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Citation

Vink, D., Abbas, T., Veilleux-Lepage, Y., & McNeil-Willson, R. (2023). “Because They Are Women in a Man’s World”:: a critical discourse analysis of Incel violent extremists and the stories they tell. *Terrorism And Political Violence*. doi:10.1080/09546553.2023.2189970

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

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To cite this article: Dominique Vink, Tahir Abbas, Yannick Veilleux-Lepage & Richard McNeil-Willson (2023): “Because They Are Women in a Man’s World”: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Incel Violent Extremists and the Stories They Tell, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, DOI: [10.1080/09546553.2023.2189970](https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2023.2189970)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2023.2189970>



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Published online: 29 Mar 2023.



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“Because They Are Women in a Man’s World”: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Incel Violent Extremists and the Stories They Tell

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ABSTRACT

This study is a critical discourse analysis of the misogynistic narratives shared by three incel violent extremists: Elliot Rodger, Alek Minassian, and Scott Beierle. Utilizing Kate Manne’s give/take model, which suggests a wider cultural pattern of misogyny serving to uphold patriarchy, this study finds that incel men expect women to provide feminine-coded services while men are entitled to assume masculine-coded privileges. Feminine-coded services that “she” is expected to provide to “him” are emotional, social, and reproductive. As incels assume masculine-coded privileges related to authority, power, and status, “she will give” and “he will take”; otherwise, “she will be punished.”

KEYWORDS



incel extremism;
radicalization; discourse;
masculinity; anti-women

Introduction

Establishing the context

In recent years, concern about physical acts of violence and the misogynistic ideologies of “involuntary celibate” (or “incel”) communities have become more prominent in media and policymaking. Furthermore, several recent acts of extreme violence implied the necessity for researching, understanding, and developing a response which accounts for the threat individuals from such communities may pose to societal security and local communities. In response to this need, this paper focuses research on acts of violence by self-ascribed “incels,” using critical discourse analysis to investigate the nature of the misogynistic narratives of three individuals who have engaged in extreme violence: Elliot Rodger, Alek Minassian, and Scott Beierle.

The paper addresses gendered discourse—from which incel terrorism has arisen—by the attackers, analysing data using Kate Manne’s “give and take” model. This model draws on feminist theories to consider how such individuals create a framework of society where women are considered less human than men, where women are expected to supply feminine-coded goods and services, and where men can take advantage of masculine-coded benefits and privileges.¹ The paper looks to examine how masculinity and femininity are constructed by individuals, seeking to not only contribute to a micro understanding of language deployed by these prominent violent incel attackers but also how this relates to trends within broader milieus that deploy misogynistic language—including those within the political mainstream. It furthermore aims at a wider understanding of how theories developed through the study of terrorism and political violence can be used in new contexts to strengthen the research canon.

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Research has increasingly recognised that male supremacy is one of several intersecting “supremacisms” that are woven into right-wing extremist ideologies and violence.² The incidence of several terrorist attacks connected to the incel movement in Canada and the U.S. alludes to both the threat of misogyny in acts of irregular violence and its widespread persistence in societies.³ However, as Willahan⁴ points out, despite increased awareness of the potential links between structural misogyny and terrorist-style violence, several studies have largely tended to treat incel misogynistic attitudes as “anomalous”—ignoring the links between incel violence and a wider pattern of misogyny and patriarchy in Western societies, despite criticism from scholars.⁵ As such, the role of the societal context in reifying misogynistic norms and their relationship with incel extremism remains under-examined. To remedy this knowledge gap, this study brings together four key components under the lens of critical discourse analysis—biographical material on three attackers; societal misogyny in North America (i.e., the U.S. and Canada); Manne’s theoretical framing of misogyny; and analysis of written texts by incel violent extremists—Elliot Rodger, Alek Minassian, and Scott Beierle.

The notion of misogyny itself remains the source of much disagreement.⁶ A common tendency is to describe misogyny as the property of individuals who experience feelings of hostility and hatred towards all women; these actors loathe women simply because of their gender.⁷ The current study, however, goes beyond this conceptualization by examining misogyny as a social function, where misogyny is the reality and product of social environments in which women are excluded. These women are framed as failing to live up to patriarchal norms and expectations, thus becoming targets of men who view the world through this lens.⁸ While this study recognises the role psychological factors play in the misogynistic discourse of incel extremists, it concentrates on the interaction between individual attitudes and the wider social world that shapes the discourse of incel extremists in North America.

