A computational Analysis of Doomerism

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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 Němeček [1]. Karel Němeček 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 19th and 20th 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? What are the exact composition of its themes and elements? 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 [1]. This project wishes to quantify the themes and causes in a computational method.

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 [2]. 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 than Fardghassemi's traditional interviews.

2.2 The Doomer Subreddit as a Study Ground

The previous studies that sought to determine the causes of loneliness interviewed its subjects. In particular, Fardghassemi *et al.* interviewed young adults in London's deprived boroughs to answer such a question [CITATION NEEDED]. This is approach is great, in so far as it asks the right people the right questions, yet it is limited in its vastness. The cost to find and conduct interviews is high; therefore, only a few participants can be used. Fardghasssemi used only 48 participants.

With any internet subculture, there is a rich amount of conversation available on forums, particularly, its subreddit. /r/rdoomer, provides the researcher with more abundance of material to analyse.

On this subforum, there are personal accounts of loneliness, that stretch far into the time when the doomer was conceptualised. These personal accounts are to the same quality as the interviews produced by Fardghassemi *et al.*

Thus, there are simply more information available to analyse for a lower cost. To analyse the high quality posts concerning the scope of the research under this forum, can give substantial results. Causes may be discovered that were missed in the narrow number of participants in previous research led by traditional interviews. Moreover, the information are made public by the users, the data scraped is not shared, and there is little to no invasiveness; therefore, there are less ethical considerations to be had.

2.3 Research Question

What are the causes of youth emotional loneliness amongst the doomers in reddit's /r/rdoomer?

2.4 Operationalisation

Doomers are then a good abstraction and representation of young people experiencing youth emotional loneliness. That is, given a phenomenon, it is wise to analyse its cultural elements and lore for the root causes.

References

[1] Karel Němeček. "Internet memes as reservoirs of meaning: Interpreting the Doomer". Bachelor's Thesis. Masaryk University, 2020.

[2] 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.