"Sä oot kyllä harvinaisen tyhjäpää ämmä": Gendered Hate Speech in Finnish TikTok Comments

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Vihapuhe ilmiönä ei ole uusi, mutta se on tunnistettu vakavaksi yhteiskunnalliseksi ongelmaksi vasta Internetin ja sosiaalisen median aikakaudella. Anonymiteetin turvin on helppo levittää syrjiviä ja vihamielisiä viestejä miettimättä niiden mahdollisia seurauksia. Yleisen määritelmän mukaan vihapuhe kohdistuu erilaisiin vähemmistöihin, joiden asemaa valtaa pitävät ryhmät yrittävät heikentää entisestään. Yksi vihapuheen muodoista keskittyy kohteen sukupuoleen, mikä on myös tämän tutkimuksen aihe.

Tässä tutkimuksessa tarkastelun kohteena olivat sukupuolittunutta vihapuhetta sisältävät suomenkieliset kommentit TikTok-palvelussa. TikTok on etenkin nuorten keskuudessa valtavaan suosioon noussut sosiaalisen median kanava, joka perustuu lyhyiden videoiden jakamiseen. Tarkoituksenani oli selvittää, millaista sukupuoleen kohdistuvaa vihapuhetta naisten ja miesten saamat kommentit sisältävät ja mitä eroja näiden ryhmien välillä on. Tutkimuksen aineisto koostui 87 TikTokista kerätystä kommentista, joista 56 oli kohdistettu naiskäyttäjille ja 31 miehille. Kommenttien analysoimiseen käytin kriittistä diskurssianalyysia. Tämän metodin avulla tutkin kommenteissa käytettyä kieltä ja kielellisten valintojen taustalla vaikuttavia asenteita ja ideologioita.

Tutkimuksessa kävi ilmi, että naisille osoitettujen vihakommenttien sisällöissä on enemmän variaatiota verrattuna miesten saamiin kommentteihin. Naisten saamat kommentit jaettiin tässä tutkimuksessa viiteen eri kategoriaan niiden keskeisimmän aiheen perusteella, kun taas miehille vastaavia kategorioita tuli kolme. Siinä missä naisten saamat kommentit koostuivat kohteen ulkonäön ja älykkyyden arvostelusta, seksuaalisesta ahdistelusta, "slut-shamingista" ja väkivaltaisesta uhkailusta, miesten saamat kommentit keskittyivät kohteen ulkonäköön, maskuliinisuuteen ja henkilökohtaisiin ominaisuuksiin.

Huomattavaa tutkimuksen tuloksissa oli myös se, että sukupuolittunut vihapuhe kohdistui lopulta vain naisiin. Sekä naiset että miehet saivat negatiivisia kommentteja TikTokissa, mutta vain naisiin kohdistuvista viesteistä löytyi piirteitä sukupuoleen kohdistuvasta vihasta. Tämä ilmeni muun muassa naisiin liitettyjen haukkumasanojen käyttönä, yleistävinä kommentteina koko naissukupuolesta ja seksistisinä asenteina, joita löytyi useista kommenteista. Miesten saamat vihaviestit puolestaan kohdistuivat uhriin henkilökohtaisesti eivätkä liittyneet hänen sukupuoleensa. Tämä osoittaa, kuinka paljon sukupuolten välisen tasa-arvon saavuttamiseksi on vielä tehtävä töitä ja miksi sukupuolittunutta vihapuhetta on tärkeää tutkia lisää.

Asiasanat – Keyword
discourse, critical discourse analysis, gender, hate speech, tiktok

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

Hate speech as a phenomenon is nothing new. It has most likely existed in different forms for as long as the human race. What has recently turned it into a major issue, however, is the rise of the Internet and especially social media. In online contexts, hateful messages spread faster and have much larger audiences than in real life interactions. According to a report coordinated by the Ministry of Justice in Finland, approximately 150,000 messages containing hate speech are published on public online platforms in Finland each month (Korkala & Laakkonen 2021). This is 1,8% of all messages. Thanks to our technologized society where everyone has a smartphone, it is nearly impossible to escape the negativity being spread online. What makes social media such a convenient environment for hate speech is the possibility to hide behind a username. It is significantly easier to make controversial statements or insult individuals or groups of people when being anonymous.

Although there is no universal definition of hate speech, it is often understood as expressions of hate or encouraging violence towards an individual or a group of people based on attributes such as race, religion, sex or sexual orientation (Cambridge Dictionary 2021). The list of attributes targeted by hate speech differs from scholar to scholar, which will be discussed further in chapter 2.3 Defining hate speech, but the central idea is that hate speech targets those who are in a somehow submissive position in society. The characteristic that the present study will focus on is gender. Some researchers see hate speech as only targeting minorities and thus do not include sex or gender in their definitions of the term as neither women nor men are a minority. What I will argue later in this paper, however, is that gendered hate should be included in the definition of hate speech as it fits most of the criteria.

What this study will focus on is gendered hate speech in TikTok comments. I will gather a sample of comments containing hateful messages targeted at both women and men and compare the types of hate speech received by these two genders. The aim is to shed light on the nastiness of the comments women and men receive on TikTok and to study the differences found between the two groups. I see this as an important topic to study for various reasons. First, TikTok, having been published in 2016, has not yet been widely studied, which is why more research about the platform is constantly needed. Second, for as long as our society sees men as the superior gender, it is necessary to study the inequalities in our everyday lives reinforcing these oppressive structures. Finally, although I admit the inspiration for this topic came from the online harassment experienced by women, I am equally interested in studying the hate comments targeted at men and seeing what the main differences between the hate comments aimed at these two genders are.

With nearly 690 million monthly users worldwide, out of which 100 million in the US and another 100 million in Europe (Iqbal 2021), TikTok is evidently one of the top social media apps of 2021. The app is used to create and share short videos whose topics are as varied as its millions of users. The amount of different types of content on the app is endless, which makes it possible for anyone to find something that interests them. The main group of users of TikTok, however, are teenagers and young adults. According to Iqbal (2021), the two largest groups of users are 10-to-19-year-olds and 20-to-29-year-olds. This is also one of the reasons why I chose to focus my study on TikTok. As the majority of users are so young, I think it is essential for adults to be aware of the types of comments these children encounter on a daily basis. Needless to say, spreading hate speech is not acceptable at any age and being targeted by it can be just as harmful to an adult than to a child, but the difference between the two groups is that adults are more likely to have the appropriate tools to deal with it. As Delgado and Stefanic (2004: 95) argue, it is the lack of coping mechanisms that makes children especially vulnerable to the effects of hate speech. For this reason, I believe TikTok is a very important platform to study.

The method I will use to analyse the hate comments collected from TikTok is critical discourse analysis. Discourse as a concept is often defined as language in use (e.g. Blommaert 2005; Fairclough 2003), which means that in discourse analysis, the data consists of naturally occurring language in its original context. What makes discourse analysis critical, however, is the focus on power relations embedded in language use (Blommaert 2005). It can be used to study the structural relationships of domination and discrimination expressed through language (Wodak 2001: 2), for instance, which makes it an appropriate method for the present study, where the aim is to study the power relations expressed in the gendered hate comments on TikTok.

In the following chapter, I will present relevant background theories and define the key concepts of this study. I will also discuss previous studies done in the field of gendered online hate in order to provide the reader with background information about what has already been done in the field. Following the theoretical background chapter, I will move on to the methodology section, where I will discuss the present study in more detail. This chapter focuses on the research aim, data collection and method of analysis. Once all the necessary background information has been discussed, I will move on to the findings, where I will use critical discourse analysis to study the examples from my data. I will first go through the comments aimed at women and the ones aimed at men before going into the discussion about the differences between the two groups. Finally, in the end, there will be a

concluding chapter where I will summarize my main findings and give my suggestions on future research in the field.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, I will introduce the central terms and concepts related to the present study. I will begin by defining the basic concept of discourse, which is an essential term to understand when conducting a study based on discourse analysis. Following the first section, I will offer the reader some insight into critical discourse analysis by first defining what is meant by the notion of critique and then presenting Fairclough's three-dimensional model as an example of critical discourse analysis in use. The third section in this chapter focuses on hate speech. I will again define the basic concept first, before going into more detail in the following section, where I will discuss gendered online hate speech. This part includes discussion on the works of other researchers in this field and a justification on why I have chosen to use this term instead of other closely related ones. In the final section, I will present some key findings of previous studies in relation to the present one.

2.1 Defining discourse

Discourse is not a simple concept to define as many researchers have their own, slightly differing views on it. Blommaert (2005: 2), for instance, sees discourse as "language-in-action", meaning that language should not be studied on its own, but always with the context in which it is used. Fairclough (2003) agrees with the idea of discourse referring to language in use, but he goes on to make a distinction between discourse as an abstract noun ('discourse') and as a countable noun ('a discourse', 'discourses'). As an abstract noun, discourse refers to the general meaning of language in use, whereas as a countable noun, discourses are ways of representing the world (Fairclough 2003).

Similarly, Bucholtz (2003: 44) too, offers two closely related definitions for the term. According to her formal definition, discourse can simply be seen as a linguistic level where sentences are combined into larger units of language. The second definition focuses on function rather than form, according to which discourse is language in context. This view emphasizes the social aspect of language rather than the idealized, more abstract linguistic forms. What Bucholtz (2003: 44) argues is that these two definitions are intertwined and cannot be separated from each other as many discourse analysts study language units larger than a single sentence and even the formal analysis often requires the context in which the language occurs.

