nämä olivat *motivaatio ja itsensä kehittäminen, naiset ja heidän käytöksensä* sekä *parisuhteet*. Kaksi viimeistä kategoriaa limittyivät toistensa kanssa, sillä diskurssi keskittyi nimenomaan heteroseksuaalisten parisuhteiden kuvaamiseen, eli parisuhteita koskevat julkaisut koskivat yleensä myös naisia. Koska tutkimus keskittyi ensisijaisesti naisten representaatioihin, kahta viimeistä aihetta ja naisia kuvaavia julkaisuja käsiteltiin tarkemmin. Analyysin tulokset osoittavat, että Red Pill -diskurssi muodostaa selvän ideologisen polarisaation miesten ja naisten välille korostamalla sukupuolten välisiä perustavanlaatuisia eroja, jotka perustuvat suureksi osaksi biologiaan ja evoluutiopsykologiaan. Diskurssi myös luo aktiivisesti vastakkainasettelua sukupuolten välille muodostamalla kuvaa miehistä sorrettiina uhreina, joita naiset systemaattisesti alistavat, niin yhteiskunnallisella kuin henkilökohtaisellakin tasolla.

Tulokset myös osoittivat, että Red Pill -diskurssi käyttää useampia diskursiivisia strategioita negatiivisen kuvan luomiseen naisista. Näitä strategioita ovat naisten homogeenointi, naisten käytöksen selittäminen biologian avulla sekä naisten epäinhimillistäminen ja naisten henkisen kypsyyden kiistäminen vertaamalla naisia lapsiin ja eläimiin. Diskurssin mukaan naiset myös kollektiivisesti manipuloivat ja hyväksikäyttivät miehiä. Lisäksi diskurssi luo kuvaa naisista eräänlaisina hyödykkeinä, joille on mahdollista määrittää markkina-arvo (sexual market value) ihmissuhdemarkkinoilla. Tämä arvo määräytyy lähinnä sen perusteella, kuinka viehättävä nainen on ulkoisesti miesten silmissä. Analyysin perusteella voi myös esittää, että Red Pill -yhteisön käsitys (seksuaalisesta) suostumuksesta on hälyttävä: diskurssin mukaan naisen sanallisesti ilmaistu torjunta ei ole riittävä, ja näin ollen diskurssi jopa kiistää naisten itsemääräämisoikeuden. Analysoitu diskurssi myös kuvaa romanttiset tai muut kuin seksuaaliset suhteet naisten kanssa pohjimmiltaan merkityksettöminä, ja korostaa, että miehet eivät tarvitse emotionaalista läheisyyttä: miesten tulisi olla henkisesti ”kylmiä”, ja löytää elämälleen jokin muu tarkoitus kuin ihmissuhteet.

Nämä representaatiot heijastavat Red Pill -yhteisön jaettuja sosiaalisia kognitioita, jotka ovat tiiviisti yhteydessä Red Pill -ideologian periaatteisiin. Suuri osa jaetuista kognitioista perustuu ”tieteellisiin” teorioihin evoluutiosta tai taloustieteen konsepteihin. Osa näistä kognitioista on ristiriidassa toisiinsa nähden, kuten käsitys naisista irrationaalisina, vailla loogista ajattelukykyä olevina hyödykkeinä, mutta samaan aikaan manipuloivina ja laskelmoivina sortajina. Näitä kognitioita ei kuitenkaan kyseenalaisteta yhteisön jäsenten keskuudessa, sillä ne perustuvat ”tieteellisiin” tai yhteisön hyväksymiin teorioihin, ja näin ollen tarjoavat tarvittavat perustelut naisvihaan ja seksistisiin asenteisiin. Jaetut sosiaaliset kognitiot vaikuttavat myös yhteisön jäsenten henkilökohtaisiin mentaalisiin malleihin, jotka manifestoituvat naisvihamielisenä diskurssina.

Analyysin perusteella voi todeta, että Red Pill -diskurssi Instagramissa on ”hienovaraista” seksististen diskurssien kontekstissa, sillä diskurssissa ei käytetä esimerkiksi naisiin kohdistuvia herjauksia eikä juurikaan voimasanoja. Esimerkiksi Red Pill -alafoorumia Redditissä tutkineet Dignam & Rohlinger (2019) totesivat, että kyseisellä foorumilla kielenkäyttö oli huomattavasti karkeampaa, ja naisiin viitattiin usein loukkaavilla ilmaisuilla. Sen sijaan Instagramissa käyttäjät eivät voi käyttää yhtä loukkaavaa kieltä, sillä Instagramin yhteisösäännöt kieltävät vihapuheen sekä esimerkiksi halventavat ilmaisut muista sosiaalisista ryhmistä. Naisviha ja naisiin kohdistuva häirintä ei myöskään ollut analysoidussa aineistossa

aktiivista (ks. Barak 2005), sillä se ei kohdistunut tiettyihin henkilöihin, vaan naisiin kollektiivisesti. Barakin (2005) termein Red Pill -diskurssi Instagramissa on pikemminkin passiivista.

