

# A computational Analysis of Doomerism

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November 17, 2022

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 The Doomer as the archetype of a generation

Recently, many cultural archetypes have emerged, on the internet, to describe the modern generation and its world. These archetypes are not mere creations for comical purposes. They pose real and deep messages through their lore as much as the legends and archetypes of antiquity. Each character defines an aspect of the young person's existence and his interaction with the external world.

Of these archetypes, often referred to as the *Wojack*, the Doomer is the one that defines this generation of young people aged about 15 to 25. The doomer, and by extension doomer-girl, is someone who is doomed to live a meaningless life. This is the notion of Doomerism. He is hopeless, dark, and alone. His world is that of the dilapidated post-soviet blocks. He sees no sunlight, no tree, no love.

The use of iconography and specifically the Doomer as a cultural and social icon is studied by Karel Nĕmeček [2]. Karel Nĕmeček identifies powerlessness and meaninglessness as the predominant forces of Doomerism.

The Doomer is left with the problems, of social inequality, pollution, global warming, and everything else. He feels powerless against the world.

Moreover, the doomer feels unquenchable nihilism. His pessimism is inspired by the likes of Schopenhauer. The works of existential thinkers of past generations is reimagined in his new world.

Compared to the generations who endured the hardships, massacres throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, this generation, at least the western generation, has seen relative peace. The Berlin Wall has collapsed. The Cold War has melted away. Nutrition is readily available [CITATIONS NEEDED]. Meat consumption is at its highest [CITATION NEEDED]. Social media is allowing for easier communication. The best technology is free to use and contribute to. Information, especially first-hand news and journalism, is a given. Everything seems to be, for the most part, *better*.

So, why is the doomer doomed? Why is he the loneliest generation? And how is what he is experiencing something new?

#### 1.1.1 Youth Emotional Loneliness

Depression and loneliness are new to this generation, yet the relatability and virality of the Doomer icon seems to suggest that something has changed. This *something* may be in our collective culture, the external world, prospects, relationships, and so on.

Young people are the loneliest demographic ever. This has been proven by multiple sources [CITATIONS NEEDED]. This is true in the eastern countries as well as western ones [CITATION NEEDED]. In particular, Statistics Canada has identified those aged 15-24 as the loneliest demographic in Canada.

### 1.2 Research Question

Thus, it is important to understand what is Doomerism? This is by itself is rather a trivial question; one can understand the elements of Doomerism by viewing a small subsample of its uses as icons. This project aims to quantify these elements through textual analysis. That is, what are the exact composition of its themes and elements?

Then, is Doomerism a novel cultural archetype of a different era, or is it a new expression for long-existing phenomenons? How is the composition of themes of Doomerism different from that of loneliness and depression in general?



Figure 1: The Doomer

## 2 Operationalisation

### 2.1 On the Shoulder of Giants

This subsection will peruse the existing work to solidify how this project builds on literature in a novel way.

Karel Němeček’s work is a theoretical analysis of memes and Doomers as social and cultural icons [2]. This project wishes to quantify the themes and causes in a computational method through textual analysis.

To study the causes of loneliness, Fardghassemi interviewed a group of 48 young adults from London’s most deprived boroughs. The interviews were manually analysed for themes and causes of youth loneliness [3]. This work wishes to compete with the interview style analysis of young adults at a higher scale. Scraping the internet, particularly the Reddit’s subforum, /r/rdoomer, can produce a higher number of personal accounts of substantial length at a lower cost.

Guntuku has a similar approach, in which she uses NLP to analyse the themes of twitter users posting about loneliness [1]. This work wishes to use her approach to answer a cultural question about the novelty of Doomerism.

### 2.1.1 Where I Stand and its Significance

There is a problem with the youth becoming more lonely, and depressed. The issue so far has been analysed through a simplistic, traditional view of what the problems may be. Doomerism, has arisen as a cultural form of the problem of the youth. To understand what it is, and if it is different from previously known phenomenon, interventions can be better created.

## 3 Methodology

### 3.1 The Data

The best place to study the doomer is its subforum on Reddit, /r/doomer. To compare the doomer with other similar characteristics, the subforums of, /r/lonely, /r/loneliness, and /r/depression were also scraped.

All the data was filtered for posts that were of greater length than 500. The data is described in table 1. The users of Reddit, and specifically these Subreddits, skew towards young, English-speaking, males.