Although these are only a few examples, it becomes clear that there is no universal definition for discourse. Many definitions include similar features of the importance of the context in which

language use occurs, for instance, but there are also those who divide the concept into two separate meanings, as in the case of Fairclough's discourse as an abstract noun and discourse as a countable noun. For the purpose of the present study, I will adopt Fairclough's definition and use *discourse* as the general term for language in use, and *discourses* as the ways of representing the world.

2.2 Critical discourse analysis

As discussed above, discourse analysis is the study of language in use (Blommaert 2005). It is used to study the ways in which people use language in different types of interactions in their everyday lives. What makes the analysis critical is the attention to power displayed through language use (e.g. Blommaert 2005; Wodak 2001). Thus, the focus of critical discourse analysis (CDA) lies in the "structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language" (Wodak 2001: 2). For this reason, CDA is an appropriate research method for studying the social inequalities expressed through language, such as the hateful comments in TikTok videos.

Within the CDA framework, Fairclough (1992) has established a three-dimensional model where discourse is analysed as 1) text, 2) discursive practice and 3) social practice. What is central here is that language use is studied in relation to its social meanings and effects. Fairclough (1992: 72) argues that people are often unaware of the social structures, power relations and the nature of the social practice they engage in when they use language. He emphasizes that these social practices affect the social structures, social relations and social struggles that we encounter in our daily interactions. For this reason, I would argue, it is worthwhile to study these social practices to better understand the society we live in and the effects of the linguistic choices we make in our everyday lives.

The first dimension of Fairclough's (1992) model looks at discourse as text. Here, the focus is on the textual features and their meanings. Fairlough (1992: 74) argues that words are socially motivated, meaning that there is always a social reason behind them. For instance, choosing to use the term "terrorist" instead of "freedom fighter" gives away the attitude of the speaker. Fairclough (1992: 75) also discusses the meaning potential of a text and its interpretation. Meaning potential refers to all the possible meanings which can be found in a text. As texts often are ambiguous and open to several different interpretations, it is essential to take this aspect into consideration when studying texts. As Fairclough (1992: 76) states, each clause is a combination of ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings, thus making them truly multifunctional.

The main aspects which text analysis focuses on are vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and text structure (Fairclough 1992: 75). Beginning with the smallest unit, vocabulary, the analysis of words can be divided into three subcategories: 1) alternative wording and their political and ideological significance, 2) word meaning and how they connect to wider struggles, and 3) metaphor (Fairclough 1992: 77). When words are combined into clauses, the focus of interest is on grammar. Clauses are analysed based on their grammatical features and structures. The third level of textual analysis is cohesion, which looks at how clauses are combined into sentences and sentences into larger pieces of text. Finally, text structure is concerned with whole texts and how they are organized.

The second dimension of Fairclough's (1992) model looks at discursive practice. This level involves processes of text production, distribution and consumption (Fairclough 1992: 78). Fairclough (1992) emphasizes that social factors affect these processes, making them vary in different situations. What he means by this is that different types of texts are produced in different ways and in different contexts. Similarly, texts are also consumed in varied manners depending on the social context. The process of distribution Fairclough (1992: 79) divides into simple and complex varieties. Simple distribution refers to, for instance, casual conversations, which only belong to the situation in which they occur, whereas complex distribution applies in situations where texts can be consumed by different audiences at different times. An example of a text distributed in a complex manner would be a political speech, which is performed directly to one audience and recorded to be distributed via news channels and online platforms.

The final part of the three-dimensional model is discourse as social practice. Fairclough (1992) divides this practice into discussions of ideology and hegemony. First, ideology he defines as constructions of reality built into the different dimensions of the forms and meanings of discursive practices, which contribute to the production, reproduction and transformation of relations of domination (Fairclough 1992: 87). He argues that ideologies embedded in discursive practices are most effective when they become accepted as "common sense". Hegemony, on the other hand, is described as leadership and domination in the economic, political, cultural and ideological domains of society (Fairclough 1992: 92). Hegemony is the power over the society as a whole, but according to Fairclough (1992: 92), it can only be achieved partially and temporarily, as an 'unstable equilibrium'.

2.3 Defining hate speech

Beginning with the dictionary definitions of hate speech, Merriam-Webster (2021) defines it as "speech expressing hatred of a particular group of people", whereas Cambridge Dictionary (2021) sees it as "public speech that expresses hate or encourages violence towards a person or group based on something such as race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation". An even more specific definition is offered by the United Nations.

> Any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor. This is often rooted in, and generates, intolerance and hatred, and in certain contexts can be demeaning and divisive. (United Nations 2020: 10)

As these three definitions illustrate, there are differing levels of detail in the manners of describing the concept of hate speech. The vaguest definition by Merriam-Webster can be applied to all situations where someone says something hateful about any person belonging to a group. In Cambridge Dictionary's version, for an utterance to be considered hate speech, it should happen in a public setting and target specifically race, religion, sex or sexual orientation. In the final definition by the UN, the terms of hate speech are defined in even more detail. As demonstrated by these examples, there is no set definition of hate speech agreed on by all.

Who are seen as the targets of hate speech is what makes the distinction between many of the different definitions. Many views only include minorities based on race and/or ethnicity as the targets of hate speech, but there seems to be no consensus on whether sex, gender or sexual orientation can also be considered attributes targeted by hate speech (Lillian 2007). Tsesis (2002: 211), for instance, sees hate speech as inciting persecution against people based on their race, colour, religion, ethnic group or nationality. Erjavec and Kovačič (2012: 904), on the other hand, argue that hate speech can target anyone based on their "race, ethnic origin, religion, gender, age, physical condition, disability, sexual orientation, political conviction, and so forth", implying that, in their opinion, hate speech can target practically any feature somehow separating a person or a group of people from another, more dominant group.

The present study focuses on *online hate speech*, which has recently become a significant concept especially in relation to social media. As with its mother term, there is no universal agreement on what it means. Hawdon, Oksanen and Räsänen (2017: 254), simply define online hate speech as

expressing hatred towards a collective, whereas Döring and Mohseni (2020: 65) go into more detail and define the term as "verbal expressions of hate in online settings, typically by using abusive terms that serve to denigrate, degrade, and threaten". Simply put, online hate speech can be understood as any type of hateful expressions shared in an online setting with the intention to cause harm and upset to the target.

2.3 Gendered online hate speech

As discussed above, there are differing views on whether gender can be included in the basic definition of hate speech. Tsesis (2002), for instance, does not include gender in his definition of hate speech, whereas Lillian (2007) argues that just like racist and homophobic discourse, sexist discourse should also constitute as hate speech. The reason why so many scholars exclude sexist discourse from their definitions of hate speech, according to Lillian (2007: 736), is that contrary to racism and homophobia, sexism has been rendered 'invisible', not only by the patriarchal society but also by third-wave feminism itself. Whether this remains accurate in 2021 is debatable, but regardless, I would argue that even today, we still need more research on gender issues.

Glick and Fiske (1996) view sexism as a multidimensional concept, which can be divided into hostile and benevolent sexism. By hostile sexism they refer to the general meaning of sexism as prejudice or discrimination based on sex, especially towards women. Benevolent sexism, on the other hand, refers to the characteristics stereotypically attached to women, which are considered positive in tone (Glick & Fiske 1006: 491). They call this The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, which Döring and Mohseni (2020) draw on in their study by expanding the theory to include men, as well. They use the term hostile gender bias to refer to the negative characteristics stereotypically attached to either women or men, and benevolent gender bias to refer to the positive ones (Döring & Mohseni 2020: 66). For instance, considering women weaker or less intelligent than men would constitute as a hostile gender bias, whereas claiming that women are the more attractive sex and that they are more empathetic than men would be considered a benevolent gender bias.

In relation to sexist online discourse, there are several closely related terms used by different scholars. One of them is *e-bile* introduced by Jane (2014b: 532), who defines it as describing "the extravagant invective, the sexualized threats of violence, and the *recreational nastiness* that have come to constitute a dominant tenor of Internet discourse". E-bile targeting women often includes claims of unintelligence, hysteria and ugliness, in addition to threats of violent sex acts, whereas e-bile directed

at men tends to focus more on attacking their masculinity through derogatory homophobia or by suggesting they have small penises (Jane 2014b: 533). Other features characterising e-bile include, for instance, targeting a person who is somehow in the public eye, being produced by anonymous commentors, using sexually explicit expressions with homophobic and misogynist undertones, prescribing coerced sex acts as all-purpose correctives, judging the target's appearance and relying on *ad hominem* attacks (Jane 2014a: 560).

Another closely related term, *gendered online hate speech*, is introduced by Döring and Mohseni (2020: 66) who define it as online hate speech targeted at women or men, which features sexist and/or sexually aggressive content. They justify using this term over other related terms, such as "sexist online hate speech" or "misogynist online hate speech" as it includes not only sexist expressions but also sexually aggressive ones and sees both women and men as possible targets. In contrast to e-bile, gendered online hate speech as a term is more likely to be understood even with no background knowledge, which is why I will also use it in my study. Another reason for choosing this term over some of the other options is its gender-neutrality. Although the common assumption might be that women receive more hate speech online, I will analyse hate comments received by both women and men equally.

