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Misogynist Incels and the Construction of Hierarchy Through Cryptoelect

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Abstract

Within misogynist incel communities a hierarchy of masculinity exists and persists through an invented language, or cryptoelect. A portmanteau of the term 'involuntary celibate,' misogynist 'incel' refers to men who collect around their heterosexuality and inability to find sexual and/or romantic relationships. Their hierarchies are intrinsically tied to notions of hegemonic power, masculinity, and normativity. Men that reflect desirable performances and ideologies of masculinity are labeled "alpha" to describe sexual mannerisms and characteristics that are highly sought-after by women. On the opposite end of the scale, "beta" men are identified as those who have a strong history as a provider but lack the personal qualities and characteristics that women find sexually appealing. Moreover, further masculinity archetypes (named 'Thad', 'Lad', 'Gad', etc.) are created and mythologized within online forums via written and meme format. However, these masculinities have not been analyzed by current studies. This research-in-progress investigates three popular online misogynist incel forums: incel.is, r/Braincels, and /r9k/ via textual mining to recognize how misogynist incels construct hegemonic versions of masculinity in order to define and sustain hierarchies of masculine identity. Preliminary findings are forthcoming. Broadly, my research contributes to ongoing discussions within game studies, sociology, anthropology, media studies, and other interdisciplinary fields with regard to power, gender, and online radicalization. I argue that understanding male supremacist groups, ecosystems, and ideologies is crucial for interrogating transnational misogyny and violence against women and gender minorities.

Keywords: Alt-Right; Language; Male Supremacism; Masculinity; Power; Violence