

Incelese: The Creation, Proliferation, and Normalization of the Incel Language

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Abstract

The Humanities and Arts Requirement was completed with a sequence of courses in Writing and Philosophy, culminating in a research paper for a seminar on the use of English for social and political power. This paper explores ‘incelese’, the language used by the online involuntary celibate (incel) community. While incelese may seem innocuous to an outsider, it harbors and spreads an incredibly violent, misogynistic, and racist ideology. The paper summarizes the ideology behind incelese, explains how incelese is used tactically, and theorizes its future spread by analyzing its use in a WPI online space and other online communities.

Introduction

Incels, short for involuntary celibates, are a group of people, mostly heterosexual men, who have formed a community around their shared lack of dating success (Labbaf, 2020). They largely reside in online social media groups, forums, and image boards, bonding with others over their struggles to get and keep a partner (Labbaf, 2020). They share their failures, frustrations, and anger regarding their dating life, document the physical attributes that they deem unattractive, and give others tips on how to improve their looks (ContraPoints, 2018).

While this description of incels seems innocuous, it fails to capture the violent and deadly hatred that this community espouses towards women, people of color, and queer people (Bates, 2023). Most posts in incel communities contain racist, sexist, or homophobic slurs, derogatory terms, and even rape or death threats (Halpin et al., 2023). Some have committed mass murder as a direct result of incel ideology; Elliot Rodger, who killed six and injured fourteen in a shooting in Isla Vista, California, released a manifesto alongside his massacre where he stated that women were “evil, barbaric animals” and dreamed of “slaughter[ing] all of those evil, slutty bitches” (Bates, 2023; Rodger, 2014). While Elliot didn’t explicitly mention incels in the manifesto, he frequently used incel terminology and was known to frequent incel forums (O’Malley et al., 2022).

As with many other online communities, the incel community has a plethora of slang terms, abbreviations, and in-jokes; however, this slang is so pronounced that it almost resembles a new language. ContraPoints (2018) called this collection of incel slang ‘incelese’, and I will do the same. Incelese is central to incel ideology, so much so that any discussions about incels that do not also explore or explain the incel language are unable to encapsulate what makes the incel community so dangerous. Its use as a recruitment tool, method of cognitive dissonance, and dog whistle has contributed greatly to how fast incel ideology has spread. As incels have grown in popularity and influence, incelese has even spread to communities entirely unrelated to inceldom, sometimes being used by those who are ideologically opposed to or face discrimination from incels. Understanding the language incels use to communicate is pivotal in combating the spread of their violent rhetoric.

Until recently, almost no literature focused primarily on incel language, and I aim to rectify that. This paper is a look into the creation, proliferation, and normalization of incelese,

both inside and outside the incel community. First, I will explore how incelese embodies and reinforces the incel community's views on gender and social hierarchies. Next, I will cover how incelese is used tactically by incels to 'recruit' new members, alienate the community through metonymy, and further radicalize their base. Finally, I will look at incelese's spread beyond the incel community: I will explore femcels, or female involuntary celibates, and how they differ ideologically from incels; I will explore how incelese is used both ideologically and non-ideologically through internet memes; I will analyze how and why incelese is used on the Worcester Polytechnic Institute Discord server, an online text and voice chat platform for WPI students. Using these findings, I will theorize the future development of incelese and determine if any actions should be taken to slow or stop its spread.

Multiple communities could benefit from my paper. The first is the linguistic community, which can use my theory and analysis of incelese to get insight into how ideology is spread through internet dialects. The second is family psychologists, who could use this analysis to look for language in their patients that could hint at incel indoctrination. The third is feminist scholars, who could use this paper as a linguistic overview to detect and combat the use of incel rhetoric in both online and offline spaces. Because I do not expect these communities to already be familiar with the incel community, the next section will briefly explain the history of the community and what ideology they embody.

Background

The term 'involuntary celibate' was first coined in 1997 on a blog created by a bisexual woman named Alana (Labbaf, 2020). A small and supportive community of both men and women sprung out of Alana's blog, discussing their struggles over finding love; she intended it to be a space "where men and women shared their fears, frustrations and unhappiness." (Bates, 2023). However, as the community evolved, Alana grew apart from her movement when she felt she did not achieve her initial goal of destigmatizing being a "lonely virgin" (Alana, 2019). She felt that some of the men were "clueless about women", generalizing women as "intimidating creatures" and looking for quick ways to "get a girl" (Alana, 2019). She later told The Guardian that "[i]t feels like being the scientist who figured out nuclear fission and then discovers it's being used as a weapon for war." (Kassam, 2018). These men, I argue, are what the incel

community began to resemble after Alana handed off ownership of the project in 2000 (Alana, 2019).

The incel movement plants itself firmly in the ‘manosphere’, a broad identifier for male-oriented movements, such as pickup artists, the Men’s Rights Movement, and Men Going Their Own Way (Bates, 2023). The incel movement gained momentum in the mid-2010s, where it became a “virtual area of hate and frustration among mostly heterosexual men within the manosphere” (Labbaf, 2020). Overall, incels believe that it is not their fault that they cannot get into a relationship, hence the term ‘involuntary’; instead, incels say that women hold all of the power—also called “sexual-economic capital” or “sexual market value (SMV)” —in a relationship, and they use this power to control men and persecute anyone who does not fit into hegemonic masculine stereotypes (Heritage, 2023). Incels accuse all women of being hypergamous, only going after attractive or wealthy men instead of the men incels deem comparably attractive, or a “looksmatch” (*Incel Glossary*, 2024). In other words, incels believe that their love lives are at the mercy of women, who only have sex with highly attractive ultra-masculine men, leaving the other men to either go completely sex-less or be abused for their wealth by women who want to ‘settle down’. This can be summed up in the common incel phrase “Alpha fucks / beta buxx” (*Incel Glossary*, 2024).

Incels believe that sexual relationships are integral to living a fulfilling life; without these relationships, incels feel like a part of their livelihood and manhood are gone (ContraPoints, 2018). They feel entitled to experience the joy and connection of having sexual and romantic relationships, and by only dating the most attractive men, they believe women are ripping a part of their lives away from them (Bates, 2023). While they believe that women control the sexual market, they are also viewed as intellectually and genetically inferior to men, and they must be controlled as a result (Labbaf, 2020).

To incels, the only way to escape inceldom is either to ‘ascend’—becoming attractive enough that they are sexually desirable to women—or to create a world where relationships between men and women are forcibly arranged (*Incel Glossary*, 2024; Labbaf, 2020). Otherwise, incels can only ‘lie down and rot’, disconnecting from society completely (ContraPoints, 2018; *Incel Glossary*, 2024). Unsurprisingly, this ideology can cause men to spiral out of control emotionally, lashing out at women both in person and online (Bates, 2023). This ideology can

easily turn deadly, leading incels like Elliot Rodger and Alek Minassian to commit mass murders in the name of “restoring the masculine order” (Labbaf, 2020).

Methodology

Most of this paper reviews recent literature on the topics of incels and incelese. This literature consists mostly of academic journal articles, graduate theses, published books, and credited news articles. However, due to the online nature of the incel community, some non-peer-reviewed online sources like *The Incel Glossary*, *Love Not Anger*, and *Know Your Meme* were necessary to get up-to-date information on the ever-changing incelese slang terms.