2.4 Previous studies

Online harassment and gendered online hate speech are relatively new fields of research, which have become especially relevant in the current era of social media. In a survey studying the views of U.S. citizens on online harassment, it was found that in general, men encounter more harassment in online environments than women (Duggan 2017). This claim is supported by Döring and Mohseni (2019), who also found that men tend to receive more hostile and derisive online hate comments than women. In Duggan's (2017) study, it was 44% of men compared to 37% of women who had experiences online harassment.

When it comes to sexual harassment online, however, both Duggan (2017) and Döring and Mohseni (2019) found that women are significantly more likely to be targeted by it than men. According to Duggan (2017), over one in five (21%) women have experienced sexual harassment in online settings, compared to 9% of men. Similarly, in Döring and Mohseni's (2019) study, it was found that women were portrayed in an objectifying and sexualized manner twice as often as men and were five times more often targeted by sexist and sexually aggressive hate comments. Another significant difference

between the genders is how they perceive harassment. Out of the male respondents, only 16% rated their most recent experience of being harassed as extremely or very upsetting, whereas in female respondents the percentage was 35. Women are also significantly more likely than men (70% to 54%) to consider online harassment a major problem. (Duggan 2017).

Similarly, in their study about gendered hate speech in YouTube and YouNow comments, Döring and Mohseni (2020) found that female content creators received more sexist and sexually aggressive hate comments than males, but in general, the number of hate comments received by women was not shown to be higher than their male colleagues. On the contrary, however, Wotanis and McMillan (2014), who studied the comments received by one female and one male YouTube content creator, found that the female creator received four times more hostile comments than her male colleague. Regarding the different types of hostile comments received by the two YouTubers, Wotanis and McMillan's (2014) findings are in line with the studies discussed above. The male YouTuber was mainly criticised on the content of his videos or his personality, whereas half of the comments received by his female counterpart targeted the content of the video or her personality, while the other half consisted exclusively of sexually explicit or aggressive comments. What Wotanis and McMillan (2014: 920) argue is that sexually explicit comments differ from hate comments in that they value the performer based on her status as a sexual object while ignoring the content of the video or the personality of its creator, both of which are the typical targets of hate comments.

As illustrated by the four studies discussed above, it seems that both women and men receive hateful comments online but the main difference between the two is that women encounter significantly more sexual harassment, while men are criticised based on other attributes. What Döring and Mohseni (2020) argue is that the common assumption of women receiving more online hate than men is indeed predominantly due to the sexist and sexually aggressive comments. As suggested by Duggan (2017), women tend to also react more strongly to being targeted by hate speech and see it as a more serious issue than men, which might also contribute to the misconception that women receive more online hate than men.

3 METHODOLOGY

Having discussed the theories and concepts related to my topic, I will now move on to explain the characteristics of the present study. In this chapter, I will first present my research aim and research questions, which this study will intend to answer. The following section focuses on TikTok as a platform and explores its community guidelines on hate speech. This leads me to describe the data collection process and justify my reasons for focusing on specific types of TikTok users while choosing the comments to include in my data. I will also briefly discuss the research ethics related to this study. Finally, I will elaborate on Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA as the method for this study and explain how I will apply it to my analysis.

3.1 Research aim and questions

The aim of this study is to give insight into the negative side of TikTok comments in the Finnish context by focusing on gendered online hate speech. Following Duggan (2017) and Döring and Mohseni (2019) who both studied the differences in hate comments received by women and men, I will also be focusing on these two genders. The reason why other genders are not represented in this study is that I believe they deserve a study of their own. Trying to study all the different genders in one study would be too ambitious and would most likely not result in a thorough enough analysis on each of the genders. For this reason, I narrowed down my focus into the two most prominent genders who represent the majority.

What I will focus on in this study are the different types of hate comments received by women and men. I will begin by collecting a set of comments and categorising them based on the different characteristics that they are targeting. Next, I will compare the comments received by women and men and discuss the key similarities and differences found in them. As a language student, I am interested in the linguistic choices made in the comments and how language is used to create insults targeted at women and men. Therefore, my analysis will be qualitative rather than quantitative, focusing on the different types of linguistic expressions of gendered hate speech.

The research questions I will intend to answer in this study are as follows:

1) What types of gendered hate speech can be found in Finnish TikTok comments?
2) What are the main differences in the hate comments aimed at women compared to men?

In order to answer these questions, I will collect a sample of comments from TikTok and analyse their contents using critical discourse analysis as the method. Before going into the data collection process, I will briefly introduce TikTok as a platform and examine their community guidelines in relation to hate speech. What I will pay special attention to is their view on gendered hate speech, which is at the centre of this study.

3.2 TikTok

TikTok, originally known as Douyin in China, is an app for creating, sharing and viewing short videos. It was launched in China in 2016 but gained major global popularity in 2018 and 2019, especially among the younger generations of users (Iqbal 2021). According to a report by Reuters, about 60% of the users of TikTok in the US are between the ages of 16 and 24 (Roumeliotis et al. 2019). In terms of gender, according to Kemp (2020), it is 53% of men and 47% of women who use TikTok worldwide, while in the US it is 58,4% of women and 41% of men (Statista 2021). Having only been published in 2016, the app made it to number 7 on the list of the most downloaded apps of the whole 2010s with a total of 1.5 billion downloads (App Annie 2019). In the spring of 2021, the app is reported to have 689 million monthly users worldwide (Iqbal 2021). As proved by these statistics, the popularity of TikTok is undeniable.

The content published on TikTok is as varied as its users. One can find videos related to sports, politics, culture, cooking, relationships, animals and anything in between. Perhaps the most popular type of content, which TikTok is most known for are the dance videos. Searching by the audio tracks used in the videos, one can find thousands of practically identical videos of different people doing the same choreography. Even beyond the dance videos, the content on TikTok is largely based on trends. Whenever someone comes up with a new idea for a song, joke, skill or trick, there can quickly be hundreds or even thousands of videos recreating the idea by either copying it directly or by adding some kind of a new perspective to the original video. Users can also "duet" or "stich" each other's videos, which means taking either the whole video or parts of it and using them in one's own video to create something new by reacting, commenting or replying to the original video. This allows for more variety in the interaction between the users compared to, for instance, Facebook or Twitter, where the main mode of communication is written comments.

According to the community guidelines of TikTok, content including hate speech is not allowed and will be removed from the platform (TikTok Commmunity Guidelines 2020). Hate speech is defined as "content that does or intends to attack, threaten, incite violence against, or dehumanize an individual or a group of individuals on the basis of protected attributes", and the protected attributes include race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, caste, sexual orientation, sex, gender, gender identity, serious disease or disability and immigration status (TikTok Community Guidelines 2020). Despite these noble guidelines, TikTok is known to have issues with racist and other types of hateful content being published on the platform. In a statement published by TikTok in October 2020, the company promises that although they are already working hard to recognise and ban any hateful messages, they will do an even better job at it going forward (TikTok 2020). The statement mentions ethnic and religious minorities in addition to the LGBTQ+ community as the main targets of hate speech published on the platform, whereas gender-based hate speech is not mentioned at all. This, again, proves that gendered hate speech is not considered as serious a problem as some other types of discrimination. For this reason, among others, I want to study this issue and raise awareness of its seriousness.

3.3 Data

I am interested in the comments received by "regular people" instead of celebrities, which is why I only looked at comments received by TikTok users with fewer than 10,000 followers. In addition, I narrowed my target group down to Finnish people. This decision was based on my personal interest and the fact that at the time of writing, I have not come across any studies about TikTok focusing on Finnish users. In addition, as Finnish is predominantly spoken in Finland, it made it easy to find Finnish users by using hashtags in Finnish. In comparison to English, it would have been impossible to narrow down my focus to a specific country or geographical area as English is used in online contexts by both native and non-native users all over the world. For this reason, as well, I chose to focus on Finnish users as it seems safe to assume that at least a great majority of the users chosen for my data are native speakers of Finnish, thus expressing themselves in their native language as authentically as possible.

Before collecting the data, I spent some time familiarizing myself with the app itself and studying the comment sections of various videos. After I had formed a picture of how the app and its users work, I started the data collection by using different hashtags to search for content. I used Finnish hashtags, such as, #tiktoksuomi, #suomi (Finland), #naiset (women) and #miehet (men) in order to find

specifically Finnish users. Unfortunately, on TikTok, there is no way of categorising the search results by date or popularity, which made it quite difficult to find the users with less followers as TikTok tends to show the more popular videos first. After trying several different hashtags and browsing through dozens of videos, I managed to find videos made by users who fit my criteria. What I found already in the data collection process was that it was significantly more difficult to find hateful comments aimed at male users. Based on my research, it seems that the female content creators receive more negative comments on TikTok than their male counterparts. The men whose comment sections I studied had generally received fewer comments than the female users even when the two had roughly the same number of followers, and out of the comments received, a smaller percentage seemed to be explicitly hateful when compared to the comments received by women. In the end, I collected 56 comments received by women and 31 comments received by men.

