

WOMAN IS SEXUAL OBJECT and MAN IS GENES. A cognitive analysis of incel discourse.

Sabina Tabacaru

Université Paris 8 Vincennes-Saint-Denis, sabina.tabacaru@univ-paris8.fr

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The link between involuntary celibates (incel) and terrorism has been discussed in the media as well as in academic work (Hoffman, Ware, & Shapiro, 2020; O'Malley, Holt, & Holt, 2020). Papadamou et al. (2021) found that any user on YouTube has a 6.3% chance of being suggested an incel-related video even when no such content is sought particularly by the user, which makes this subject alarming for online radicalization.

The present paper explores the dangers linked to the hate speech and violence openly discussed on such websites, which allow the development of a specific language and ideology among the users. A lot of the views expressed can be transcribed through frames (Fillmore, 1976) and metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980): women, as sexual objects, should be “distributed” among the men who have inferior genes because SEX (for men) IS A NECESSITY. The incel community also seems to prefer a metonymy-based practice that links both anti-feminist and racist views (for example, all women deserve revenge, the term “currycel” is used to talk about a person from South Asia, etc.).

The corpus used contains more than 1,500 posts drawn from an online forum and analyzed using AntConc for a view of the terms and frames used by the members. Their language promotes frames and prototypicality (Berlin & Kay, 1969; Rosch, 1977), with a preference for blends (e.g., terms such as incel from involuntary celibate, locationcel from location and incel, etc.), categorizing people as well as experiences in terms of stereotypes and the UP and DOWN metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Following these patterns, women are dehumanized, as they are only seen as sexual objects.

This topic is particularly important in relation to ideology, and the way power relations between men and women (dominance and subordination) should be kept and developed (Lazar, 2005; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). The users consider that a woman can only be used for sex, and consent is not a factor that should be taken into account. Calls for violence against women are frequent and supported by most users on such forums. The users seem to adhere to faulty reasoning processes (if a, then b) and false biological views that they promote as “common sense.”

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