I am a second-year undergraduate student at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, a private polytechnic university in Worcester, Massachusetts. During my time here, I have noticed that some college students who did not identify as incels have started to use incel terms in casual conversation, even to refer to things completely unrelated to inceldom. However, I have lacked the empirical evidence to make any concrete conclusions about this use of incelese. I will attempt to determine whether this use of incelese is harmful or helpful in preventing the spread of incel ideology by analyzing college students’ use of incelese through the lens of critical discourse analysis.

To do this, I analyzed the Worcester Polytechnic Institute Discord server, which contains over a million messages from thousands of prospective, current, and former WPI students. Discord is a popular social messaging app where users can create ‘servers’ that host a multitude of text- and voice-chat channels. I chose the WPI Discord server specifically for 3 reasons. First, the WPI Discord is not freely accessible by anyone: to join the server, one must either use their school email to find the server through Discord’s Student Hub or get a link through WPI’s website. Either way, the WPI Discord is limited to only prospective, current, and former WPI students. Second, all of the accounts on the server are not anonymous, and anyone who joins via the Student Hub will have their school email attached to their account. This means that members post on the server with the knowledge that their messages can be linked back to their identity, limiting the amount of ‘trolls’ on the server which may skew the results. Third, I have easy access to the server as I am already a member of it, and members have access to a detailed and configurable search tool built into the Discord app.

Users of the WPI Discord server commonly fall between the ages of 18-22, but some younger and older members exist on the server. The server has male, female, and non-binary members coming from a wide range of countries, communities, and ethnicities; I believe that this server fairly closely resembles the wider college-aged population. I will use Discord's built-in search tool to search for nine common incel words: 'Chad', 'Stacy', 'pilled', 'mogged', 'alpha', 'beta', 'incel', 'femcel', and 'cuck'. Any occurrence that resembles the incel use of the word will be tallied, and I will pick a few messages that I believe reflect a term's wider use on the server to show as examples. This analysis was performed in January of 2023 on all 1,754,156 messages posted up to that point in the Discord server.

There are some limitations to this WPI Discord analysis. First, this analysis is limited only to text messages and not spoken words. Any data gathered will only apply to casual written communication, not spoken communication. Second, the WPI Discord has rules that strictly forbid discrimination of any kind. Any deliberately discriminatory or malicious use of incelese has most likely been removed already by server moderators, and what remains are only its uses that the server moderators deem non-discriminatory. Despite these limitations, however, I think that this data could give insight into the spread of incelese to non-incels. It could help conclude how this use of incelese rejects or reinforces the underlying ideology behind it. It could also help determine whether this spread could be embraced as a sort of 'reclamation' of incelese or whether it should be viewed as coded hate speech and pushed back against.

Part 1: The Ideology of Incelese

While incelese is rich in ideology, much of it is deliberately obscured behind acronyms and caked in metonymy; to an outsider looking in, words like "blackpill", "Stacy", "wristcel", and "roastie" don't seem sinister, only benign (Labbaf, 2020). It is only with the knowledge of these terms' etymologies and the context in which they are used that these words show their true colors. Through my research, I have noticed that incelese reflects and perpetuates four themes central to incel ideology: rigid social hierarchy, objectification of women and minorities, the prevalence of violence, and inceldom's involuntary nature.

Social Hierarchy

Incelese reflects and perpetuates a rigid male and female social hierarchy. These hierarchies are integral to incel ideology, so much so that some incelese words describing different members of these hierarchies have cemented themselves into general internet culture, as shown in the “Virgin vs. Chad” meme format:

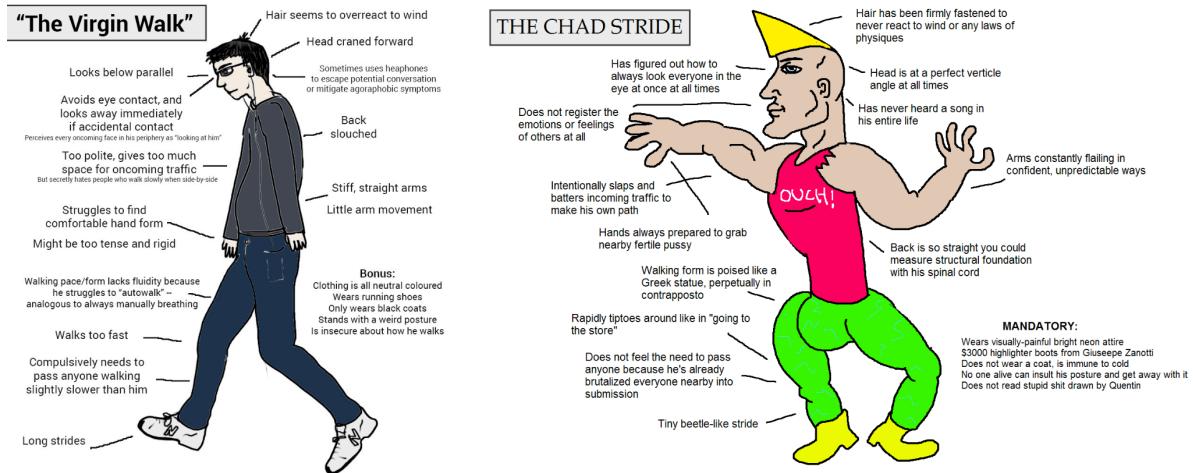


Figure 1. 'Virgin Walk / Chad Stride' meme. Obtained from knowyourmeme.com

This hierarchy, adapted from Heritage (2023), is as follows, from most powerful to least powerful:

Stacy
Becky
Chad/Alpha
Cuck/Beta
Incel
Femcel

Table 1. Male and Female social-sexual hierarchies.

On the very top of the hierarchy is the Stacy^[1], a metonym based on the feminine name Stacy (Heritage, 2023). The Stacy represents the most attractive women; she is presented as hyper-feminine, commonly appearing in internet memes with bleach-blonde hair and wearing a bright pink skin-tight dress and high heels (Heritage, 2023). She is thought to live a life of luxury by exploiting her partners for money, “never work[ing] a day in her life” (Menzie, 2022). The Stacy is viewed as being highest on the hierarchy, even above that of the Chad, being able to sleep with anyone she wants. (Menzie, 2022). While the Stacy is feared for her power, she is also relentlessly denigrated by incels. Incels accuse the Stacy of only fostering relationships that benefit her sexually or financially and not having any interests outside of maintaining these relationships (Menzie, 2022). She is viewed as unintelligent, emotionally vapid, and sexually ‘vanilla’ (Menzie, 2022). While incels are attracted to the Stacy, they do not desire to get into a relationship with her; they believe that the Stacy is too unloyal to ever remain in an extended relationship (Menzie, 2022).

Next on the hierarchy is the Becky, who represents moderately attractive ‘normal’ women (Menzie, 2022). She is commonly presented as wearing comfortable and cheap clothes, a backpack, and sneakers, with brown hair tied up in a messy bun (Menzie, 2022). While not being as attractive, the Becky can still date men who are considered more attractive than her, and she has complete control of her relationships (*Incel Glossary*, 2024). Despite not being as attractive as the Stacy, she still harnesses enough sexual-economic capital to dominate men (Menzie, 2022). The Becky is used as a sort of ‘catch-all’ for other non-Stacies, even those that do not embody feminine traits, allowing incels to derogate women that fall anywhere on the masculine-feminine spectrum (Menzie, 2022).