All the comments included in my data are taken from public videos, which are available to all TikTok users. Apart from the users who have private accounts, which allows only their followers to see what they post, all TikTok videos are public. Although the videos themselves are available even to those without an account, the comment section can only be seen as a registered user. When collecting the data, I only saved the individual comments which I will use in this study. The usernames of the creators of the videos or the authors of the hate comments were not saved to ensure their anonymity. As my focus is on the hate comments themselves rather than the people behind them, I want to make sure their identities are not revealed in this study.

My intention was to find a sample of comments as representative as possible. For this reason, I collected comments from different categories of videos made by different types of people. These categories include, for instance, dance, story time, workout and comedy videos. What all the creators of the videos have in common is that they all speak Finnish, are most likely over 18 but under 30 years old and have less than 10,000 followers. Unfortunately, as the authors of hate comments tend to favour remaining anonymous, I have no demographic information about them. In terms of including multiple comments received by one person, I decided to set the limit to three in order to enable more variety. However, despite aiming at as much variety as possible, the data only represents a very small portion of all TikTok comments, and thus cannot be used to make generalizations.

3.4 Method

As discussed above, I will use critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the method of analysis in my study. I chose this method as it is concerned with displays of power through language, thus making it an appropriate research method for analysing gendered online hate speech, which is very strongly concerned with power relations. Previous studies about gendered online hate speech, such as Döring and Mohseni (2019 & 2020), have used content analysis to study the frequency of gendered hate speech, but as my interest is specifically on the different types of hate speech, I see CDA as a more appropriate method for this study. While content analysis is a method often used to provide statistical information about how common a certain phenomenon is, CDA is more focused on studying the nature of the issue. Therefore, as my aim is to determine what types of hate comments both women and men receive, rather than make statistical comparisons between the two, CDA will most likely work better in this study.

I will analyse my data using Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA. I will begin with text analysis by studying the vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and text structure of the comments. As the comments are often rather short, I believe the most useful aspects to pay attention to in my analysis will be the first two, while the latter two will most likely be omitted from the analysis. Fairclough (1992: 75) distinguishes three more features to consider while doing text analysis, which are the force of utterances, which refers to the different types of speech acts (e.g. promises, requests or threats); coherence of texts; and intertextuality. However, as the data in the present study consists of individual online comments, the only aspect relevant for the analysis is the force of utterances. In contrast to Döring and Mohseni (2019 & 2020) and Wotanis and McMillan (2014), who studied the quantity of different types of hate comments received by women and men in different online settings, my focus is on the content of the comments, which is why I will pay attention to the linguistic choices made in them. For this reason, I believe word choices and grammatical structures will be especially important in this study. I will study the nouns and adjectives used to describe women and men and the verbs and actions associated with them.

The second dimension is concerned with discourse as discursive practice, which includes the production, distribution and consumption of texts. As Fairclough (1992) states, social factors strongly affect all these processes, and they are always dependent on the context. In the context of the present study, however, this dimension seems less relevant compared to the other two. For instance, the production of TikTok comments would be very difficult to analyse as the commenters are anonymous,

not revealing any details about themselves. Furthermore, all the comments are distributed on the same platform and consumed in a similar manner, thus not offering much variety or differences to be found between the different comments. For these reasons, my analysis will mainly focus on the other two dimensions, text analysis and discourse as social practice.

The third and final aspect of the three-dimensional framework is the analysis of discourse as social practice, where the focus is on the ideological and hegemonial meanings. Here, I will first study the gender-related ideologies embedded in the comments, paying special attention to word meaning, presupposition and metaphor (Fairclough 1992). Second, I will investigate the hegemonial meanings found in the comments. What this means in practice is analysing the expressions of male dominance in the society. As argued by Connell (1987: 186), who has investigated the concept of hegemonic masculinity, there is no hegemonic femininity in the same manner as the dominant form of masculinity is hegemonic as all forms of femininity are based on the overall subordination of women to men. Jewkes et al. (2015) build on Connell's idea by stating that hegemonic masculinity serves as a tool to perpetuate gender inequality, which involves not only men's domination over women but also the power some men have over other men who belong to minority groups. This idea will also be taken into consideration in my study, where I will study both of these aspects related to hegemonic masculinity.

4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I will analyse my data using Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis as a starting point. I will begin by focusing on comments aimed at women, which I have divided into five categories, 1) targeting looks, 2) targeting intelligence, 3) sexually explicit, 4) slut-shaming and 5) violent threats. These categories were chosen based on the reoccurrence of these themes in many of the comments. After that, I will move on to the comments aimed at men, which fall into three categories, 1) targeting looks, 2) targeting masculinity and 3) personal attacks. Finally, I will answer my research questions by comparing the comments received by the two genders and discussing the key differences between them.

4.1 Comments aimed at women

I will begin the analysis by going through the comments aimed at women included in my data. As stated above, I have divided them into five categories based on their main topics. Although there are comments with features from more than one category, each of them is only included in one category based on the dominant topic. This section consists of five subsections corresponding to each of the categories listed above. Focusing on the first and third dimension of Fairclough's (1992) model, which are discourse as text and discourse as social practice, I will analyse the language used in the comments and the gender-related ideologies embedded in them.

4.1.1 Targeting looks

The first category of comments aimed at women is targeting their appearance. As women are stereotypically considered the more attractive sex, judging their looks is an easy way to try and diminish their value. This is also argued by Jane (2014b: 533), who lists ugliness as one of the main aspects which women receive criticism on in online contexts. Attacking a woman's appearance can be seen as the worst type of insult since being attractive is supposedly the most important characteristic expected of women.

> (1) Et oo viehättävä sori
>
> (*You're not attractive sorry*)

(2) Ruma huora

 (*Ugly whore*)

(3) Eihän suhun koskis haaskalinnutkaan

 (*Not even scavengers would touch you*)

In the first example, the clause structure presents the statement as a fact. There are no signs of a subjective opinion, such as "I think" or "in my opinion". Instead, it is portrayed as a universal truth that the receiver of this comment is not attractive. The commenter does add the word "sorry" at the end as if not to sound so rude, but it is clearly not a genuine apology. In comment number 2, there is little room for interpretation. In this commenter's opinion, the target of the comment is not only ugly but also a whore. Even when a comment only includes two words, the choice of these words is significant. As Fairclough (1992) argues, words carry ideological meanings, and calling a woman a whore evidently portrays a negative attitude towards women. Example 3 takes a more indirect approach on judging their target's appearance. They do not use the word "ugly" or any of its synonyms but use a metaphor instead. As discussed in the method section, metaphor is one of the three key aspects in the third dimension of Fairclough's method, along with word meaning and presupposition. In this example, by stating that "not even scavengers" would touch the target, the commenter is implying that she is so disgusting that even animals who eat dead animals would not want to touch her.

(4) Lmaoo kuinka vitusti meikkiä voi naamaan laittaa? Näyttäisit varmasti hevosen perseeltä ilman meikkiä 😂

 (*Lmaoo how much makeup can you put on your face? I'm sure you'd look like a horse's ass without makeup* 😂)

(5) siis tiiätsä vittu mitä sä oot niin vitun ruma rotta joka luulee olevansa kaunis sä näytät hiireltä vitun idiootti et oo lapsi ala käyttäytyy.

 (*you know fucking what you are a fucking ugly rat who thinks she's pretty you look like a mouse you fucking idiot you are not a child start behaving.*)

These two comments are more detailed than the previous examples but follow the same strategy of intending to diminish the target's value by calling her ugly. In comment number 4, the target is being attacked for hiding her "horse's ass" of a face behind makeup. Again, this choice of words clearly reveals the commenter's attitude towards the target. In addition, the emoji and the use of the abbreviation "lmao" (laughing my ass off) suggest that they find it hilarious that the target is supposedly so ugly that she needs so much makeup to hide it. This comment stems from the expectation for women to be (naturally) beautiful by ridiculing someone who, in this commenter's opinion, does not fit the ideal.

Example 5, on the other hand, goes beyond the basic criticism on the target's appearance and uses explicit language to verbally attack the target. The use of swear words is a simple strategy of making one's message appear more vicious and portraying a hostile attitude towards the target. The commenter also compares the target to a rat and a mouse, both of which are not commonly considered the most attractive animals. What makes this comment different from the previous ones is the fact that it goes on from attacking the target's looks and calls her an idiot, as well. For this reason, this comment is a prime example of hate speech targeted at a woman as it calls her both ugly and stupid, which are two of the three most common characteristics targeted by e-bile (Jane 2014b: 533). The commenter also tells the target to "start behaving" as she is not a child, implying that, at the moment, she is not behaving. Direct orders like this are a portrayal of power, implying that the commenter has the authority to tell the target what to do.

According to the current beauty standards, in addition to "beautiful", the second most important adjective women can have attached to them is "thin". A lean figure is still largely portrayed as the only acceptable body type for women, and anyone who does not fit the ideal is considered a failure in the eyes of society (Afful & Ricciardelli 2015: 457). Therefore, it comes as no surprise that women also receive criticism about their bodies online. As the examples below demonstrate, there are various words which can be used when insulting a woman's body. Whether "plösö", "läski" or "lihava", the message remains the same: you are fat and that makes you unattractive. What is important to note with these types of comments, however, is that they are not only left for those who are overweight, but also women who appear normal weight are called fat on TikTok. Needless to say, calling an overweight person fat is no more acceptable but it is important to understand that "fat" is often used as a general insult with no relation to the target's weight. The aim is simply to make the target feel bad about herself.