Subreddit	N. of Posts $\geq$ 500 words	Ave. Post Length	Earliest	Oldest	N. of Users
/r/doomer	2921	1275.15	2019-04-22	2022-11-15	1764
/r/lonely	4860	1228.02	2022-09-13	2022-11-17	3759
/r/loneliness	2754	1489.41	2011-11-09	2022-11-15	2252
/r/depression	8811	1336.82	2022-02-28	2022-11-15	8168

Table 1: Metadata

### 3.2 Approach

To start off, the posts were manually examined by a human to identify some causes and themes from the different Subreddits. This approach is similar to Fardghassemi’s analysing of the interviews [3].

When the causes have then been identified from the manual approach, a list of terms will be identified. These terms will be analysed for their frequencies in a similar approach to the work of Guntuku [1]. If terms pertaining to one cause always have a higher frequency than another in one Subreddit over another, it is clear that cause is more prevalent.

Thirdly, a composition of the causes are created for a doomer, lonely person, and depressed person, as the measure of the frequency of the terms in the corpus of posts. This data could be used to train a model to classify a doomer from the other categories. This would answer the research question of the doomer having a distinct and novel identity.

## 4 Results

### 4.1 The Commonality of the users

The users of these Subreddits were generally unique. That is, only a few doomers posted in the other similar forums. This is our first evidence for the doomers being a distinct identity.

The number of unique users of each of the Subreddits were greater than a thousand; however, the common users between the doomers and the other Subreddits were very low. There were only 13, 6, 14 common users between /r/doomer, /r/lonely, /r/loneliness, and /r/depression respectively.

The greatest number of common users were actually not between /r/lonely and /r/loneliness, 31: this, I believe, is to the smaller user base of /r/loneliness. The greatest commonality was between /r/depression and /r/lonely, 161, suggesting that lonely people are generally depressed and vice-versa.

There were no common users between all the Subreddits, and only 2 and 1 common users between /r/doomer, /r/depression, /r/lonely, and /r/loneliness.

### 4.2 Manual Inspection

A sample of these posts were read to identify the themes and causes present in the categories. A sample of 50 posts from both /r/doomer and /r/loneliness were read. 20 posts from /r/lonely and

/r/depression were read.

#### 4.2.1 Themes of /r/doomer

Doomers are predominantly male, young, and single. There are lots of mentions of school and a lot of accounts of their actual age and gender. In doomer terms, they are plagued by *no gf*. They have seldom talked to girls, they are worried about their virginity, and they feel utterly helpless. There are lots of mentions of relationship issues and porn addictions.

The largest theme that arose from the sample reading were themes of **nihilism** and **doom**. One can argue that these are not separate entities; nihilism seems to be a subset of doom, and doom seems to be a subset of nihilism. Yet, doom encompasses more than just nihilism. Doom is the notion that the world is hopelessly going to be extinct. Our civilisation is bound to collapse, and the doomers see it clearly. The world is doomed, and the doomers are the outcasts who are first experiencing this. Thus, their nihilism can be seen to arise from this doom.

There was a simple poetry to the doom of the doomer. Here is a sample written by doomers.

The prophetic vision of the holy executioner finally begins to take shape and unfold  
Nothing remains to view the final breaths of a dying star many eons after all signs of  
life ceased their existence on the surface of our beautiful planet leaving behind a still  
silhouette of memory of a once magnificently brilliant world

The prophetic vision of the holy executioner finally begins to take shape and unfold  
where the monochrome deafening silence echoes throughout the remnants of what was  
our beautiful world

An exiled hermit  
These desolate plains I roam  
From the cosmic infancy  
I float like a lost comet  
Drifting through empty space  
Deprived of self  
I find solace within painful memory  
Of my sadistic lover,  
Life  
The ghost of ecstasy  
Lurking in the sorrows  
Which belong to me alone  
To serve as the gate to the firmament  
And contain the flames of agony  
In which I've forged the poisoned  
knife  
With which I'll put the suicidal god

Out of its eternal misery  
Before abandoning the heavens  
Consumed by the flames of my pas-  
sion  
Casting a shadow to eclipse the sun  
Burning brighter than the morning  
star  
At the edges of the dawn  
To break free from the chains of blind  
devotion  
devouring the minds of man  
That shall signal the inevitable col-  
lapse of tyranny  
Of paradise and hell  
Born out our asymmetry  
In ascendancy

The second biggest theme that arose from the manual inspection was **loneliness** and *no gf*. I will be using this term to refer to being single (having no girlfriend). This term is not only an abbreviation, it's an esoteric term that signifies the obsessiveness of the doomers towards their being single. This obsession is somewhat close to the ideas of *incels* (involuntary celibates), a truly toxic subculture arising from the internet. These doomers really blame not having sex as an evidence of them being doomed.