The study finds scope for understanding incel violence within the context of terrorism. Attacks by incels have not always been classified under existing definitions of terrorism. Gentry, for instance, critically highlights several historical and recent instances where it is asserted that “misogyny and violence against women is not political and therefore not terrorism.”⁹ In line with and building upon scholarship from Gentry and Leidig, we believe it is beneficial and expedient to consider incel attacks as falling within the scope of terrorism and political violence.¹⁰ In part because the term “terrorism” has been (rightly) criticised as being disproportionately applied to Islamically-justified violence by authorities in Western states,¹¹ some commentators have suggested that, if we are to be consistent in its application, it must be applied to a range of acts—including incel violence.¹²

The importance of including instances of incel violence under such a rubric has become even more pressing with the expansion of counterterrorism towards identifying and responding to (violent) extremism. This encourages a greater focus on the specific ideologies and framing of attackers as well as how such beliefs have in shaping, encouraging, and justifying violence. Accounting for the rise of (counter-)extremism necessitates more research on the links between beliefs such as incel ideologies and violent attacks. Recent research also highlights the importance of structural and community factors as key enablers in violence—such as societal polarisation caused by structural racism, hate crime, or the strength of the far-right.¹³ How extreme and exclusionary ideologies are legitimised by mainstream society and politics becomes a key step in understanding violence, suggesting merit in utilising an analytical framework developed around terrorism and political violence within the context of incel violence.¹⁴

There are additional analytical frameworks. Psycho-social understandings,¹⁵ well-being measurements,¹⁶ and mental health-led theories have also been used.¹⁷ With findings from social movement theories of irregular violence,¹⁸ it may be useful to investigate how such theories could conceptualise incel communities as participating in contentious activism within wider counter-cultural movements.¹⁹ Other research has used online network theories to examine how technology may enable violence.²⁰ We do not think designating incel violence as “extremism” or “terrorism” is the best way to analyse it, but it does present opportunities. Leidig suggests that we detect and classify incels beyond counterterrorism approaches to account for how incel violence interacts with structural

misogyny in society.²¹ Expanding a security-based approach may problematize all incel-linked language or networks as terrorist-style violence, and the security-focused analysis risks establishing new repression patterns due to the lengthy War on Terror's many flaws.

However, through the lens of (violent) extremism, we can demonstrate the relevance of (counter-) extremism discourse and analytical processes in several settings, particularly beyond the “traditional” (and racialized) ones. This allows discipline-specific theory criticism. It also allows scholars to identify contextual factors that contribute to violence and critically evaluate incel discourses on social isolation and exclusion. We use this conceptualization while acknowledging the limits of terrorism-based theories and their use in incel violence. This study uses Kate Manne's give/take paradigm to investigate Elliot Rodger, Alek Minassian, and Scott Beierle's incel violence and how it fits into North American sexism and patriarchal violence. North American incel-related violence has included Alek Minassian's 2018 Toronto van attack, the 2018 Tallahassee Yoga Studio shooting, the 2020 Toronto erotic spa knife attack, and the 2020 Westgate Mall massacre. These attacks killed over fifty people.

Establishing the research questions

The Incel rebellion has already begun! We will overthrow all Chads and Stacys! All hail the supreme gentleman Elliot Rodger!²²

Before driving a van into a crowd on one of Toronto's busiest avenues, killing ten and injuring sixteen, Alek Minassian posted the above on Facebook. Following the attack, Minassian claim during a police interview that he was “radicalised by online incel message boards and planned to create a rebellion.”²³ Minassian also claimed to have spoken to Elliot Rodger, the twenty-two-year-old who stabbed and shot six people at the University of California in 2014. Rodger's manifesto blamed women's “cruelness” for his virginity.²⁴ Rodger and Minassian were members of the online “involuntary celibate” (or incel) community, which constructs a male identity around the conviction that males are entitled to access women's bodies and that women and society are to blame for their lack of sexual gratification.²⁵

While there are a significant number of male supremacist communities, and though male supremacism has long been tied to right-wing extremist ideology,²⁶ the increasing threat posed by the incel movement has aroused substantial attention in recent years.²⁷ Between 2014 and 2018, incels were responsible for the murder of fifty people in North America.²⁸ Despite this attention, incels' discourse around gender has often been characterized as linked to mental health issues or otherwise pathologized. In the aftermath of the Toronto van attack, for instance, some pundits refused to consider the attack as an ideologically driven act of political violence and instead focused on Minassian's developmental disorder and history of mental illness.²⁹ However, this treatment fails to acknowledge the undercurrent of societal misogyny in North America that shaped Minassian's violent rhetoric and actions.³⁰

This paper brings together four constituent elements: (1) societal misogyny in North America; (2) Manne's give/take model on misogyny; (3) biographical material on three attackers; and (4) analysis of their written texts. It does this to consider the links between incel violence and societal misogyny in North America. First, the paper examines the incel movement, its core ideologies, links to violent conflict, and how it links to the case studies. Second, it explores misogyny in the U.S., aggrieved entitlement, and political intolerance. Third, it offers a detailed exploration of Manne's give/take approach before then, fourthly, applying this to language from manifestos linked to the three case study attacks—coding particularly for instances of feminine and masculine framing.

According to Manne's theoretical give/take paradigm, sexism in North American societies maintains a patriarchal order in which women are expected to provide feminine-coded “services” and males are entitled to masculine-coded “privileges.” Thus, patriarchal ideas of the giver/taker relationship promote misogynistic discourse that enforces gender standards. We show how gender inequality and other inequality dynamics lead to irregular “terrorist” violence. This pushes us to investigate ways to curtail violence that avoid pathologizing people and instead account for how the state and institutional level radicalise individuals and groups towards violence.