(6) Oot kyl semi plösö

   (*You are kind of a fatty though*)

(7) Oot liia läski Hyi vittu

   (*You're too fat Fucking disgusting*)

(8) Irstas lihava sika

   (*Debauched fat pig*)

Comment number 6 uses the word "plösö" as a more playful alternative for "läski" (fat). Using the words "kyl" and "semi" is a manner of reducing the effect of the statement by hedging. Especially the word "semi" suggests that the commenter only sees the target as "semi fat" instead of completely fat. Although this is clearly an insult as well, compared to some of the following comments, this one seems like the least insulting. As commenter number 7, for instance, states that the target is "too fat" and uses "hyi vittu" to express disgust, the effect of the comment is significantly stronger than in the previous one. Example 8 goes even further by using the adjective "debauched" to insult the target's personality and/or behaviour while also comparing her to a pig. These two words combined with the foundation word "fat" creates an even stronger hateful impact.

(9) Mene läski pissis laihdutus kuurille. Edustat juuri sitä kaikkea mikä maailmassa
   on vikana.
   (*Go on a diet you fat bimbo. You represent everything that is wrong in the world.*)

(10) Mitä vittua laihduta sit jos näin vittuna haittaa saatanan ruma lehmä
   (*What the fuck lose weight then if it bothers you so fucking much you fucking ugly cow*)

(11) Sul on miehen kroppa
   (*You have the body of a man*)

The author of comment 9 makes a bold statement about how the target represents "everything that is wrong in the world" simply for being too fat in their opinion. They intend to express power by giving

her a direct order to go on a diet while also calling her a "fat bimbo" to add emphasis. Example 10 follows the same strategy of telling the target to lose weight but uses three swear words and calls the target "ugly cow" to highlight how much they despise her. Both of these examples display patriarchal ideologies where men have the power to dictate a woman's worth based on her attractiveness. In addition, comparing women to farm animals, such as cow in example 10 or pig in example 8, is yet another strategy of diminishing women's value as human beings.

Comment 11, on the other hand, uses a completely different strategy to insult their target as there are no direct insults or swear words to express hatred. What makes this comment particularly interesting is that it insults the target by comparing her body to that of a man. As Jewkes et al. (2015: 113) argue, the core idea behind the concept of hegemonic masculinity is that it is "not gay" as well as "not female", which clearly portrays the power dynamics between these groups of people. Consequently, it is a typical strategy of attacking a straight man's masculinity by comparing him to a woman, but having the roles reversed seems less common. Here, the idea behind the insult is most likely related to the supposedly decreased femininity due to the lack of curves and having visible muscles. As women as expected to be thin while also having the appropriate amount of curves, comparing someone who does not fit the standard to a man is essentially saying that she is not good enough of a woman.

4.1.2 Targeting intelligence

Another common theme that arises from the comments targeted at women is questioning the target's intelligence and diminishing her value as a person. As discussed above, unintelligence is one of the most common types of critique received by women online (Jane 2014b: 533). In my data, women are called empty-headed, dumb and brain-dead based on one video posted on TikTok. With these types of comments, it seems that the only goal is to upset the target. These cannot be considered constructive criticism or factual statements as they are simply attacking the target as a person by using unnecessarily rude language.

(12) Vittu sä oot kyllä harvinaisen tyhjäpää ämmä

(*Fuck you are an unusually empty-headed bitch*)

(13) Eli oot tyhmä blondi

(*So you're a dumb blonde*)

> (14) Sä olet vain aivokuollut pissis, joka ei saisi miestä tolla naamalla tai asenteella
> mene valas salille
> (*You are just a brain-dead bimbo, who couldn't get a man with that face and
> attitude go to the gym whale*)

The language used in these comments is rather simple and there is little room for different interpretations. Example 12, for instance, refers to the target as an "unusually empty-headed bitch". As discussed in the previous section in relation to the word "whore", calling a woman a bitch is also a portrayal of a demeaning attitude towards women. What is interesting in this comment, however, is the fact that the commenter uses the word "unusually" to emphasize that not all "bitches" are as empty-headed as this particular one. It avoids the common strategy of generalization, while adding to the impact of the insult targeted at this one person. This is an example of why each word in an utterance matters, as has been argued by Fairclough (1992). The same idea can also be applied in the following comment. In example 13, the commenter relies on the ancient stereotype of blonde women being stupid. Instead of simply saying "you are dumb", they insist on including the target's hair colour to the comment, as if that somehow made it a stronger argument.

The commenter behind example 14 seems to have truly put thought into the comment in order to make the target feel as bad as possible. Using the term "brain-dead" instead of the more casual "dumb" or "stupid" is a conscious choice used to emphasize the severity of the target's stupidity. The effect of the word is significantly stronger than some of its more commonly used synonyms as it refers to a complete lack of brain activity. Combined with the slang word "pissis", which refers to a self-absorbed teenage girl, the commenter is further diminishing the target's intelligence by comparing her to a teen when in fact, based on my subjective estimation, she is in her mid-20s. Furthermore, the comment goes on to criticise her face and her attitude with the justification that she "cannot get a man" with either. This statement is a prime example of the patriarchal and heteronormative attitudes portrayed in many of the comments aimed at women in my data. All women are assumed to want a man and "not being able to get one" is considered the most severe tragedy a woman can experience. According to commenter 14, however, this problem can be solved by going to the gym. This relates back to the first category of comments targeting looks, where I discussed the current beauty standards and TikTok commenters feeling entitled to tell their targets to lose weight in order to become more attractive.

(15) Perus tyhjäpää akka

   (*basic empty-headed hag*)

(16) Olipa harvinaisen paska vastaus 😂😂 naiset on nii tyhmii huutista"

   (*What an unusually shit response* 😂😂 *women are so dumb lmao*)

These two comments use generalizations to insult the female gender as a whole. Number 15 uses the word "empty-headed" to attack the target's intelligence and "hag" to imply that she is old and ugly. Again, the choice of words is significant here. "Empty-headed" is a much more loaded word than "dumb", for instance, whereas "hag" is a female-specific insult by definition. In addition, by adding the word "basic" in the beginning, this insult becomes targeted at all women as the implication is that it is actually common for women to be "empty-headed hags". Similarly in example 16, based on the target's "shit response", the commenter comes to the conclusion that all women are dumb. Generalizing comments like these are yet another portrayal of sexist ideologies.

(17) anna ihmisten pelaa golfia ja jatka sä sitä jalkojen avaamista

   (*let people play golf and you keep spreading your legs*)

(18) haluutte rikkaan ukon vaikka ei oo muuta annettavaa ku käytetty pillu

   (*you want a rich guy even though you have nothing else to give but a used pussy*)

This set of comments is not directly commenting on the targets' intelligence but rather objectifying them by implying that they have nothing else to give (to men) but their bodies. Comment 17, for instance, is indirectly suggesting that the target of the comment is only good for spreading her legs and golf should be reserved for "people" – a group which she is not a part of. Example 18 follows the same strategy by portraying women as sexual objects with nothing else to give but "a used pussy". Referring to a woman's genitalia with the adjective "used" is yet another manner of degrading the target. By suggesting that she is somehow "ruined" or "damaged" is an attempt at decreasing her value as a possible partner. In addition, this commenter uses the second person plural form of the verb "want" (haluutte), suggesting that the comment is aimed at all women. It sees women as a

homogenous group who are all the same and want the same things in life. Statements like these are diminishing women's value as people by implying they are nothing but sexual objects whose only purpose is to please men.

(19) Eka vinkki, pue päälle niin sut otetaan vakavasti
(First tip, put some clothes on so you'll be taken seriously)

(20) No älä treenaa sit akka kuuntele äläkä valita
(Well don't train then hag listen instead of complaining)

One of the aspects to pay attention to in the first dimension of Fairclough's (1992) model is the force of utterances, which refers to the types of speech acts (e.g. promises, requests or threats). The speech act used in these two examples is command, which is used as a display of power. Example 19 is structured in a rather patronizing manner, ordering the target to "put some clothes on" as if the commenter had some authority over her. It is also another form of objectification to suggest that women need to cover themselves if they want to be taken seriously. Similarly in comment 20, the writer uses three different imperative verbs while calling the target a hag, intending to display some power over her. The choice of speech act is significant here as there is a clear power dynamic when using direct commands. It is the commander who has the power in the situation, while the person receiving the command is put in a submissive role.

4.1.3 Sexually explicit

As was seen in Döring and Mohseni (2019) and Wotanis and McMillan (2014), sexually explicit and suggestive comments seem to constitute a significant portion of the comments received by women online, which is also the case in the present study. As the following examples demonstrate, there are various different strategies for objectifying women and making inappropriate suggestions to them. What most of the commenters in this category have in common is that they are more or less directly implying that they would like to have sex with the female target. None of them, however, seem very concerned about her consent.

(21) voin swaippaa mun patukan sun haaraväleihi
(I can swipe my baton into your crotch)

(22) Ootko viel menettänyt neitsyyttä voisin tulla hakee sen viel kun ehtii 😉

(*Have you lost your virginity yet I could come get it while there's still time* 😉)

As argued by Fairclough (1992), metaphors are an important tool for describing the world we live in. Example 21 uses a not-so-subtle metaphor of the sexual act, referring to the swiping on Tinder, which relates to the video this comment was left for. Although the use of a metaphor makes the suggestion indirect and not as aggressive as in the following examples, the underlying idea of women being objectives who men can "take" whenever they please remains the same. Using the same strategy, in example 22, the commenter masks their sexually aggressive agenda behind an almost polite-sounding message. They ask the target a direct question and then make a suggestion using the conditional "I could", implying a polite tone despite the message being completely disgraceful.

