

A computational Analysis of Doomerism

Ali Raeisdanaei

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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 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 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? 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.

Subreddit	N. of Lines Scraped	N. of Posts \geq 500 words	Earliest	Oldest	Ave. Post Length	N. of Users
/r/doomer	189004	1000	2002	2020	600	1000
/r/lonely	97579	1000	2002	2020	600	1000
/r/loneliness	37151	1000	2002	2020	600	1000
/r/depression	80000	1000	2002	2020	600	1000

Table 1: Metadata

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>.