The involuntarily celibate movement

The involuntarily celibate movement predates concerns about incel violence. Several counter movements emerged during the 1960s second wave of feminism, which questioned the language of traditional gender norms. The late 1970s Men's Liberation Movement spawned the Men's Rights Movement. The Men's Rights Movement, unlike the Men's Liberation Movement, stressed how women's empowerment undermined men's masculinity.³¹ The Men's Rights Movement opposed feminist notions of female oppression and masculine privilege. Men's Rights Movement supporters said that men suffered more than women because male roles were more inflexible.³² In addition, the greater suicide rate among men, domestic abuse against men, circumcision, and conscription were cited as evidence of injustice against men.³³

The internet spawned the "manosphere," a network of blogs, websites, and forums encouraging masculinity, antagonism toward women, strong opposition to feminism, and extreme sexism.³⁴ Digital ethnographers have identified four interrelated but distinct subgroups within the manosphere: (1) Pick Up Artists (PUA): self-identified dating coaches and men whose goal is the seduction and sexual conquest of women; (2) Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW): men seeking to separate themselves from a society they believe has been destroyed by feminism; and (3) Men's Rights Activists (MRAs): ideological descendants of the Men's Rights Movement.³⁵ Despite being mixed-race, many incels consider white males as superior, thus mixing racism, sexism, and misogyny.³⁶

In 1997, Toronto woman Alana founded "Alana's Involuntary Celibacy Project," coining the term incel. This website created a supportive network for men and women without sexual partners.³⁷ Mixed-gender incel networks existed, but because the incel and PUA audiences overlapped, a rather sexist worldview formed. Both male audiences experienced sexual discontent based on sexual entitlement and the dehumanisation of women. The project eventually became an exclusive male-misogynistic incel movement away from Alana's activity.³⁸ In the 2000s, the incel community, now extended across numerous websites and forums, including 4chan and Reddit, got increasingly aggressive.³⁹ The community's move from a digital support network to an activist hub that pushes members to "take action" and reclaim their lives and sexuality was one of the most noticeable changes. This has ranged from organised or "networked" harassment of women (such as "doxxing" and cyberstalking) to overt acts of violence against women and the society incels see as having rejected them.⁴⁰ The Matrix references best illustrate the activism. Like the film's protagonist, incels are encouraged to "take the red pill" (or "black pill" in more nihilistic versions) and face an uncomfortable yet life-changing truth. Incels believe feminism has given women too much power and that male privilege is a fabrication.

According to many current incel ideologies, feminism has devastated civilization, so incels must recover their male and white superiority to re-establish their manhood.⁴¹ They criticise feminist movements for creating a hierarchical society where attractive young women are attracted to the most attractive and accomplished alpha males. The idealised men and women at the top of this sexual hierarchy are called "Chads" and "Stacys," the middle are "normies," and the bottom are incels. They think white Chads and blonde Stacys are the best. Thus, incel ideology influences and maintains white supremacy. Incels allege that the few Chads get most of the Stacys, while normies get unattractive women and incels get nothing. In addition to their perceived inferior physical appearance, incels who have been "pilled" believe they have "privileged insight" that normies lack.⁴² "Taking the black pill" means incels must accept their genetically inferior appearance for life.⁴³ Incels believe they can access women's bodies. Incels view feminism and sexual rejection as oppression that justifies excessive violence.⁴⁴

All three case studies are linked to incel ideologies and communities. In his writings, Rodger engaged with incel communities online and self-identified as an incel. Since his attack, he has been "canonized" in online incel spaces, becoming referred to as "Saint Elliot" and "the patron saint of incels."⁴⁵ Alex Minassian similarly referred to himself as an incel, proclaiming his progressive involvement in incel communities through discussions on Reddit and 4chan.⁴⁶ Scott Beierle,

meanwhile, was a long-time adherent to incel ideologies, posting videos on social media sites expressing support for high-profile incel predecessors.⁴⁷ They play multiple functions in the incel debate. On one hand, their central, acclaimed positions in online milieus make them incel movement representatives, at least in terms of their proclaimed worldviews. They are also atypical immigrants who have committed public violence. While this is noteworthy, what is key in these three case studies is that, since their attacks, many incel communities have grown to view them as an “ideal type,” aspirational in their ideas.

Societal misogyny in North America

The incel movement is one of many strands of male supremacism. Examining the context in which male supremacist movements develop in North America, it is possible to discern two structural and interrelated patterns that enable the rise of these movements, namely (1) aggrieved entitlement and (2) the mainstreaming of political intolerance.⁴⁸

White men’s worldview fears may have contributed to Donald Trump’s win. White and male racists supported Trump’s words and actions.⁴⁹ His 2016 election empowered and legitimised misogynistic attitudes among all white nationalists.⁵⁰ Donald Trump’s 2016 election was a “glorious affirmation of misogynists’ worldview,” which was under attack from female movements like #MeToo, Barack Obama’s comparatively progressive social policies, and Hillary Clinton’s presidential effort.⁵¹ Several extreme-right movements saw feminism as the adversary, helping Trump win.⁵²

Male supremacism and white supremacism have long been linked, and gender academics now view extremist incel violence as a form of white male aggrieved entitlement.⁵³ Several white nationalist movements have capitalised on the crisis of masculinity among young men⁵⁴ by claiming that feminism emasculates men and threatens their social, economic, and political chances.⁵⁵ Male-white supremacism is not new.⁵⁶ Globalization is enabling multiculturalism and feminism as lower-middle-class young males in North America face economic, political, and cultural transformations. However, patriarchal norms often suggest masculinity-proving obligations based on patriarchal gender role expectations.⁵⁷ This involves heterosexuality, attractiveness, and high-earning expectations that force young men to behave masculinely through power and dominance. From this cultural standpoint,⁵⁸ young males may view themselves as superior and entitled to women and immigrants.