On the top of the male hierarchy is the Chad. These Chads fulfill the hegemonic norms of masculinity and are sexually desirable to almost all women (Labbaf, 2020). While Chads are generally envied in the incel community, they are also portrayed as being unintelligent and arrogant (Menzie, 2022). Menzie (2022) argues that describing the Chad in these undesirable ways is an attempt to undercut the sexual-economic capital that the Chad holds. Incels view the Chad with both hatred and sympathy; while incels envy the Chad for directly benefiting from the hierarchical nature of the dating market, he is also seen as “another victim of the changing sexual marketplace” (Menzie, 2022). Reflecting the broader manosphere, Chads are also described as the “alpha”, named after the first letter of the Greek alphabet, a direct reference to a hierarchical

order common in other manosphere movements like the Pick-Up Artists (Bates, 2023; Heritage, 2023).

Next in the male social hierarchy is the cuck. While the cuck originates from the term ‘cuckold’, which refers to “a man with an unfaithful wife” (*Incel Glossary*, 2024), the cuck does not necessarily mean one who is a cuckold; instead, it refers more generally to “normies”: someone who is not attractive enough to sleep with anyone they want, like the Chad, but still attractive enough to get into relationships with women in the first place (*Incel Glossary*, 2024). The word ‘cuck’ is used so broadly because incels believe that the majority of average-looking men are getting taken advantage of by their partners through adultery or financial extortion (Bates, 2023; Heritage, 2023). Another term used nearly interchangeably with the cuck is the “beta”, a continuation of the Greek letter archetype from above (Heritage, 2023).

Next on the hierarchy is the incel. Incels, as stated previously, view themselves as so unattractive that they are unable to get into any relationship, no matter how much they try. They measure their romantic success with the Chad’s perceived romantic success and believe that they are being mocked by every other archetype in the hierarchy (Menzie, 2022). Some incels view this as a permanent, unchangeable curse, while others think they could become attractive enough through improving their physical appearance, called “looksmaxing” (Heritage, 2023; *Incel Glossary*, 2024).

The female equivalent of the incel is the femcel. While both incels and femcels view themselves in a similar light, the very existence of the femcel is the antithesis of incel ideology (Ling, 2022). Femcels say that they have lots of difficulty getting and maintaining romantic and sexual relationships and are frequently exploited by men, going directly against the incel assumption that women hold all the power in the sexual market (Ling, 2022). If femcels are truthful, they disprove incel ideology as a whole. As a result, incels berate and ostracize femcels, often banning them from incel communities altogether (Labbaf, 2020; Ling, 2022). I will conduct a more detailed and nuanced discussion of femcels in Part III.

The incel hierarchy provides some very illuminating insights about incel ideology. The first is that this hierarchy lets incels cement themselves—and men as a whole—as the ones being persecuted and discriminated against, contrary to the prevailing feminist belief that modern society is patriarchal. Using this, incels can argue that any discrimination and violence towards women is not a result of the patriarchy, but rather a retaliation to female domination of

relationships. They view themselves as vigilantes, retaliating against this perceived social order with threats and acts to disrupt it. With this view, it is no wonder why Elliot Rodger and Alek Minassian viewed their mass murders as an effort to “restore the masculine order”.

As an extension, this hierarchy also allows incels to disregard any evidence suggesting a patriarchy, like workplace discrimination, the wage gap, domestic violence, or unequal domestic responsibilities. To incels, these problems can be seen as trivial compared to the discrimination against men by women in the dating world. Because they view women as already holding most of the social power, all feminist activism is seen as entitled and whiny.

The prescriptive nature of the hierarchy also pushes diverse groups of people into monolithic, White, and Western-oriented stereotypes. Any deviations from these stereotypes are not seen as proof that the hierarchy is overly simplistic and doesn’t reflect the wider population; rather, they are viewed as uncommon or fringe distractions. These stereotypical metonymies also completely ignore the existence of the queer community, a group that starkly defies the hierarchy, apart from the occasional “faggot” hurled indiscriminately at non-incels_[2] (Heritage, 2023).

Objectification

Much of incelese objectifies those that incels discriminate against. These objectifying words exist for many groups, like women, the BIPOC community, and the queer community (Bates, 2023). For women, this objectification happens on multiple levels, each getting one more step removed from the women they are used to refer to. The first level is “female”—while this is still a widely used term referring to women, incels opt to use this almost exclusively over the standard terms ‘women’ or ‘girls’, aiming to capitalize on the more scientific nature of the word. The second level is “femoid”, a combination of ‘female’ and ‘humanoid’ (*Incel Glossary*, 2024). This further disconnects women from their humanity; instead of being viewed as human, women are now viewed as a figure that resembles the human body, hence the term ‘humanoid’. The third level is “foid”, a shortening of the aforementioned “femoid” (*Incel Glossary*, 2024). The fourth level is “roastie”, referring to the common incel belief that when women have sex with many different (not the same) men, their labia begin to resemble roast beef (Heritage, 2023; *Incel Glossary*, 2024).

This objectification also applies to the incel hierarchy explored above. Black Chads are referred to as “Tyrones”, East Asian Chads are referred to as “Changs”, Middle Eastern Chads are referred to as “Chaddams”, and Indian Chads are referred to as “Chadpreets” (*Incel Glossary*, 2024). Other members of the incel community also are given different names, too—Asian, Indian, and Black incels are referred to as “Ricecels”, “Currycels”, and “Niggacels” respectively (*Incel Glossary*, 2024).

This use of different language for the Chad and the incel illuminates a surprising intersectionality in the incel movement. By using these different terms, incels indicate that these ethnic groups have unequal places in the incel hierarchy, and thus, they must be referred to separately. Incels broadly agree that the more “white-passing” a person is, the more sexual-economic capital they possess, no matter their gender (Heritage, 2023). Some non-White incels use this as another reason for their incelibacy (Heritage, 2023). However, some White incels argue the opposite, stating that many women and gay men lust over “bbc”, or “big black cock” (Heritage, 2023). To incels, race is viewed as both “a route and a barrier to sexual relationships” (Heritage, 2023).

This objectification also indicates how incels deal with the moral ramifications of demeaning and insulting these groups. By detaching women from their humanity, incels can contextualize their hate not as interpersonal violence, but instead as a sort of ‘rage against the machine’. The use of dehumanizing words like “femoid” and “roastie” also makes the otherwise violent and disturbing incel ideology more palatable to newer incels, detaching the violence from the people it is directed toward (Bates, 2023). This effect will be covered more comprehensively in Part II.

The objectification of women also aligns with their performative view of relationships. Instead of seeing relationships as an emotional outlet or a source of intrinsic value, many incels instead see relationships as a signifier of social status. As Menzie (2022) states: “Incels are predominantly concerned with social readings of their desirability and their success with women, rather than their erotic capital. They disparage efforts towards self-improvement (like gymcelling) and instead fixate on women as partners to be displayed.” Incels view that their social value is not merely a reflection of their “erotic capital”, or their desirable physical appearance, but also a reflection of who they are seen with. Objectifying women using these

terms reflects the notion that a relationship is not beneficial for its intrinsic value, but instead as an object to flaunt to the world.

Normalization of Violence

Incelese also reflects and perpetuates the incel community's violence. Mass murderers that supported the incel movement are frequently elevated to celebrity status within the incel community; Elliot Rodger, after his shooting in Isla Vista, was looked up to and hailed as the "supreme gentleman" by other incels (Bates, 2023). This phrase, along with the shortening "SG" and his initials "ER", were quickly adopted into incelese (Bates, 2023; *Incel Glossary*, 2024). To "go ER" became a common phrase amongst incels to refer to committing mass murder (Bates, 2023).