Red Pill -diskurssi Instagramissa on siis luonteeltaan ”pehmeämpää”, ja sen voidaan sanoa ja ilmentävän jopa ”arkista” naisvihaa, sillä se tuottaa seksistisiä ja naisvihamielisiä diskursseja matalalla kynnyksellä, suosituilla sosiaalisen median sivustolla. Tämänkaltaiset diskurssit voivat osaltaan edistää naisvihon ja sukupuolistereotyyppien normalisointia (Jones, Trott & Wright 2020, 1915). Arkisen luonteensa takia analysoitu diskurssi voi myös olla helpommin lähestyttävää kuin äärimmäistä naisvihaa ilmentävät sivustot, ja siksi Red Pill -diskurssi Instagramissa voi olla tehokas tapa värvätä uusia kannattajia ja levittää ideologiaa entistä suuremmille yleisöille. On myös huomionarvoista, että Red Pill -diskurssi on ensisijaisesti tarkoitettu muille Red Pill -yhteisön jäsenille, sillä diskurssi pyrkii tarjoamaan motivaatiota ja voimaannuttavia neuvoja lukijoilleen. Kuitenkin suuri osa analysoidusta diskurssista käsitteli naisia ja heidän käytöstään. Siksi analyysin perusteella voikin esittää, että Red Pill -diskurssi Instagramissa ilmentää naisvihaa, mutta on naamioitu eräänlaiseksi motivaatiopuheeksi miehille. Näistä syistä kyseistä diskurssia voidaan pitää erityisen huolestuttavana ilmiönä.

Tutkimuksessa huomioitiin myös seksististen diskurssien vaikutukset laajemmalla tasolla. Seksistinen ja naisvihamielinen diskurssi on haitallinen ilmiö, joka voi rohkaista yksilöitä ilmaisemaan naisvihaa sekä virtuaali- että reaali maailmassa. Naisvihamieliset asenteet ja niiden toisintaminen voivat myös pahimmillaan johtaa jopa fyysisen, seksuaalisen tai henkisen väkivallan hyväksymiseen, ja sitä kautta väkivaltaisiin hyökkäyksiin naisia kohtaan joko kollektiivisesti (esim. Dewey 2014) tai henkilökohtaisella tasolla, kuten parisuhteissa (Canto et al., 2020). Seksistiset diskurssit ja niiden tuottamat naisvihamieliset asenteet ovat vakava yhteiskunnallinen ongelma, joka tulee tunnistaa. Vaikka tutkimus keskittyi suurilta osin seksististen diskurssien negatiivisiin vaikutuksiin naisten näkökulmasta, ilmiöllä on epäedullisia vaikutuksia myös miehiin: seksistiset diskurssit toisintavat ja ylläpitävät perinteisiä käsityksiä sukupuolista ja sukupuolten välisistä rooleista, ja esimerkiksi miesten haavoittuvaisuus ja tunteiden ilmaisu tuomitaan antifeministisissä diskursseissa usein täysin.

Tutkimus osoittaa, että vaikka Instagram tuomitsee vihapuheen, haitalliset stereotypiat ja muunlaisen halventavan kielenkäytön yhteisösäännöissään, antifeministiset yhteisöt, kuten Red Pill -ideologian kannattajat, tuottavat aktiivisesti antifeminististä ja naisvihamielistä

diskurssia Instagramissa. Tehokkaammat keinot seksistisen diskurssin kitkemiseksi sivustolta olisivat siksi tarpeen, ottaen huomioon seksistisen diskurssin haitat sekä yksilölle että yhteiskunnalle. Tutkimus käsitti vain pienen osan Red Pill -yhteisöstä Instagramissa, mutta tarjosi vastaukset tutkimuskysymyksiin, sekä esimerkin ”arkisesta” seksistisestä kielenkäytöstä sosiaalisen median sivustoilla. Koska tutkimus keskittyi ainoastaan Instagram käyttäjien julkaisemiin kuviin ja niiden tekstuaalisiin elementteihin, lisätutkimus aiheesta on paikallaan. Tuleva tutkimus voisi tarkastella myös esimerkiksi julkaisujen kuvatekstejä, hashtageja ja kommentteja. Lisäksi tulevat tutkimukset voisivat keskittyä Red Pill -diskurssiin Instagramissa kokonaisvaltaisemmin, ottaen huomioon myös esimerkiksi ideologian rasistiset elementit ja muut syrjivät asenteet.