Young men may feel humiliated when economic, political, or cultural pressures threaten their entitlement. Frustration may result from not meeting Western masculinity norms.⁵⁹ Some men use different methods to reclaim their manhood after feeling emasculated and entitled, including joining the incel movement as an expression of masculinity. Young, disillusioned men may find gendered belonging, status, and identity in far-right movements. Thus, such young men are more inclined to accept traditional gender roles (such as a progenitor, a guardian, and a provider) to look more macho⁶⁰ and to foster misogyny among young men united against a female “Other.”

The limits of existing scholarship

Existing research on incel violence perpetrators and their narratives has largely ignored society’s misogyny as a fertile ground for incel excessive violence. According to Willahan, incel violence is an indication of misogynistic and oppressive cultural beliefs that mask the dysfunctional socioeconomic situations that cause sexual frustration and violence.⁶¹ Vito, Admire, and Hughes⁶² examine the role of masculinity crises in mass shootings, while Zimmerman, Ryan, and Duriesmith⁶³ argue that addressing misogyny and violence is “the most effective way to prevent some of the conditions which lead to domestic terrorist attacks” since incel ideology is “just one of many forms of misogynistic violence” (2).

Incel ideology has typically been understood as a matter of individual views, with experts arguing that mental illness, social isolation, and sexual frustration are the main causes. For example, Mac Donald⁶⁴ calls Rodger a “lunatic narcissist,” Ferguson⁶⁵ blames “chronic anger and mental-health

problems,” and Williams and Arntfield⁶⁶ focus on incels’ “significant issues pertaining to their mental, social, and relational well-being” as a key factor in their violence. Meanwhile, Allely and Faccini propose a psycho-social explanation for Rodger’s 2014 attack, linking his autistic spectrum diagnosis (ASD) to narcissistic wrath and the Path of Intended Violence.⁶⁷ Misogyny is an important social issue, but current literature does not always link it to specific instances of mass violence.⁶⁸

Other commentators have attributed the incel phenomenon to a craving for sexual satisfaction above everything else. As with income distribution, Hanson views sex as “a complex package that is desired” by incels and asks “how we may deliver more of it to them.”⁶⁹ Srinivasan relates the need for sex to a political state, “answered by recognising more general patterns of domination and exclusion” and suggests that while there may be no right to sex, there may be “a duty to transfigure, as best we can, our desires” around political norms.⁷⁰ According to this interpretation, incels commit excessive violence because they believe society, especially women, is denying them sexual fulfilment. The sexist social milieu that supports and fosters incels’ violent behaviour is overlooked in research. In this vein, numerous feminist critics have suggested that the sexual frustration interpretation is reductionist and that incels are not seeking sexual satisfaction but rather re-establishing and reinforcing a patriarchal order.⁷¹ Thus, severe aggression and sexual unhappiness are symptomatic of the incel community’s misogynistic philosophy. In other words, sexual fulfilment is just their favourite method of dominating women.⁷²

Feminists have always enraged me . . . I have decided to send the feminists, who have always ruined my life, to their Maker. (Lépine as quoted in Lindeman)⁷³

Commentators’ responses and interpretations of attacks, both contemporary and historical, have reinforced erroneous psychosocial assumptions about incel-related violence. On December 6, 1989, Marc Lépine shot and killed fourteen female Polytechnique Montréal engineering students after separating them from the men. Lépine’s École Polytechnique massacre was Canada’s greatest mass killing until 2020’s Nova Scotia incident.⁷⁴ Lépine’s mother, like Rodger and Minassian, blamed his attack on an undiagnosed personality problem or psychosis.⁷⁵ However, feminist scholars and much of the Canadian public today understand the significance of widespread misogyny in Lépine’s attack.⁷⁶

Incel groups discuss masculinity alongside society’s misogyny and patriarchy. Masculinity is ideal and unattainable for incels, who are “innate in their physicality, which fails to comply with idealised masculine norms” and “unable to accomplish manhood acts that cause other men to evaluate them as lacking in masculinity.”⁷⁷ This simple concept is linked to many complicated social metrics. The “Chad” ideal embodies manhood through physique, strength, and attention from women, as well as income, racial profile, friends, status, and often obscure and contradictory authority. These measures reflect patriarchal and white power imbalances in liberal-democratic systems.