It is unclear whether the use of these covert phrases like SG and ER makes the idea of violence more palatable to incels; most incels are upfront about their desire for violence, openly and frequently using the phrases 'kill' and 'rape' when talking about these massacres (Bates, 2023). However, the prevalence (and very existence) of these terms shows that discussions of violence within the incel community are very common.

Much of this violence is also directed inward. The involuntary nature of inceldom leads some members of the incel community to talk frequently and openly about suicide (ContraPoints, 2018). However, this talk about suicide doesn't just contain phrases like 'suicide', 'hanging', or 'kill myself'; suicidal thoughts are so prevalent that suicide is shortened to "sui" and "rope" is used as a verb to express the act of committing suicide, as in, 'I am going to rope' (*Incel Glossary*, 2024). This also lets incels discuss the act of suicide without feeling the metaphorical weight of the act they are discussing.

Voluntary Inceldom

The incel community reflects the wider manosphere by referencing the "red pill", inspired by the movie *The Matrix*, where the main character is given a choice to take the red pill and learn the true nature of the world or to take the blue pill and live a life of blissful ignorance (Bates, 2023). To incels, taking the red pill means accepting the idea that women are hypergamous and dominate men in the sexual market, only choosing the most 'high-value' men

to have sexual relationships with (ContraPoints, 2018). However, “redpillers” still believe that their situation can be improved—they think that even though the cards are stacked against them, they are still able to ‘ascend’ (ContraPoints, 2018).

Incels have augmented this rhetoric with their own pills, namely the “black pill” (*Incel Glossary*, 2024). The black pill contains the additional notion that physical attractiveness is determined completely genetically, and any attempt to change your attractiveness is futile. Blackpillers often pity those who want to escape inceldom by ascending, viewing their attempts to improve their appearance as useless “cope” (ContraPoints, 2018). Black pill swallows feel completely helpless in the sexual marketplace and don’t make any effort to socialize with women (Heritage, 2023). However, ContraPoints (2018) argues that the black pill goes deeper than just this statement: “[the black pill] is also the dogma that because you can’t get laid, you can never be happy...it’s at worst a kind of death cult, complete with an eternal hell and an omnipotent enemy.” The black pill is not just the stress of not finding a partner; it is an existential dread of existence, the feeling that a part of your manhood is missing—and nothing can be done about it.

The black pill is the heart of inceldom. While those who take the red pill are applauded for their ideology, those who take the black pill are respected as ‘true’ incels (Bates, 2023). Taking the black pill involves a dramatic perspective shift and restructuring of one’s life, so much so that it is all-consuming; to take the black pill is to show one’s immense devotion to incel ideology (ContraPoints, 2018).

On the contrary, taking the “blue pill” means living a delusional life, blissfully ignorant about the misandry inherent in the dating sphere; bluepillers still believe that all men, no matter their genetics, can fall in love and find a partner (*Incel Glossary*, 2024). Bluepillers are shunned and berated in the incel community (Heritage, 2023). Incels view most normal men, or “normies”, as having taken the blue pill (Heritage, 2023). It might be fitting to call all women (except those who are inside the incel community) bluepillers, but talks about the blue pill in incel spaces almost always involve men and not women (Heritage, 2023). Thus, the blue pill most accurately means “men who support women” (Heritage, 2023).

Other pills exist beyond just the red, blue, and black pills. The “white pill” is the acceptance stage of the black pill, where blackpillers reach a state of nirvana, simultaneously internalizing black pill ideology while (quite contradictorily) also taking steps to improve their life (*Incel Glossary*, 2024). The “pink pill” is the feminine version of the black pill, where men

are hypergamous and women are disadvantaged in the dating market (*Incel Glossary*, 2024; Ling, 2022).

Part 2: The Tactics of Incelese

Incelese is not just a reflection of incel ideology; it is also a tool to protect and spread the incel movement. In my research, I have found that incelese serves three main tactical functions. Incelese creates a clear in and out-group, fostering a sense of community and support for young men who desperately need a support system. Incelese can also be used with a sense of comedic plausible deniability, allowing it to be spread easily on conventional social media sites, especially as part of a meme. Incelese also serves as a radicalization tool, leading new supporters down an increasingly all-consuming rabbit hole using the metaphorical ‘pills’ discussed earlier.

Fostering and Fracturing Communities

Incelese helps the incels who speak it foster a tight-knit, quasi-supportive community with clear in and out-groups. As discussed earlier, incelese requires immense knowledge of incel ideology to grasp it completely; this makes it difficult for an outsider looking in to completely understand it without first immersing themselves into incel culture (Heritage, 2023). The use of incelese creates a very distinct in and out-group, separating those immersed in incel culture from those who are not (Green et al., 2023). This means that when newcomers to the incel community have their feelings validated and decide to stick around, they quickly get immersed into a culture that molds their very language around the insecurity, frustration, and anger they feel about their dating lives—and this sense of community is excruciatingly difficult to abandon (Green et al., 2023).

Ian Danskin of *Innuendo Studios* argues that alt-right spaces can hijack one’s insecurities to indoctrinate them with dangerous and violent rhetoric, stating: “The alt-right targets [people] by treating their economic anxiety as one of many things bigotry can be sold as a solution to.” (Danskin, 2019). I argue that a similar tactic is being used to recruit new incels. When recruits feel frustrated by their failed attempts at getting a partner, incels sell them the idea that misogyny, not self-care or unlearning toxic masculinity, is the solution to all of their dating problems (Bates, 2023). And incelese only exacerbates this feeling of community; not only are

recruits given a new ideology to explain away all of their problems, but they are given an entirely new language to express this new ideology. By speaking and understanding incelese, incels can form a tight bond of camaraderie and support through sympathizing with each other using hyper-specific, synthetic terminology.

The violent misogyny, racism, and homophobia behind these words quickly lose their edge when they are discussed so frequently in these groups; newcomers can quickly internalize the bigotry espoused using this language, and any more hate they spread elsewhere doesn't carry the same weight anymore (Bates, 2023). As Laura Bates started immersing herself in incel culture to better understand the ideology of the incel community, she experienced this phenomenon firsthand: "As time went on, I referred back to the [incel] glossary less and less. I became used to seeing women referred to as foids, barely registered the incitements to initiate misogynistic massacres, skimmed over posts about rape, because they were just so common. Finally, one day, I read a post about giving a foid the violence she deserved, in order to avoid being cucked, and I realised that I understood every word. In short, I got used to it." (Bates, 2023).

Incels versus non-incels are not the only in and out-group fostered in the incel community; there are multiple more within the community itself. A common one is that of "trucels", or true incels, versus "volcels", or voluntary incels (Green et al., 2023). Some incels, even popular ones like Elliot Rodger, are thought to be too attractive, wealthy, or White-passing to be a "true" incel (Green et al., 2023). The label then becomes another driving force to push people further down the incel pipeline; to avoid being called a volcel, incels don't bother to improve their looks, further reinforcing their dating frustrations (Green et al., 2023).