There are two comical tropes that explain this. The first is the doomer finding the doomer girl, the exact female counterpart of the doomer, and them being *doomed* together. The sample of posts inspected did have females, but they are rare. It is an elusive dream or a joke within this community of ever finding the doomer girl. In fact of the top posts of /r/reddit, there is one of a doomer couple holding hands.

The second feature that displays the comedy and obsession of the doomers with girls and sex is the idea of a state mandated girlfriend. The doomer is so doomed, that the only plausible intervention by the government issues girlfriends. This second example is a stretch, as it did not come during the inspection, and it may be more attributed the aforementioned incel subculture.

Other causes include **suicide**, **a bad childhood**, **a dead end job**, and to lesser extents issues of **mental health** and **drugs**. The two latter causes were less relevant to the sample doomer posts inspected.

#### 4.2.2 Themes of /r/lonely and /r/loneliness

The sample posts inspected between the two Subreddits were identical in themes.

The lonely users are an older group. They are more likely to be female, in a relationship, or even married. In the 50 posts in the doomer set, there was not a single post mentioning they were in or ever were in a marriage. The doomer looks up to marriage as perhaps the naive, traditional embodiment of the good life, the *undoomed* life as it were.

The lonely person seems to be dealing with issues that are simpler and more natural to the human condition. Friends are growing distant as the person ages, they cannot find friends, or a romantic partner, they have gone through a break up, and so on. Therefore, the first cause of loneliness identified were **relationship issues**.

The other themes identified were issues of **social issues**. The users mentioned their being too shy and introverted to change anything. There were also mentions of **unlovability**. The users could have been in marriages, yet they felt emotionally alone. Their souls and beings were not cared for as they would wish.

The loner posts had more mentions of hope and lights at the end of the tunnel. The loner has some sense of optimism for how they can, or in the least, should change things. The doomer's identity comprises a deep, dark core of nihilism and doom. The doomer is simply not lonely, they are *doomed* to be lonely and unloved.

#### 4.2.3 Themes of /r/depression

The users of this Subreddit were far **medical** than any of the other users. In fact, they seemed to be dealing with these issues but still having some problems. They mentioned medications or therapy, and ways they are trying to remedy their diagnosed problems.

Many of the posts mentioned **issues and responsibilities** that they were dealing with. A breakup or a death in the family was very commonly mentioned.

There was also an **emotional emptiness**. Many users described their emotions in terms of being sad, having or lacking in pain, energy, or motivation.

#### 4.2.4 Conclusion of Manual Inspection

Although, all the problems the users of these Subreddits were dealing were serious and need of attention, there were degrees to their *troubles*.

The doomer is, by far, the most dark and nihilistic of the other groups. In this regard he is distinct.

## 5 Conclusion

### 5.0.1 Discussion

### 5.0.2 Ethics

The issue of ethics was closely guarded for this research. The people in consideration for this research are vulnerable groups; therefore no data created for this research has been shared. Moreover, all notes created for the analysis of these posts have also been made private. For the most part, identifiable features of the posts were hidden and discussed.

All the data, that was used, are made public by the users themselves, and free software and widely available scrapers were used to retrieve that data. Any person could have access to the posts made by these users.

### 5.0.3 Acknowledgments

## References

- [1] Sharath Chandra Guntuku et al. "Studying expressions of loneliness in individuals using Twitter: an observational study". In: *BMJ* 9 (2019).
- [2] Karel Němeček. "Internet memes as reservoirs of meaning: Interpreting the Doomer". Bachelor's Thesis. Masaryk University, 2020.

- [3] Hélène Joffe Sam Fardghassemi. “The causes of loneliness: The perspective of young adults in London’s most deprived areas”. In: *PLOS ONE* 17.4 (2022). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0264638>.