Manne’s give/take model

This study treats misogyny as a property of social environments in which women face hostility and violent intent to police and impose gendered norms and expectations defined from a historical and patriarchal perspective. Manne’s give/take model offers a theoretical framework for understanding misogynistic discourse and, most importantly, the relevant social forces in North America that enable it. According to this theoretical perspective, most cases of misogyny can be seen as falling under the following social norms for women:

- (1) “She is obligated to give feminine-coded services to someone or other, preferably one man who is her social equal or better (. . .), at least insofar as he wants such goods and services from her”;⁷⁸ or
- (2) “She is prohibited from having or taking masculine-coded privileges away from dominant men (. . .), insofar as he wants or aspires to receive or retain them.”⁷⁹

Within this dynamic, feminine-coded goods and services and masculine-coded privileges are described as follows:

- (1) Feminine-coded goods and services: to endow “attention, affection, admiration, sympathy, sex, and children (i.e., social domestic, reproductive, and emotional labor); also mixed goods, such as a safe haven, nurture, security, soothing, and comfort;”⁸⁰
- (2) Masculine-coded privileges: “power, prestige, public recognition, rank, reputation, honor, ‘face,’ respect, money and other forms of wealth, hierarchical status, upward mobility, and the status conferred by having a high-ranking woman’s loyalty, love, devotion, etc.”⁸¹

“She will give, and he will take, or else she might be punished,”⁸² and “she is not allowed to be in the same way that he is.”⁸³ Women cannot compete with men for masculine-coded privileges. Men can also stop women. A woman who “beats the males at their own game” may be accused of cheating or stealing masculine-coded privileges.⁸⁴ A woman who breaks these societal rules is publicly shamed. This enforces oppressive gendered norms and expectations and warns other women not to emulate or support her.⁸⁵ The give/take method provides a thorough theoretical framework for analysing misogyny in its social context.

Biographical material on the three attackers

On May 23, 2014, Elliot Rodger, 22, became the world’s most notorious incel violence perpetrator. Rodger stabbed his two housemates to death in their Isla Vista, California, apartment before going to the Alpha Pi sorority house near UC Santa Barbara and shooting three women, killing two. Rodger then drove back to Isla Vista, shooting people from his car, killing a male student and wounding others. He crashed and shot himself in the head.⁸⁶ During his rampage, Rodger sent his family and former instructors a 141-page manifesto, “My Twisted World: The Story of Elliot Rodger,” along with a video he filmed between the murder of his housemates and the killings at the sorority home attack. The manifesto and video detailed his killings and motivation.⁸⁷

Rodger was born in London in 1991. His parents migrated to California when he was five and divorced two years later. In his manifesto, Rodger outlines his poor relationship with his parents after their divorce. Rodger felt concerned by his father’s apparent success with women and resented his mother for her inability to meet his financial needs. Since age eight, Rodger had been seeing mental health doctors for depression, problematic relationships with women, and low self-esteem.⁸⁸ He was half-Asian and prejudiced, praising his white British heritage.

Following his vehicle-ramming attack, which killed ten and injured sixteen, Alek Minassian threatened a police officer by holding his phone like a gun, but he failed to cause a “suicide by police.”⁸⁹ His pre-attack Facebook post linked the attack to incel ideology. In the aftermath, Minassian was charged with ten counts of first-degree murder and sixteen counts of attempted murder.

Minassian stood out from an early age. He was quiet and sensitive and often bullied. Minassian, who had autism, was bullied in secondary school. Minassian played Halo late into the night as a teenager, developing acquaintances in the Halo community. Minassian studied software development at York University after discovering his computer skills. Minassian joined the Canadian Armed Forces in September 2017 for two months before requesting voluntary leave during recruit training and completed his university degree.⁹⁰ After his arrest, Minassian told police that a friend from his software development studies had introduced him to the incel movement’s internet message board, where he discovered like-minded friends who were struggling to fit in and “unable to get laid.”⁹¹ Minassian says he met Rodger on Reddit and fantasised about his own “rebellion” after learning about Rodger’s 2014 massacre.⁹²

Scott Paul Beierle, 40, shot six yoga students, killing two at Florida hot yoga studio on November 2, 2018. He then killed himself before police arrived.⁹³ Beierle, a military veteran and a Florida State University graduate, had previously been charged by police for a series of sexual

offences against women and young girls.⁹⁴ A month after a 2014 arrest for harassment, Beierle posted multiple anti-women YouTube videos. In addition, Beierle penned poems, lyrics, and novels about raping and killing women.⁹⁵

These three cases involve incel ideology and milieus. Manifestos, videos, and social media activity leave a valuable record of their ideology, motivations, and framing. After examining the history of the incel movement and the three case studies, the following section examines the interactions and intersections between incel beliefs, entitlement, and political intolerance, as well as the three actors and the incel milieu.

Research design and methodology

This study examines incel extremist speech in relation to social misogyny. Based on incel extremists' spoken and written language via a sociocultural lens, critical discourse analysis was used to carry this out. Manne's give/take theoretical framework implies that misogynistic rhetoric and societal circumstances enable it. This study seeks to detect incel extremists' sexist discourse patterns and explain how societal sexism can explain their narratives in North America. This analysis uses rhetoric from violent incel extremists Elliot Rodger, Alek Minassian, and Scott Beierle. Beierle has not admitted to being an incel. Rodger's misogynist incel ideology impacted Beierle. This paper examines incel ideology as a form of misogynistic entitlement. Due to a lack of Minassian and Beierle dialogue, our study underrepresents both extremists. The analysis triangulates manifestos, interviews, online videos, and Rodger, Minassian, and Beierle lyrics. It explores how incel extremism reinforces masculine privileges and feminine services. It examines how social misogyny legitimises incel rhetoric and goals.