(23) nojoo voisin nussiakkin jos laitait sen pussin päähä.
(*wellyeah I could fuck if you put a bag over your head*)

(24) Ai saatana sua panis
(*Fuck I would do you*)

These examples take a more direct approach and use the vulgar verbs "nussia" and "panna", both of which roughly translate to "fuck" in English. In number 23, the commenter insults the target's appearance by saying that she would need to wear a bag over her head during the act so that the commenter would not need to look at her face. They paint themselves as some sort of a hero who is willing to make a sacrifice by having sex with this woman although she is supposedly too ugly to even look at. What all these comments have in common is the most likely false presupposition that the targets would even want to have sex with these anonymous commenters. These comments are constructed in a way that makes it seem like these people have the power to make decisions for the female target, who is simply a sexual object, waiting to be degraded by men. As in example 24, the commenter is not asking the target's consent but simply stating that they "would do her", as if it was their decision to make.

(25) Katoin vaan tissejä, mahdoitko sanoa jotakin?

(*I was just looking at your boobs, did you happen to say something?*)

(26) Heiluta akka takapuoltas enemmän nii voin tehä ite murekkeen tällä kertaa
😛😛😛

(*Hag shake your ass more and I can make the meatloaf myself this time*
😛😛😛)

These examples do not feature explicit suggestions but use other resources to objectify the targets. Number 25, for instance, intends to demean the woman receiving this comment by implying that her breasts are the only interesting aspect in the video. Objectifying women is a typical way of silencing them. By making a comment like this, the person is suggesting that nothing that the woman says is worth listening to. Example 26 features another display of power by making a direct command and using the degrading term "hag" to refer to the target. The offering of making the meatloaf themselves "this time" implies that it is usually the woman who does the cooking, but if she does as the commenter says, they are willing to make an exception and make the meatloaf themselves.

4.1.4 Slut-shaming

Slut-shaming is "the act of criticizing women or girls for their real or presumed sexuality or sexual activity, as well as for looking or behaving in ways that are believed to transgress sexual norms" (Karaian 2014: 296). Jane (2017: 6) argues it is the cultural norms in our society that enforce slut-shaming upon girls and women on sexualized social media use, which boys and men do not experience. This can clearly be seen in the examples from my data as well. Whenever the topic of a TikTok video made by a woman is even remotely related to sex or sexuality, it seems more of a rule than an exception to find judgmental comments under it.

According to Jane (2014a: 560), there is a combination of desire and disgust when it comes to sexualised hate comments aimed at women online. The targets are first hypersexualised as "sluts", while at the same time, derogated for being "sluts" (Jane 2014a: 560). The same double standard can also be found in the comments in my data. The comments presented in the previous section portrayed women as sexual objects whose main purpose is to pleasure men, while the comments in this section judge women for engaging in sexual activities. As Jane (2014b: 533) puts it, women are represented

as both "unacceptably unattractive man haters and hypersexual sluts who are inviting sexual attention or sexual attacks".

(27) huora mikä huora
(*whore what a whore*)

(28) Kun oot lutka joka kuukausi
(*When you're a slut every month*)

(29) Huora nimitystä ei saa turhasta
(*You don't get called a whore for nothing*)

"Whore" and "slut" seem to be among the most common insults women receive on TikTok. Both these words are commonly used to insult women who presumably engage in sexual activities deemed indecent for women by the standards of society. Comments 27, 28 and 29 trust the power of these words and provide very little context for these statements. In example 27, the author does not use the words "you are" but it is clearly implied that this comment is aimed directly at the creator of the video. What is interesting, however, is that comments 28 and 29 are structured as more general statements instead of attacking the target directly. Commenter 28 uses the words "you are" in the passive meaning, not directing the words at the target, although it is strongly implied considering that this comment was left specifically for her. Similarly, in example 29, the commenter makes a general statement about earning the title of a whore without mentioning the woman who has made the video. However, considering the context, it is clear that what this commenter also implies is that it is the creator of the video who "deserves" to be called a whore.

(30) faija ylpee ?
(*dad proud ?*)

(31) Älä tee horosta vaimoo
(*Don't make a wife out of a hoe*)

(32) ei kukaan kunnon jätkä halua tollasta horatsua :DD
(*no decent guy wants a whore like that :DD*)

What stands out in this set of comments is that women are valuated based on men's opinion about them. This again emphasizes the sexist and patriarchal ideologies presented in many of the examples discussed throughout this chapter. In comment number 30, for instance, the author implies that the father of a young woman would not be proud but possibly even ashamed of his daughter engaging in sexual activities. Similarly, the following two comments suggest that a "decent man" would not want to marry an "indecent woman". What makes a woman indecent, in these commenters' opinion, is not explicitly stated, but based on the context, it seems safe to assume that it has something to do with their sexuality.

(33) aika varma että tulevaisuudessa kadut korkeeta bodycountia ja et enää ylpeile sillä varsinkaan kun etit kenties tulevaa aviomiestä
(*pretty sure that in the future you will regret your high body count* [number of people a person has had sex with] *and stop boasting about it especially when perhaps looking for a husband*)

(34) Aika helposti avattavissa oleva lukko näköjää, no ei siinä ite oon niiden lukkojen perään johon vaan harva avain käy
(*Apparently a lock that is quite easy to open, that's fine personally I'm after the locks only a few keys can open*)

Comments 33 and 34 do not express explicit judgement towards the creator of the video for engaging in sexual activities, but the reason I included these examples in this category is the underlying, very patronizing tone in them. The comments use civil language and almost seem like friendly advice, while actually the hidden message is very judgmental. The author of comment 33 claims to be "pretty sure" that they know how this complete stranger on TikTok will feel in the future and again, expressing her sexuality is portrayed as a negative aspect "when looking for a husband". Making these types of assumptions about a TikTok creator who the commenter most likely does not know personally is a demonstration of patriarchal attitudes where men think they know what is best for women. The lock-key metaphor in comment 34 refers to women as locks and men as keys, saying that a lock that can be opened by multiple keys is a bad lock, whereas a key that opens multiple locks is a good key. This simple metaphor summarises the age-old idea that a man who sleeps around is a respectable alpha male, while a woman who does the same is a slut. Furthermore, the author of this

comment states that "it's fine" but "personally" they are after "the locks only a few keys can open", expressing a very condescending attitude towards the target.

(35) Lol tää todistaa et kaikki naiset on huoria
      (*Lol this proves that all women are whores*)

(36) Muijille taas yks tekosyy lisää huorata netissä
      (*Another excuse for girls to whore around online*)

(37) miettikää että nykyään kehutaan sillä miten paljon huorataan ja otetaan kyrpää.
      hyi helvetti naiset on pilalla. absolutely degenerate.
      (*think about it, nowadays people brag about how much they whore around and
      take dick. fuck women are ruined. absolutely degenerate.*)

What these three comments have in common is the generalizing statements they make about women as a gender. Commenter 35 argues that a simple TikTok video proves that all 3.8 billion women in the world are whores, which is a very bold generalization and probably says more about their own attitude towards women than women as a gender. The following comments also talk about "whoring around", which seems to be a generic term used for any even slightly sexual activity performed by women that men deem indecent. As mentioned in the beginning of this section, it is not only the real sexual activity of women but also the presumed, as well as looking or behaving in "inappropriate" ways, which exposes women to slut-shaming (Karaian 2014: 296). As commenter 37 suggests, simply talking about one's sex life publicly as a woman proves that all women are ruined. Whether the same policy applies for men remains unclear.

4.1.5 Violent threats

According to my data, apart from being called fat, ugly, stupid or whore, women also receive violent threats on TikTok. Jane (2014b: 542) argues that rape and death threats are among the most common online hate speech strategies. Although it is more common for women to be the targets and men to be the producers of this type of discourse, it is important to note that these types of threats can also be targeted at men (Jane 2014b: 536).

(38) Vittu sut pitäis raiskata

(*Fuck you should be raped*)

(39) hyi vittu. tämmöset oikeest jostai sillalt alas

(*fucking ew. these kinds* [of women] *seriously off a bridge*)

As discussed above, rape threats are a typical strategy when attacking women online, and commenter 38 provides a prime example of that. It is short and simple and contains just the right amount of information to get the message across. The statement "you should be raped" is not a direct threat as they are not saying they will do it themselves but wishing rape on anyone cannot be considered anything but threatening. The following example also uses an indirect threat. Here, the commenter has omitted the verb of the clause, further increasing the indirectness, but the message is just as clear without it. What is left unsaid, however, is whether the goal of this act is to cause the victim serious injury or death. Either way, suggesting that someone should be thrown off a bridge is very clearly a violent threat.

4.2 Comments aimed at men

Having analysed the comments aimed at women, it is now time to move on the comments targeting men. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the comments aimed at men have been divided into three categories, which I will go through in a similar manner as with the comments aimed at women. Again, focusing on the linguistic and ideological features of the comments, I will intend to discover the typical features of hate comments targeting men on TikTok.

