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The New Generation of Incels on Tiktok

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Abstract

Due to increasing scholarly interest in incels following the mass attacks committed by self-proclaimed incels such as Alek Minassian, and purported incels such as Elliot Rodger, a considerable amount of research has emerged that focuses on incel forums (Baele et al., 2021; Baele et al., 2024; Tranchese & Sugiura, 2021) or older platforms like YouTube (Uzun & Tiryaki, 2024; Papadamou et al., 2021) and Reddit (Glance et al., 2021; Chang, 2022), and to a lesser extent, incel manifestos (Glance et al., 2021; Dupré et al., 2024). Currently, very little research has been carried out on the effect of newer platforms like Tiktok on incel culture, with the exception of Solea & Sugiura's (2023) research on how incel terms and ideas are becoming mainstream on the platform. This paper positions incels on Tiktok as part of the broader redpill-manosphere philosophy that has become incredibly popular on the platform and as a new generation of incels that differs to those who emerged from older forum-based platforms like 4chan and Reddit. I argue that the prominence of image-based social media has only worsened the emphasis on 'lookism' (a popular incel term meaning discrimination based on looks), leading to an acceleration of blackpill and redpill adoption. This aligns with existing research on the sudden explosion in popularity of 'manfluencers' (Wescott et al. 2024, p. 168) such as Andrew Tate or Myron Gaines, on young boys and the concurrent rightward political shift of men aged 15-24 as women of the same age have become increasingly progressive (Muroi, 2025). Compared to those older platforms, Tiktok has cultivated a strong hold over younger people partly due to its perceived authenticity (Barta & Andalibi, 2021), as opposed to the performativity associated with Instagram, for example, as well as its superior recommendation algorithm (Nowacki 2024, p.1326). This paper analyses instances of non-incel content that could be considered priming for incelism, focusing mostly on the looksmaxxing subculture of Tiktok. Additionally, it investigates the contribution of recommendation algorithms to the growth of incel-ish content on Tiktok and networked misogyny (Banet-Weiser & Miltner 2016, p. 171).

Keywords: incels, misogyny, algorithms, tiktok, redpill, looksmaxxing, lookism