Memes as Propaganda

Incel rhetoric is also spread through online memes that contain a plethora of incelese terms. Marc Fisher for *The Washington Post* notes how integral memes were in spreading the rhetoric that led to the attack on the US Capitol on January 6: "You have neo-Nazis, eco-fascists, conspiracy theorists, and what unites them is the culture, not the ideology — the videos, movies, posters, memes." (Fisher, 2021). In the article, Christian Picciolini, head of the Free Radicals Project, explains how recruiters often join spaces frequented by young white men to try and lure out potential recruits using memes and jokes as a filter. "They find people looking for help and

they invite them to chat, send them funny memes. Some kids see those memes and say, ‘Not cool’ and some giggle. Those who giggle get invited to private rooms.” (Fisher, 2021).

I argue that memes made by incels about incel ideology have a similar effect of luring in recruits. Those who don’t find comedic value in incel memes can brush them off as a bad joke, while others who do find value in them can keep coming back for more. There exists this sort of plausible deniability, where any offensive content in these memes is just considered “edgy humor”, concealing the violent ideology present in them behind a veneer of comedy.

While research on the spread of incel rhetoric through memes is less prominent, literature does suggest that memes are a very prominent method of expression and humor among incel forums and message boards. Putra Aulia & Rosida (2022) note that “memes, as the most frequent inter-communicational means to each individual in the manosphere, became the most prominent language to express their feelings of celibacy.” Many of these memes eventually make it out of the incel community and permeate through the wider internet; memes like the ‘Virgin Walk/Chad Stride’ have been adapted by a plethora of internet communities to represent their views on what actions and characteristics are desired in their niche interests (Cauterucci, 2018). While the spread of these memes seems innocuous, their presence has the effect of desensitizing viewers from the misogyny that archetypes like the Virgin, Chad, and Stacy promote. Cauterucci (2018) writes, “The sincere, aggrieved language of incels turns droll in the hands of jesters with no misogynistic paradigm to promote”. It is also important to note that incel memes are sometimes used by anti-incel activists to push back against this rhetoric; this phenomenon will be discussed in more depth in Part III.



Yes.

Figure 2. ‘Yes Chad’ meme. Obtained from knowyourmeme.com

Popular incel terms and archetypes are also included in memes made by other radical groups to attract more members. The ‘Yes Chad’ meme (Figure 2), featuring the side profile of a Chad, was created by members of the alt-right to compare races and promote race wars (Kelly,

2023). This, too, has spread throughout the internet, being adapted by different communities to mock opposing views (*Yes Chad*, 2019).

Alienation and Radicalization

Incelese also alienates incels from their family and previous friends, giving them no choice but to become increasingly dependent on the incel community, leading to radicalization. As discussed in the previous part, different pills are used to differentiate different distinct stages of accepting incel ideology. At first, incels start at the blue pill, not knowledgeable of incel ideology. Bluepillers are cast as unintelligent and willfully ignorant by the rest of the incel community—they think a ‘bluepilled incel’ is inherently contradictory (Green et al., 2023). Once newcomers start to engage with the incel community, they are quickly pressured to take the red pill—the belief that the sexual market is dominated by women and rigged against men (Green et al., 2023; Heritage, 2023). Once they take the leap and declare themselves ‘redpilled’, they are welcomed into the community with open arms. The newcomers who become active in the community are quickly surrounded by other incels that validate their own beliefs using language that is specifically synthesized to convey these feelings; they see a social circle spring up around them, filled with others who sympathize with them on a level they have rarely experienced before (Green et al., 2023).

However, they are simultaneously told to push away other non-incels in their life—not explicitly, but implicitly, through the “us versus them” mentality that is frequently expressed using incelese (Green et al., 2023). As newcomers spend more and more time surrounded by incels, they find themselves alienated from any other support networks they have. The specific language they speak to express their feelings and frustrations is unintelligible to someone who is not also an incel. Some resent their friends and family for resembling different incel archetypes, like the Chad, the cuck, and the Stacy (Green et al., 2023). This lays the groundwork for isolation, centered around a shared struggle and a common enemy.

As incels are surrounded by other incels’ stories from daily life that validate incel beliefs (called “sui fuel”, or suicide fuel) as well as their own life experiences, they grow increasingly doubtful that they would ever be able to get into a relationship (Green et al., 2023; *Incel Glossary*, 2024). This leads them to swallow the black pill, believing that any attempts to get a partner are futile—they either have to “cope or rope” (ContraPoints, 2018; *Incel Glossary*, 2024).

This feeling of helplessness and anger towards their fate as well as the community's repeated advocacy for violence leads incels to frequently have violent outbursts, directed either at themselves or at others (Bates, 2023).

Part 3: The Spread of Incelese

Incelese has grown enough to break through the confines of the incel community and spread throughout the world, both on- and offline (Zand, 2022). Incels have started to be referenced in pop culture and television series (*The Bear*, 2022). While this spread is new, and not much literature exists as a result, I think it is still important to analyze; it could help determine whether this new fame will grow or ostracize the incel community. I will investigate three places incelese is being used outside the incel community: in the femcel community, memes, and the Worcester Polytechnic Institute Discord server.

The Femcel Community

As discussed briefly, femcels (female involuntary celibates) are a group of women who feel similarly disadvantaged as incels in their dating life (Ling, 2022). They feel that men have set unrealistic standards for beauty, and because they do not fit those rigid feminine stereotypes, they are ignored completely by men (Ling, 2022). Many believe that men are attracted to women solely based on their physical appearance, called “lookism”, and any women who are not traditionally attractive are cast aside in society (Cernik, 2021). While the idea of ‘ascending’ or ‘getting hotter’ is deemed nearly impossible for incels, femcels view it as the only way to break free of femceldom (Ling, 2022).

Femcels hope to associate with their male counterparts; some view the incel community as the only space that could truly relate to them (Ling, 2022). However, because they are viewed by incels as the ‘antithesis’ to incel ideology, they are endlessly ridiculed whenever they enter incel spaces (Jennings, 2018; Ling, 2022). Many incel forums have rules specifically banning all women (Labbaf, 2020). This leads femcels to have to create their own communities, mostly on the social messaging site Reddit^[3] (Ling, 2022).

Femcels also use much of the same language as incels (Ling, 2022). As discussed above, they refer to their situation as “involuntary celibacy”, and are driven to escape their femceldom

by “ascending”. Femcels frequently refer to the incel hierarchy, using names like Chad, Stacy, and Becky for attractive men, attractive women, and moderately attractive women respectively (Ling, 2022). They use the word “cope” to refer to the act of coping with their situation, often derogatorily (Ling, 2022). Femcels also have adapted some incel derogatory terms to refer to men instead of women; the term “roastie” was changed by femcels to “wurstie” to refer to a man’s genitals, which is used in a very similar way (Ling, 2022).

It is fair to assume that incels and femcels are simply two sides of the same coin; one is misogynistic against women, and the other is misandrist against men. However, Ling (2022) argues that there are some stark differences between the two movements. While incels think that women only exist to serve as sex objects for men, this sentiment is not reflected towards men in the femcel community (apart from the term “wurstie”) (Ling, 2022). Unlike incels, femcels are less focused on their virginity and more focused on their lack of companionship; while incels are preoccupied with having sex, femcels primarily focus on finding a long-term relationship (Ling, 2022). Femcels view their attractiveness not simply as an avenue to sexual conquest, but as an asset to find a partner, land a job, make friends, and generally “function normally in society” (Kohn, 2020; Ling, 2022). These differences, I argue, are enough to consider femcels and incels separate, albeit related, communities.

The use of incelese in the femcel community lets us draw some illuminating conclusions. First, it shows that while incelese is primarily used derogatorily, incelese does not necessarily correlate with violence; no hate crimes or violent attacks have been associated with the femcel movement (Ling, 2022). Second, the precise language of incelese can help foster a sense of community and make the struggles of an individual more relatable to others. While femcels are ostracized by the movement that they base themselves on, they still use its language for its community-building power.