Analysis

Feminine-coded services

Through the application of critical discourse analysis, several patterns are identified in the misogynistic discourse of Rodger, Minassian, and Beierle. Across all cases, the dominant discourse constructs women as service providers, obligated to provide certain goods and services to "him." However, this pattern is not uniform: there is variety in the way these feminine-coded services are constructed.

First, incel fanatics believe women should give them "attention," "affection," "sex," and "sympathy." "I consider Sixth Grade to be the better year out of the three years I would spend in Middle School," Rodger writes in his manifesto. "Girls noticed me. I was not invisible because they knew who I was."⁹⁶ Rodger also discusses how puberty altered him. Before his twelfth birthday, a summer camp girl made him feel inferior: "... this girl was rude to me and yet she liked Oren."⁹⁷ Rodger's manifesto links pain to his desire for love and sex. This excerpt shows his want for emotional services:

I could never embrace a girlfriend and feel her warmth and love, I could never have passionate sex with a girl and drift off to sleep with her sexy body beside me. Women deemed me unworthy of having them, and so they deprived me of an enjoyable youth while giving their love and sex to other boys.⁹⁸

Rodger believes ladies prefer boys "who do not deserve it" to gentlemen like himself.⁹⁹ Rodger claims that "not one girl offered to help me as I stumbled home with a broken leg, beaten and bloody. If girls had been attracted to me, they would have offered to walk me to my room and take care of me. They would have even offered to sleep with me to make me feel better."¹⁰⁰ In a YouTube video, Beierle remarked that,

...[I would] like to send a message now to the adolescent males that are in the position, the situation, the disposition of Elliot Rodger, of not getting any, no love, no nothing. This endless wasteland that breeds this longing and this frustration. That was me, certainly, as an adolescent.¹⁰¹

In one of Beierle's YouTube videos, he talks about the birth of his misogynistic views and expresses his anger towards one of his previous dates, claiming that he "could have ripped her head off."¹⁰² According to Beierle, women behaved so uncaringly towards him that they could be likened to a "pit of vipers."¹⁰³ He goes on to refer to women as "whores and sluts."¹⁰⁴ Likewise, during Minassian's police interview, he claimed he wanted to kill "any of the Stacys who do not wish to furnish their love and affection to the incels" and chose to bestow their love and affection upon "obnoxious brutes" instead.¹⁰⁵

These constructions show incels' rage towards women for not giving them emotional support. These women "hold" them. These ideas show that incels want sex not for sexual gratification but as part of a set of emotional goods and services they think women owe them.¹⁰⁶ They define themselves as rational superior players and women as irrational actors, justifying their rejection by these women. The portions above demonstrate another kind of othering in which incels call the Chads "obnoxious brutes" and compare them to "magnificent gentlemen," supporting the idea that incels are deserving of women's love and affection and unfairly denied it. These buildings reduce the threat incels face from women and their males.

The second noticeable pattern is the articulation of women as being expected to provide social services such as "admiration," "nurture," and "comfort." In Rodger's manifesto, he states: "I imagined the ecstasy I would feel as scores of beautiful girls look at me with admiration as I drive up to college in a Lamborghini."¹⁰⁷ He goes on to note that "no girls admired me; no girls even gave me a second look."¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, there are several fragments in Rodger's manifesto in which he expresses his frustration because his mother refused to marry a wealthy man. Rodger states how he "would have still preferred it if my mother had gotten married to a wealthy man and moved into a mansion. I still continued to pester her to do this, and she still stubbornly refused. I will always resent my mother for refusing to do this. If not for her sake, she should have done it for mine."¹⁰⁹ In this situation, Rodger presents his mother as a selfish woman for not giving him the comfort that he wanted and deserved. Lastly, in reflecting on when he was beaten up at a party, Rodger explains his suffering not as being due to the physical attack, but due to the fact that "not one girl showed an ounce of concern" for him.¹¹⁰ In these texts, Rodger presents women as providers of specific social labor, expecting women to take care of him for the sake of their own wellbeing. This distinct articulation of service providers characterized women as providing a reproductive service. Rodger explains that women hinder the "advancement of humanity" because they choose to mate with "stupid, degenerate men."¹¹¹ In line with Rodger's reasoning, Minassian claims that the incel movement wants to "overthrow the Chads (...), which would force the Stacys to be forced to reproduce with the incels."¹¹² According to Rodger, all women should be destroyed, save for a few women who should be spared "for the sake of reproduction."¹¹³

In the main, the dominant gender discourse of Rodger, Minassian, and Beierle constructs "her" as being obligated to grant feminine-coded services to "him" to uphold his male dominance. Additionally, she is to provide him with emotional, social, and reproductive labor. In the event that he does not receive the goods and services he is owed, he is entitled to take them from her by force without facing any consequences. As Rodger stated: "I will punish all females for the crime of depriving me of sex."¹¹⁴ This construction serves as a justification for their anger towards women.¹¹⁵ Remarkably, these narratives show a retaliatory tactic that is personal but not particular.¹¹⁶ The incels' anger is directed towards women simply because they are women in a man's world, and therefore any woman is a legitimate target.¹¹⁷