4.2.1 Targeting looks

While Jane (2014a: 565) argues that it is rare for men to receive negative comments about their appearance, the men in my data were insulted based on their looks. Although these comments differ greatly from the ones in the corresponding category of comments aimed at women, a significant number of examples fall into this category, which is why this is the first category in the present section. What is notable in these examples is the variety of characteristics that they attack. While women were mainly called ugly and fat, men seem to receive more specific criticism on their appearance.

(40) Ei pahal mut oot lakannu kyntes ja äijjäl vitunmoiset harava hampaat 😂

(*No offence but you've painted your nails and you have fucking crooked teeth* 😂)

(41) kasvata ny vittu oikeet viikset 😂 ei tollasii haivenii ees kehtaa pitää jumalauta

(*grow a fucking real moustache* 😂 *embarrassing to have fuzz like that jesus*)

(42) älä ikinä näytä itteäs kameran edes uudestaa 😂 näytät pelleltä.

(*never show yourself in front of a camera again* 😂 *you look like a clown.*)

Each of these comments targets a different aspect of the receiver's appearance. In example 40, painting one's nails as a man is considered a negative thing, most likely because it is stereotypically associated with women. As discussed earlier, the concept of hegemonic masculinity is based on the fact that men are inherently different from women, who are considered the inferior gender (Jewkes et al. 2015). For this reason, engaging in a stereotypically feminine activity such as painting one's nails as a man can be seen as weakening his masculinity. The second aspect this commenter mentions are the target's teeth, which is another very specific characteristic of a person's appearance. The author of comment 41 uses a similar strategy as they pick on the target's moustache. Based on these two examples, it seems like they are purposely looking for something to use against the target. It does not need to be anything significant as the main point is just to insult him.

Example 42, however, uses a different strategy and simply states that the target "looks like a clown". This comment is not based on any one characteristic but insults the target's appearance as a whole. What is interesting in all these comments is the use of the 😂-emoji. It is used to symbolize that these commenters are laughing at the targets and that it is hilarious if someone has crooked teeth or "not a real moustache". At the same time, using an emoji makes the insults seem less serious. Compared to the comments targeting looks aimed at women, which contained hardly any emojis, these examples could almost be seen as friendly banter rather than hate comments.

(43) ootko kuollut kun joka video sama ilme

(*are you dead because you have the same expression in every video*)

> (44) En huomaa eroa näytät marsulta
>
> (*Can't tell the difference you look like a guinea pig*)

> (45) Joudut pitää pipoo pääs ettei kalju paista
>
> (*You have to wear a beanie so your bald head doesn't show*)

This set of comments points our three more characteristic men can be criticised for. It is interesting to note that not one of these men is called "ugly" or any other general insult, but most of these comments focus on one detail in their appearance. In comment 43, it is the target's facial expression. Not being expressive enough is compared to being dead. In example 44, the target is said to resemble a guinea pig. Although guinea pigs are often thought of as rather cute animals, it seems like this comment was meant as an insult. In contrast to these two rather vague insults, comment 45 attacks a common insecurity for many men. Balding is probably among the most typical features men feel insecure about, and comments like this certainly do not make it easier for anyone who struggles with it.

> (46) Jätkä näyttää joltai anorektikolta ja antaa jengille salivinkkejä
>
> (*Dude looks anorexic and gives people gym tips*)

> (47) eihän sulla edes ole lihaksia vitun siima
>
> (*you don't even have muscles you fucking fishing line*)

Men also receive criticism for their bodies, but the main theme seems to be the lack of muscles rather than being fat. In comment 46, the target is said to "look anorexic", which is an eating disorder, not a body type. What the author of this comment most likely intended to say is that the target looks thin but chose to use the word "anorexic" instead, to emphasize the severity of said thinness. In this comment, there is also a presupposition that anyone who is not visibly muscly should not give out gym tips. Similarly, in example 47, if the commenter cannot see the muscles, it is assumed that the target simply does not have any. They also add the common Finnish metaphor of comparing thin men to fishing lines, which most likely needs no explanation. As having large muscles is considered the body ideal for men, it is not surprising that men too receive negative comments about not fitting in the standard.

4.2.2 Targeting masculinity

As discussed by Jane (2014b), the online hate targeted at men often attacks their masculinity, which can be seen in the following examples. Perhaps the most typical way of attacking a straight man's masculinity is by comparing him to a gay man or a woman. Although gay men are also men, they are stereotypically considered more feminine, which seems to put them in the same category as women, who are often perceived as subordinate to men. As Jewkes et al. (2015) put it, hegemonic masculinity is strongly based on a gender position that is equally "not gay" and "not female". For this reason, calling a man "gay", "faggot" or "girl" is essentially an attempt to diminish his masculinity.

(48) Siis vittu mikä hinttari
      (*Fuck what a faggot*)

(49) Vaikutat homolta,oletko?
      (*You seem gay, are you?*)

(50) Vitun neiti
      (*Fucking girl*)

Comment 48 is a typical example of an attack on a man's masculinity. Using the derogatory term "faggot" to suggest that the target is gay is a way of implying that he is somehow less of a man. In addition, choosing to use the offensive term over the general word "gay" also portrays a hostile attitude towards homosexuals. The following comment, number 49, takes a more polite approach to the same prejudicial strategy. Although this question might seem fairly innocent, to say that someone "seems gay" is a problematic statement to make as it suggests that all gay men are the same and there are certain characteristics that tell them apart from straight men. Moreover, sexual orientation is not something that would generally be considered polite to ask a stranger, which this TikTok user most likely is to the commenter. In example 50, the commenter trusts misogyny as the source for the insult. Any female-related noun used to refer to a man is considered an insult as it is a way of diminishing his masculinity.

(51) Pääkii simppi
      (*Shutup simp*)

(52) Ei vittu HUUTISTA!!!!!!!!! Simp

(*Fucking LMAO!!!!!!!!! Simp*)

(53) Kuka vittu on nii tossun alla että kysyy muijalta luvan

(*Who the fuck is so whipped that asks his girl for permission*)

Another perspective to diminishing the target's masculinity is by suggesting he is subordinate to a woman. As the stereotype holds, it is the man who is the head of the household and has the power to make the decisions. To give some of this power to a woman or to even suggest that women might have opinions worth listening to is a sure way to earn the title of "simp". According to Urban Dictionary (2021), a simp is "someone who does way too much for a person they like". On TikTok, the term is most often associated with men who give excessive attention to a woman with the hopes of achieving a romantic relationship with her. "Simping" is considered an embarrassing activity as it puts the female target on a pedestal while emasculating the man. What is important to note here, however, is that the word is not only used in situations that fit the dictionary definition, but even agreeing with a woman or complimenting a video made by a woman might be enough to make a man a simp in the eyes of his peers. As examples 51 and 52 demonstrate, simp is such a widely known expression on TikTok that the word itself is enough of an insult and no more context is needed. Commenter 53, on the other hand, implies that asking one's girlfriend for permission to do something is a sign of weakness. This is again related to the man's role as the leader in both society and in relationships. Listening to a woman's opinion is portrayed as a negative action as it diminishes the man's position as the one who is in charge.

4.2.3 Personal attacks

The final category in comments aimed at men attacks the target by insulting him personally or criticising the content of his video. As Jane (2014b: 533) mentions in her article about e-bile, one of the most typical characteristics of hateful online speech aimed at both women and men is *ad hominem* invectives, which attack a personal attribute completely irrelevant to the topic of discussion. As the following examples demonstrate, this is a very common strategy used on TikTok as well. Similarly to all the previous categories, the main goal of the authors of these comments is to insult the target.

(54) Vittu sä oot kyllä tyhmä jätkä

(*Fuck you are a stupid guy*)

(55) Vitunn kehari

(*Fucking retard*)

(56) hajosin, vitun luuseri. legit face tats and shit.

Sit viel tälläst paskaa. huutonaurua 😂😂😂😂😂

(*Lmao, fucking loser. legit face tats and shit.*

Then this kind of shit. Laughing out loud 😂😂😂😂😂)

What these examples have in common is the use of swear words and insults related to the target's intelligence. Swear words are loaded words by definition, which automatically creates tension to a message in which they are used. When combined with insults, as in these examples, they add further emphasis to the offensive message. Comment number 54 uses the common, all-round insult "stupid", whereas commenter 55 takes it further by using the word "retard", which is insulting not only to the target but also all disabled people. By comparing the target to an intellectually disabled person, the author of the comment is implying that there must be something wrong in his brain for him to be so stupid. Although this comment was most likely only meant to hurt the target, it also portrays a hostile attitude towards anyone with a disability. Comment number 56, intends to ridicule the target by calling him a loser, insulting his tattoos and the content of his video. The use of five cry-laughing emojis clearly suggests that they are laughing at the target, which seems to be a reoccurring theme in the hate comments aimed at men.

(57) TikTok on pedofiilien taivas. Ole hyvä ja tapa ittes ennenku autan sua siin 😊

(*TikTok is heaven for paedophiles. Please kill yourself before I help you with it*

😊)

As mentioned in the section about violent threats aimed at women, these types of messages are not exclusively directed at women (Jane 2014b: 536). According to Jane (2014a: 565), threats of sexual violence is a common e-bile strategy aimed at both women and men. In my data, there were no examples of threatening sexual violence on men, but comment 57 shows that men do also receive violent threats on TikTok. In this example, the author is encouraging the target to kill himself "before they help him with it", which is an indirect threat. In addition, the use of a smiling emoji gives off a

very passive-aggressive tone. I do not see the connection of the first clause in this comment to the content of the video as the topic was not even remotely related to paedophilia.