Memes

Because incels frequently express themselves through the form of internet memes (Putra Aulia & Rosida, 2022) and memes’ shareable nature allows them to spread quickly and widely (Lonnberg et al., 2020), several incel and incel-adjacent meme “formats” have become popular amongst non-incels.

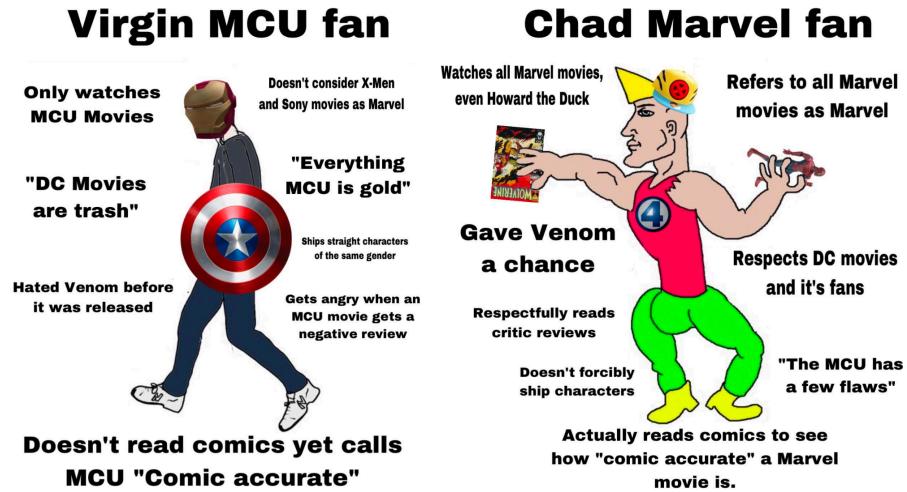


Figure 3. Post by u/dannelbaratheon. Obtained from reddit.com/r/marvelmemes

The most prominent format is the aforementioned “Virgin vs. Chad” comparison (Figure 1). While the original meme is packed with incel rhetoric, other internet subcultures have adapted the format to represent shunned and respected archetypes within their niche interests. For example, the meme above, taken from the “r/marvelmemes” subreddit^[3] compares fans of newer and older Marvel series (Figure 3). This format is so widespread that an entire subreddit was made to post these memes, called “r/virginvschad”; as of February 2024, it has over 180,000 members (*Virgin vs. Chad*, n.d.). Users also frequently change the pictures depicting the Virgin and the Chad with others, commonly Wojaks^[4]. I argue that the popularity of this meme format is the reason the Chad and virgin incelese archetypes have started to be used widely among non-incels, which I will discuss in the next section.

Another popular format is the also aforementioned “Yes Chad” meme (Figure 2). While incel use of the “Yes Chad” meme is used to perpetuate white supremacy, non-incels do not pick up on the racial nature of the meme; instead, they use it to agree with a certain opinion, expressing that a physically attractive and seemingly intelligent person would also agree with it. Often, non-incels use this format to express their desire for civilized debate over emotional and irrational arguments. For example, the meme below, taken from the “r/memes” subreddit, shuns debates about the best smartphone operating system (Figure 4).

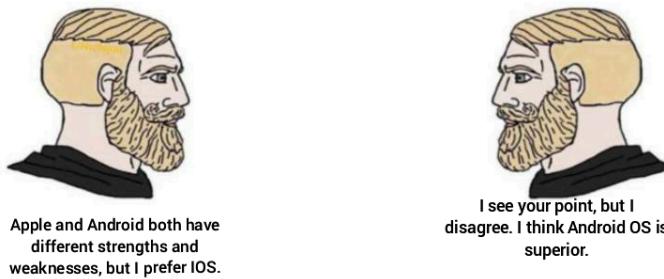
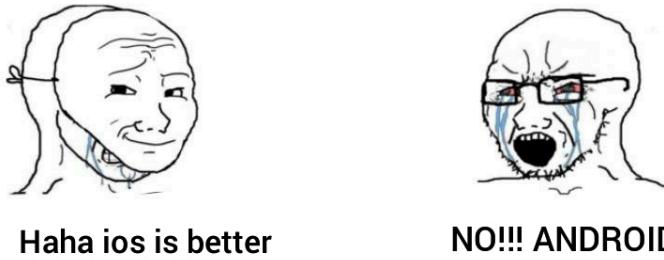


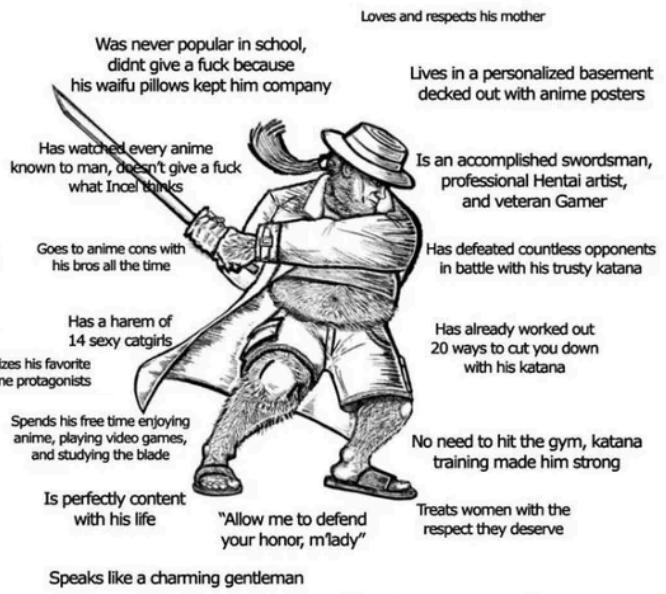
Figure 4. Post by a deleted user. Obtained from reddit.com/r/memes

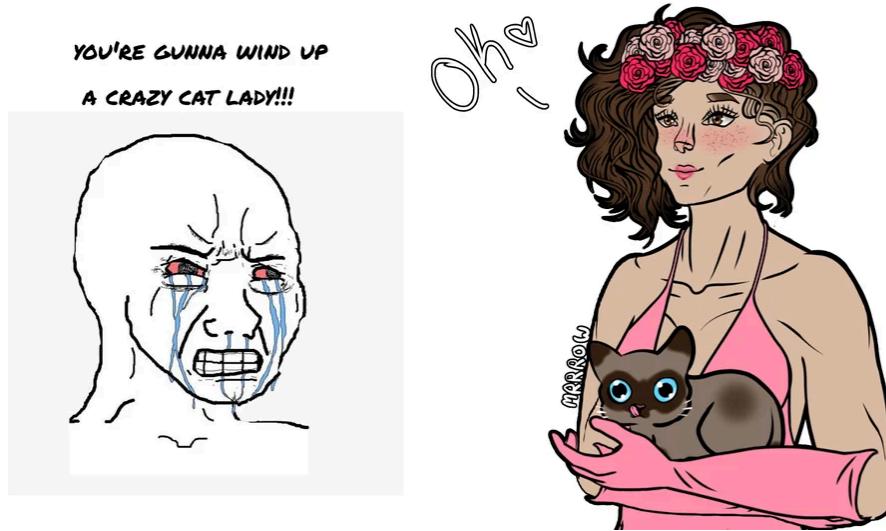
Another popular character in meme culture is the “gigachad”, an archetype formed around doctored photos allegedly taken of Russian model Ernest Khalimov (*GigaChad*, 2018). Khalimov’s face is used frequently by both incels and non-incels, most commonly in the “Average Fan vs. Average Enjoyer” format (*GigaChad*, 2018).