Masculine-coded privileges

Incels share a dominant misogynistic narrative in which men are entitled to enjoy masculine-coded privileges. However, this dominant discourse on masculine-coded privileges is not uniform across the cases studied. The incels examined in this analysis associate their privileges with different ideas of power, social status, social "face," and the associated absence of negative experiences such as shame and humiliation. First, the discourse of the incel extremists' positions power as a masculine-coded good to which they have exclusive access. Rodger explains how, after buying a lottery ticket, he "felt

thrilled with the prospect of having a chance to become a multi-millionaire.”¹¹⁸ According to Rodger, as he became older he realized “how important money was, and the more obsessed” he became with getting rich.¹¹⁹ Rodger felt that if he were to become wealthy at a young age, he could “have any girl” he wanted.¹²⁰ Additionally, stating that “if I could somehow become a multi-millionaire at a young age [...] I would be able to get revenge on my enemies just by living above them and lording over them.”¹²¹ These quotes illustrate that, for Rodger, wealth was associated with power. He talked to one of his friends about how he wanted to use his powers “to rule the world and set everything right.”¹²²

Rodger proposed a “new and powerful type of government, under the control of one divine ruler, such as myself.”¹²³ He thought he could control “every aspect of society, in order to direct it towards a good and pure place.”¹²⁴ “We don’t necessarily wish to kill the normies but we do wish to subjugate them [...] to make them understand that our type is the more superior one,” Minassian said in his police interview.¹²⁵ Minassian claims incels want to “imprison” normies.¹²⁶ In one of Beierle’s songs, titled *Locked in my Basement*, he speaks about holding a woman prisoner in his basement to “rape her.”¹²⁷ Beierle underlines in a YouTube video that the ladies who betrayed him to “destroy him” will pay.¹²⁸ He states: “I believe in karma, I believe in ‘what comes around goes around,’” and uses the metaphor “live by the sword die by the sword.”¹²⁹ During Rodger’s preparations for his attack, he purchased a handgun: “After I picked up the handgun, I brought it back to my room and felt a new sense of power. I was now armed. Who’s the alpha male now, bitches?”¹³⁰ Rodger links masculine privileges like authority to extreme violence. Rodger, Minassian, and Beierle’s delusions of total domination empower them. They overcome their impotence by demonstrating their power. Their power language lets them think about avenging all their perceived wrongs. Power is a right in these constructions.

The second noticeable pattern is the articulation of incels as being entitled to social status. As a statement in Rodger’s manifesto reads:

Because of my father’s acquisition of a new girlfriend, my little mind got the impression that my father was a man that women found attractive, as he was able to find a new girlfriend in such a short period of time from divorcing my mother. I subconsciously held him in higher regard because of this. It is very interesting how this phenomenon works, that males who easily find female mates garner more respect from their fellow men, even children.¹³¹

In this text, Rodger perceives social status as conferred by having a high-ranking woman by one’s side. Rodger continues by stating:

... people having a high opinion of me is what I’ve always wanted in life. It has always been of the utmost importance. This is why my life has been so miserable because no one has ever had a high opinion of me. My little brother Jazz was the only one who had such an opinion, and that is why I enjoyed spending so much time with him, despite my envy of his social advantages.¹³²

Here, it is noteworthy that Rodger prefers spending time with his younger brother because he responds to his need for public recognition and high social status. Furthermore, Rodger describes himself as “an intellectual who is destined for greatness” and who “would never perform a low-class service job.”¹³³ Furthermore, Rodger states the following:

I am not part of the human race. Humanity has rejected me. The females of the human species have never wanted to mate with me, so how could I possibly consider myself part of humanity? Humanity has never accepted me among them, and now I know why. I am more than human. I am superior to them all. I am Elliot Rodger, magnificent, glorious, supreme, eminent, divine! I am the closest thing there is to a living god. Humanity is a disgusting, depraved, and evil species.¹³⁴

Minassian notes that he and other incels “wish to subjugate [the normies] to make them understand that our type is the more superior one.”¹³⁵ He wants to place the normies in “a lower position in society.”¹³⁶ By doing so, Minassian hopes to make his targets “acknowledge [...] the incels [...] as the more superior ones.”¹³⁷ These fragments illustrate Rodger’s and Minassian’s focus on social status as a masculine-coded privilege. Specifically, by emphasizing their superiority, they position themselves as

the legitimate Self, while the Chads, Stacys, and normies are positioned as the illegitimate, inferior Other. In the face of rejection by women and society, this Self/Other construction serves to legitimize the incels' desire to wreak revenge and to overthrow their targets.