(58) Ei oo myöhästä poistaa tätä
(*It's not too late to delete this*)

(59) Lopeta nyt vittu
(*Fucking stop already*)

(60) Miten vittu kehtaat mennä kouluun tän julkasemisen jälkeen 😂😂
(*How the fuck do you dare to go to school after publishing this 😂😂*)

These final examples target the content of the video but are clearly intended as insults to the creators. Commenter 58, for instance, seems to think that the video this comment was left for is so bad that it should be deleted. However, they do not directly tell the creator of the video to delete it but use an indirect suggestion instead, which reduces the hostileness of the message. The following example takes a more direct approach by simply ordering the target to stop. As has been discussed before, direct commands are portrayals of power. In example 60, the commenter is implying that the video is so bad that the target should feel embarrassed to show his face at school after publishing it. Once again, the cry-laughing emoji is used to further emphasize how ridiculous the commenter thinks the target is.

4.3 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the different types of gendered hate speech encountered by women and men on TikTok and compare the comments received by the two groups. As the findings in the previous two sections demonstrate, the comments aimed at women differ greatly from the comments aimed at men. In this section, I will discuss these differences in more detail. I will begin with some general observations before moving on to discuss more specific findings and to reflect on them based on previous studies in the field.

The first research question in this study concerned the different types of gendered hate speech found in Finnish TikTok comments. As illustrated in the previous section, the comments aimed at women

were divided into the following categories, 1) targeting looks, 2) targeting intelligence, 3) sexually explicit, 4) slut-shaming and 5) violent threats. Compared with the characteristics targeted by e-bile aimed at women, which are unintelligence, hysteria and ugliness (Jane 2014b: 533), there can be some similarities found in the categories chosen for this study. The comments aimed at men, on the other hand, fit into three categories, which were 1) targeting looks, 2) targeting masculinity and 3) personal attacks. According to Jane (2014b: 533), e-bile aimed at men often focuses on attacking their masculinity through derogatory homophobia or by commenting on the size of their penises. The latter was not found in the comments analysed in this study, but other strategies for diminishing the target's masculinity were identified. Comparing the number of categories dedicated for each gender, it could be argued that there is more variety in the comments aimed at women in this study.

The only category that was present in both women and men's comments was the first one, targeting looks. Sexually explicit and slut-shaming messages were exclusively present in women's comments. Violent threats were in fact found in both women and men's comments, but as there was only one example targeted at a male user, I decided to include it in the category of personal attacks rather than making a separate category for it. The categories of targeting intelligence in women's and personal attacks in men's comments were loosely related to each other. Although the examples in these two categories were rather different from each other, there was also some overlap between the topics. Targeting masculinity was the only category unique for men. There was no corresponding category of comments for women where their femininity would have been questioned. Although there were several comments focusing on the female users' gender, their main purpose did not seem to be to diminish the target's femininity.

The second research question focused on the differences found between the comments aimed at women and men. Perhaps the most obvious finding related to this question can already be seen in the lengths of the sections dedicated to women's and men's comments. As I already mentioned in chapter 3.3 regarding the data collection process, it was more difficult to find hate comments targeted at men and therefore, the data consisted of 56 comments aimed at women and 31 aimed at men. In addition, as discussed in the previous paragraphs, there were also more categories for the comments received by women compared to men. Due to these two reasons, the section on comments aimed at women is significantly longer than the following one. This does not mean that the comments aimed at men would be any less important – simply that there was less data available on them. Therefore, in contrast to Duggan (2017), it could be argued that in this study, it was women who received more hostile

messages than men. A similar argument was made by Wotanis and McMillan (2014), who found that a popular female YouTuber received more negative comments than her male counterpart.

As demonstrated by the analysis of the examples in the previous two sections, there are also several differences in the content of the hate comments received by women and men. For instance, in this study, it was only women who received sexually explicit comments, which is in line with Duggan (2017) and Döring and Mohseni (2019), who argued that women are significantly more likely to experience sexual harassment online than men. Furthermore, although Jane argues that threats of sexual violence is a typical strategy used in online hate comments targeted at both women and men (2014a: 565), that was not the case in this study, where men received no threats of sexual violence. Moreover, they were not criticised for being sexually active either – unlike women, who received a great deal of slut-shaming comments. As Jane (2017) argues, there is a sexual double standard in our society that slut-shames women for any sexual activity, which for men is completely acceptable.

As discussed previously, the focus of this study was gendered online hate speech, which Döring and Mohseni (2020: 66) defined as online hate speech targeted at women or men, which features sexist and/or sexually aggressive content. Having analysed the comments received by women and men, I would argue that it is only women who receive this type of hate speech in my data. Men received no comments focusing on their gender or claiming that all men are the same. The hate comments targeted at men were more personal, insulting the target as an individual, not as a representative of his gender. With women, on the other hand, various strategies for emphasizing the target's gender were used. There were generalizing comments about women as a homogenous group, female-specific insults, such as "bimbo", "whore" and "hag", and objectifying comments saying that a woman's worth is based on her attractiveness in the eyes of men. This, in my opinion, is what gendered online hate speech is about. When the comments target the recipient's gender or make assumptions based on it, it can be classified as gendered hate speech.

Whether the comments aimed at men can be considered hate speech in general is a difficult question. Gender was not included in many of the lists of attributes targeted by hate speech discussed in the theoretical background section, and even when it was, it was implied that it refers to women as the targets of hate speech as they are in a weaker position in society compared to men. According to my understanding of the concept, hate speech targets those who are in a somehow subordinate position compared to another, more dominant group of people. Consequently, this would mean that by definition, men cannot be considered targets of hate speech. Needless to say, men do also receive

hateful comments in online communities – as has been demonstrated in this study – but they cannot be classified as hate speech as men are not a subordinate group.

5 CONCLUSION

As has been demonstrated in this study, TikTok is home for a variety of nasty comments aimed at both women and men. One can be criticised for their looks, personality or any other feature regardless of their gender. My aim in this study was to explore the different types of gendered hate speech that can be found in Finnish TikTok comments and discover the main differences between the comments aimed at women and men. However, due to the small number of examples analysed in this study, the findings cannot be used to make any generalizations. Instead, I believe my study can be used as inspiration for future studies, which are still much needed in the field of gendered online hate speech. What my findings prove is that there is still work to be done towards gender equality. Giving women equal pay or hiring them in leader positions is not enough if the sexist attitudes still prevail in the comments women receive online.

What I have found in this study is that there is more variety in the topics of the hate comments aimed at women compared to the ones aimed at men. It is also more typical for women to receive comments emphasizing their gender. This can be done by reinforcing the patriarchal attitude where women only exist to serve and pleasure men, by making generalizing statements about how all women are the same or simply by calling the target a "bitch" or a "whore". The majority of the hate comments aimed at men did not mention the target's gender at all, and even when they did, that was not the central theme of the comment. The men in this study received no comments expressing an ideology according to which all men are the same and inferior to women. The opposite idea, on the other hand, was found in several comments. As explained in the previous section, men cannot be considered targets of hate speech due to their dominant position in society, which is why my main argument is that gendered online hate speech only targets women. As Jane (2014a: 566) argues, gendered online hate speech targeted at women is not about a particular man having an issue with a particular woman, but it is related to a much broader social issue about gender equality and sexism. It is rooted in the patriarchal ideology which sees women as the inferior gender whose primary purpose it is to provide sexual gratification for men (Jane 2014a: 566).

Critical discourse analysis worked well as the method for this study as the focus was on language and power relations. CDA is a useful tool for analysing the power structures expressed through language in their authentic contexts, which is why I chose to apply it to this study. More specifically, I used Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model, which includes discourse as 1) text, 2) discursive practice and 3) social practice. In my analysis, I mainly focused on the first and third dimensions,

studying the linguistic choices and the ideological attitudes portrayed in the comments. The second dimension, discourse as discursive practice, is concerned with the production, distribution and consumption of texts (Fairclough 1992), all of which would have been difficult to analyse based on my chosen data, which is why I decided to omit this dimension from the analysis. For this reason, Fairclough's model might not have been the most appropriate method to use in this study, but I am nevertheless satisfied with the outcomes of the study and I believe I have made some interesting findings.

As stated above, the field of gendered online hate speech is far from being exhaustively studied. More research is needed on all aspects of the phenomenon. How common it is, what effects it can have on the receivers and what are the reasons behind writing such hateful comments are just a few examples of possible future research topics. In my opinion, it would be especially important to study the impacts such hateful language use can have on children, who are not only the main user group of TikTok but are very active on other online platforms as well. Although I am sure that gendered online hate speech is a worldwide issue, it would be interesting to see if the same categories found in this study would also emerge when studying hate comments written in German or Spanish, for instance. As my study related to the different types of hate comments aimed at both women and men, there were various categories to go through, which did not allow me to centre my focus on a specific type of hate speech, such as sexually explicit or slut-shaming, both of which I believe would deserve a study of their own. For this reason, I would suggest any future researchers to focus on a specific phenomenon and only one gender in order to get more profound findings.

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