The virgin Incel



THE CHAD NECKBEARD





Figures 5 (top) and 6 (bottom). Obtained from a deleted user and u/AnonPinkLady respectively from reddit.com/r/IncelTears

Some memes adapted from incel meme formats openly ridicule incel ideology. Figures 5 and 6 adapt the “Virgin vs. Chad” and “Yes Chad” formats respectively to ridicule both incels themselves and their ideology. Figure 5 compares a scrawny incel physique to a “neckbeard”, an often derogatory term describing someone who has an overt interest in anime and geek culture. However, the meme highlights the neckbeard’s genuine interest in culture, kindness towards others, and positive outlook on life, and condemns the incel’s hostility, weak appearance, and misogyny. Figure 6 pushes back against incels’ entitlement to sex, promoting the sexual and personal autonomy of women by welcoming a woman’s choice to become a “crazy cat lady” instead of engaging in a sexual relationship.

While a portion of the memes I have observed contain overt or implied misogyny, the overwhelming majority are benign and do not involve discussion or commentary about relationships, sexuality, or gender stereotypes. While no literature exists on this topic, I argue that it is possible to engage in the production and spread of these memes without having any connection to the incel community.

It is inconclusive whether this “benign” engagement with these meme formats is truly harmless. Granted, by engaging with social archetypes like the Chad and the Stacy, one serves to normalize their existence, but using these archetypes does not mean endorsing them. Those using these formats can simultaneously ridicule these ideas and benefit from their comedic value. It is too early into the growth of these incel and incel-adjacent meme formats to gauge the ideological

effect they have on non-incels. In the next section, however, I hope to lay the groundwork to answer this question by analyzing who uses these memes or terms and in what way.

WPI Discord Server

Fortunately, as a student at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, I have access to over 1.7 million text chat messages posted by verified college students as well as a detailed search tool to filter them. By analyzing how incel terms are used on this server, I can get closer to determining whether the use of these terms is dangerous, benign, or somewhere in between.

I searched for nine common incel terms, and for each search, I tallied the occurrences that to my discretion fit the common incel use of the term. For example, any occurrences of “chad” that referenced the country or any occurrences of “pill” that referenced literal pills were omitted. I also tried to omit any mentions of “Chad” or “Stacy” that referred to individuals who went by these names. Table 1 shows the occurrences of each search term. In the rest of this section, I will explain how each term is used, in what context, and by which people in more detail.

Search Term	Frequency
“chad”	460
“cuck”	77
“incel”	70
“pill”	30
“alpha”	27
“beta”	12
“mog”	0
“stacy”	0
“femcel”	0

Table 1. Frequency of Incel Terms on the WPI Discord Server.

Chad

The term “chad” was by far the most used incel term on the server, being referenced 460 times (Table 1). It was said by dozens, if not hundreds, of different users from a wide range of ages. The Chad archetype was so popular that two custom emojis referenced it: one of the “gigachad” in black and white, and the other an outline of the country Chad. There were also multiple instances of users posting GIFs and videos containing panned and zoomed image slideshows of the “gigachad”. For a time, around 2020-2021, “chad” and “gigachad” roles^[5] existed on the server. Most uses fall into three distinct cases: comparison, adjective, and meme reference.

Many uses mirrored the “Virgin vs. Chad” meme format (Figure 1); more specifically, they followed a “virgin __ vs. chad __” format. Like the meme format, this was used to compare an inferior person, object, or idea to a superior one. For example, one user used it to compare WPI’s dining options to the local Worcester restaurants: “Virgin supporting soulless corporation that offers mid af food vs Chad supporting local businesses that enrich the city of Worcester and its people while offering good food”. In these scenarios, Chad is almost exclusively referenced as the morally superior choice; there is very little nuance to these uses.

Other users used “chad” as an adjective, indicating that a person or object shares attributes with the Chad archetype. Compared to the first use, this use can be much more nuanced, depicting whatever the user is referring to as confident but arrogant and shortsighted. However, it is also sometimes used to depict something or someone as universally good. This term can often be used sarcastically, referring to a figure that is seen to have overstepped their boundaries. For example, a user used “chad” to refer to a video of a crane that uprooted an entire tree without warning: “>picks up tree / >tosses it away / >refuse to elaborate / >cease operation / chad crane [not gonna lie]”. Users also referred to the Chad archetype as if Chad were a person. This reference to Chad, like its use as an adjective, can range from overt to nuanced. A user responded with “Chads, the lot of them” when another user sent a music video of union activists.

Cuck

The term “cuck” came in second out of the incel search terms, being used 77 times (Table 1). Like in incel communities, “cuck” is used both as a noun and a verb. As a noun, “cuck” refers

to a person or concept that is pitied or seen as weak, and is often accompanied by the word “beta”. For example, a user responded “beta cuck” to a headline posted by another user stating that Ron DeSantis dropped out of the presidential race. As a verb, “cuck” or “cucked” refers to someone getting ‘screwed over’ by a larger figure with more power. For example, a user said “instagram fucking me with its login” when Instagram repeatedly denied their login attempts. Few, if any, references to “cuck” on the WPI Discord server are sexual, compared to its overtly sexual use on incel forums.

Incel

The term “incel” is the third most frequent on the server, being used 70 times (Table 1). Its use is very literal, referring to incels themselves, and this reference is almost exclusively negative. Any reference to incels in a positive light is ridiculed by other server members. For example, a user used the word to point out the hypocrisy in another user’s argument: ““guys stop being incels’ * proceeds to go off on a rant about how women need to give nice guys a chance *”

This term is the most overt example of the difference in broad political sentiment between the WPI Discord server and Incel communities. While the term “incel” is, of course, used in earnest in incel communities, any use of “incel” in earnest on the WPI Discord server is met with heavy pushback. However, it is interesting to note that incelese is still used in spaces that are ideologically against incels.

Pill

The term “pill” was used 30 times, making it the fourth most common incel term. The term is very frequently used as an adjective (i.e. “pilled”) by users to refer to themselves proudly supporting a person, object, or idea. For example, a user said “this song made me brave little abacus pilled” when referring to a specific song made by the band Brave Little Abacus that they especially liked. This term is often used in the phrase “based and __pilled”, where “based” in this context means that someone’s (often controversial) opinion is correct. This mirrors the term “based and redpilled” common in right-wing online spaces (*Based and Redpilled*, 2018).

Alpha/Beta

The terms “alpha” and “beta” are the fifth and sixth most common, being used 27 and 12 times respectively (Table 1). While the terms were quite common on the server, the overwhelming majority of them referenced software or Greek life and did not reflect how they are used in incel spaces. However, in the instances where they do reflect their incel use, the terms were either used in discourse about incels, or they were used to comedically refer to the alpha and beta archetypes. For example, a user responded with “Thats cause Chris is an alpha gamer” when another user (referred to as Chris) stated that they only use “chad” olive oil instead of extra virgin olive oil.

It is surprising how infrequently these terms are used, considering that these terms are also very popular in other manosphere communities (Bates, 2023). However, it could be that because these terms are used very frequently to refer to other topics, users simply do not think to use them in this context. Users could also be intentionally omitting them to avoid ambiguity.