The last pattern is concerned with the social "face" and the related absences of shame and humiliation and the markers thereof. In several fragments of Rodger's manifesto, he shows himself to be concerned with what other people think of him, as demonstrated in the following statement:

I had to suffer the shame of other boys respecting me less because I didn't get any girls. Everyone knew I was a virgin. Everyone knew how undesirable I was to girls, and I hated everyone just for knowing it. I want people to think that girls adore me. I want to feel worthy. There is no pride in living as a lonely, unwanted outcast. I wouldn't even call it living.¹³⁸

Similarly, Beierle speaks of, "the societal pressure that is put on an adolescent male, to unburden himself of this stigma that society has put on him. This virginity burden and having a girlfriend."¹³⁹ Rodger's manifesto describes his first encounter with "female cruelty" during summer camp when he was eleven.¹⁴⁰ He says he unintentionally bumped into a girl while playing with friends, who responded by cursing and pushing him. Rodger says this encounter "traumatized" him "to no end" and made him feel like an "unworthy little mouse."¹⁴¹ Rodger then portrays himself as humiliated by women for not liking him. As shown in the following example, Rodger's discourse relates to various episodes from his childhood and college years:

I was walking across the huge bridge that connected the two campuses, I passed by a girl I thought was pretty and said "Hi" as we neared each other. She kept on walking and didn't even have the grace to respond to me. How dare she! That foul bitch. I felt so humiliated that I went to one of the school bathrooms, locked myself in a toilet stall, and cried for an hour.¹⁴²

Rodger's relationship with his stepmother also suffered along similar lines, as he experienced being embarrassed by her on several occasions. For instance, in his manifesto, Rodger refers to an argument he had with her: "she shouted at me in front of George [Rodger's brother] and threatened to punish me. This was so embarrassing that I fell into a miserable mood for the rest of the day."¹⁴³ Minassian, too, refers to a particularly defining moment when he felt "very angry" because some girls at a Halloween party laughed and ridiculed him.¹⁴⁴ According to Minassian, this was the moment he realized he was an involuntary celibate.¹⁴⁵

As the fragments above have shown, the discourse on masculine-coded privileges emphasizes concern about social "face," reputation, and freedom from public humiliation. The latter is a freedom that is more or less universally desired; however, what sets Rodger and Minassian apart is their conviction that they are entitled to it due to their gender. Whenever women resist or mock these gendered expectations by humiliating them, their masculine pride is threatened. This discourse appears as an attempt to cast women as an irrational Other and hold them responsible for men's suffering. Moreover, the emphasis on women's "misbehavior" is used to point out flaws in the female character.

Discussion and concluding remarks

In recent years, the incel movement has become more antagonistic and ubiquitous across cyberspace, according to several scholars and commentators.¹⁴⁶ While the scale of this is debatable, incel violence and its interplay with structural misogyny have become more widely acknowledged as a problem.¹⁴⁷ This study's incel violence perpetrators are part of a larger online subculture of violent guys. This includes the view that women are responsible for their isolation and rejection by organising society so that men's access to women is based on physical appearance.¹⁴⁸

This study proposes that sexism in North America maintains a patriarchal structure in which women provide feminine-coded services and men receive masculine-coded benefits. Two main misogynistic trends in Elliot Rodger, Alek Minassian, and Scott Beierle's discourses show up. The first dominant pattern portrays women as patriarchally bound to deliver feminine-coded services to

“him.” This study indicates that women are expected to supply males with emotional, social, and reproductive services under this dominating discourse. Incels want “attention,” “affection,” “sex,” and “sympathy” from women. Women must show “admiration,” “nurture,” and “comfort.” This study concludes that women must provide reproductive services to incels. In other words, incel fanatics want to force women to breed with them to overthrow the oppressive sexual order. Rodger, Beierle, and Minassian’s second dominating pattern is patriarchal, with incels believing they are entitled to masculine-coded privileges. In this hegemonic discourse, incels equate masculine-coded privileges with power, social standing, and social face. This discourse holds that women should be punished if they make mistakes as providers or try to usurp masculine-coded privileges from “him.” This justifies their violence towards women and society.

The three case studies target women, society, and sometimes men with violence. Rodger wants to punish “everyone who is sexually active” to target “all women and the males they are drawn to,” as stated in his manifesto. Minassian wants to “overthrow the Chads” by targeting “all the alpha men.”¹⁴⁹ Misogyny is not used to downplay violence against males because patriarchal systems damage at least a majority of men.¹⁵⁰ The give/take paradigm may explain men’s targeting by highlighting misogyny that directly frames masculine-coded privileges as active in other settings. Instances when attackers talk of “the shame of other boys respecting me less” or “love and sex [given] to other boys” try to turn victimhood (in this case, as a victim of other men’s capabilities) into a privilege required by the attackers over other men. However, Manne’s approach might be modified to employ coding to highlight men’s targeting.

The assailants’ misogynistic speech enforces patriarchal gender standards and is affected by the giver/taker relationship. Incels, young white men, believe women and feminism have wrecked society, endangering their social, economic, and political chances.¹⁵¹ Incels embrace traditional gender roles and exhibit extreme masculinity. Thus, incels use violence to express their pain and demonstrate their masculinity.¹⁵² Incel violence is rising in Canada and the U.S. Despite this growing threat, scholarly research on incel narratives is scarce.¹⁵³ Psychological and “anomalous” incel-inspired actions are rarely considered terrorism. This study examines incel extremist narratives through North American societal misogyny.¹⁵⁴

Incel extremists in North America feel emasculated and express their anguish through violent words and conduct. This shows young males have few safe ways to communicate their pain. Thus, the lack of such opportunities must be addressed. While most incels will never commit such acts of violence, the incel community’s aggressive rhetoric inspires a few who feel justified in acting on their anger. Further research could examine a narrative in which being a “real man” is weak and vulnerable.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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