Mog, Stacy, and Femcel

None of these terms appeared on my search of the server (Table 1). While there were some results for the term “stacy”, they all referred either to people named Stacy or the 2003 song “Stacy’s Mom” by Fountains of Wayne. Besides not appearing in my search, these terms do have something in common though—they are not used in any memes that have been circulated outside of the incel community. Because all the other terms that were found frequently on the server are terms that are used commonly in memes, it could mean that non-incels have learned incelese terms almost exclusively through the spread of memes and not through any other means. This primarily meme-induced spread has some large implications for the future spread of incelese.

Takeaways

I argue that in the context of the WPI Discord Server, using these terms does not meaningfully spread incel ideology. In my analysis, nearly all of the uses of these terms were either used comedically and don’t refer to gender, relationships, or sexual hierarchy, or were used in discourse that overwhelmingly shuns incel ideology. They were used by men, women, and nonbinary users as well as users who were openly queer, feminist, and/or left-leaning. In this

context, one might argue that seeing the severity to which incel ideology is shunned on this server may cause potential incels at WPI to shy away from joining incel communities, as they might fear that other peers at WPI will disapprove of them as a result.

As I stated in the methodology, WPI has a strict anti-discrimination policy that is enforced by server administrators, so any use of incelese in earnest (at the discretion of the administrators) is promptly deleted from the server. This means that incels are not able to meaningfully spread incel ideology through this server, and any use of incelese that remains is deemed comedic and non-discriminatory. Using incelese in a space like the WPI Discord mocks the ‘nerdy misogyny’ that these terms perpetuate. These terms are reclaimed, and the ideology behind them is shunned.

Without this anti-discrimination policy, however, incels can freely spread incel ideology. In these spaces that are not limited by anti-discrimination policies, incels could reveal the misogynistic undertones of the Chad and the Stacy and hint at the white supremacy that using the “Yes Chad” reinforces through more overt messages. In this circumstance, these incelese terms are not used mockingly, but instead in earnest. This means that when incelese terms and memes are spread, they reinforce the ideas behind these terms instead of reclaiming the terms themselves. Without the constant shunning and resistance of any earnest incel ideology, even using incel terms comedically could still serve to normalize these terms and desensitize the weight of these terms (Cauterucci, 2018).

As stated earlier, much more research still has to be performed to support these claims. This analysis was performed on only one space, on one social media platform, with a primarily progressive user base. This analysis can not reasonably apply to spaces that do not fit these demographics. The meaning of the messages themselves and the contexts in which these terms were used were interpreted only by myself, with no input from those who sent the messages. It would also be helpful to further analyze the use of these terms in spaces with looser community guidelines.

Conclusion

Incelese has a considerable ideological impact on both incels and non-incels. In Part I, I explained how incelese reflects and perpetuates incel ideology in the community. I described

how incelese archetypes such as the Chad, the Stacy, the cuck, the virgin, the incel, and the femcel all perpetuate a rigid sexual hierarchy; both men and women have their own hierarchies within their respective genders, but women hold power over men in the sexual market. I argued that this hierarchy perpetuated by incelese allows incels to frame their bigotry and hatred of women as protesting this supposed unjust power structure. I explored how incelese terms like “femoid” and “roastie” objectify women, and I argued that this objectification allows incels to detach the violence they espouse from the people that violence is directed towards. I also explained how terms like “Chadpreet” and “ricecel” perpetuate white supremacy (and highlight surprising intersectionality) in the incel community. I explored how incelese terms like “go ER” and “rope” perpetuate violence not only towards women and minority groups but also towards incels themselves through normalizing and advocating for suicide. Finally, I argued that the incel ‘pills’, like the “bluepill”, “redpill”, and “blackpill” all serve to perpetuate the involuntary nature of inceldom and direct hate towards those who do not subscribe to incel ideology.

In Part II, I explained how incels use incelese tactically to create clear in and out-groups, spread incel ideology, and radicalize recruits. I explored how the language barrier of incelese draws clear in and out-groups, creating an alluring sense of community and making it harder to leave the community completely. I argued that incels use memes like the “Virgin Walk/Chad Stride” and the “Yes Chad” as propaganda to spread their rhetoric beyond the confines of incel forums and image boards. Finally, I explained how incelese alienates incels from their family and former friends with an “us versus them” mentality, leading incels to despise figures that could potentially de-radicalize them and become increasingly reliant on the incel community to give them happiness. I argue that the different incel ‘pills’ quickly pushes recruits to accept the incel community’s most violent rhetoric by pairing these beliefs with heightened social status within the community.

In Part III, I analyzed how incelese is used in non-incel communities. First, I explored the femcel (female involuntary celibate) movement and their adoption of incelese. I argued that while femcels associate with the incel movement, they are still a separate movement from incels because of their stark ideological distinctions. Next, I explored how incelese terms like the Chad and the virgin were popularized through humorous memes used by non-incels. I argued that the spread of these memes could potentially desensitize non-incels from these terms, making their earnest use more palatable. Finally, I analyzed how incelese was used in the Worcester

Polytechnic Institute Discord server. I suggested that these terms were used because they appeared in memes, not because incel ideology has earnestly spread to the community. Because of this, combined with the community's resistance towards earnest incel ideology, I argued that the WPI Discord server's use of these terms is benign and does not meaningfully contribute to the spread of incel ideology.

Lasting Impact

Overall, I think that incels have made enough of a presence in wider discourse and internet culture that they are undoubtedly here to stay. Incelese is so ingrained into the internet lexicon that working to remove it entirely will prove futile. Thus, I think the only way to stop any malicious spread of incelese is to educate people on the dangers of incel ideology. I think the WPI Discord server proves that a community can simultaneously use incelese for comedic effect while also pushing back against the violent ideology that is coded within the terms. In effect, I think that the server has 'reclaimed' these terms, using them as a source of humor and joy instead of a source of hate and vitriol. However, WPI Discord members are much younger on average than the US population, and because of this, they are more likely to be queer and progressive (Jones, 2021; Newport, 2014), leading them to be more resistant to incel ideology. Without vehement resistance to misogyny and racism, this reclamation cannot happen in the first place.

To make sure that incelese is reclaimed and not used to perpetuate incel ideology on the wider internet, we need to ensure that resistance to incel ideology vastly overshadows support for it. To do that, we must educate as many people as possible about the dangerous coded ideology present in incelese, and motivate them to resist any earnest use of incelese that they see in daily life. Bates (2023) argues that movements like the Good Lad Initiative, which performs workshops teaching school-aged boys about the dangers of toxic masculinity and casual misogyny, can help immensely in stopping the spread of the broader manosphere. She likens the manosphere to a Guinea worm, a parasite that must be slowly pulled out from its host: "It won't work to try to lop off just the visible tip. It isn't enough to try to yank it out in one go or to focus only on one part of the problem. Quick fixes won't do. The only method that will work must be slow and sustained, patient and thorough. We have to get the whole worm." (Bates, 2023, p. 415).

Further Research

As stated earlier, many aspects of incelese have yet to be featured in academic research. The spread of incel memes, the casual use of incelese in non-incel communities, and the femcel community all have limited to no coverage in academia. For these ideas to move out of the speculative realm and into concrete thought, much more research has to be done. Much of the existing literature regarding incelese is centered around its use in the incel community; while incelese was used only in incel communities five to ten years ago, it has now spread much further than that. I argue that more research should focus on this wider spread, as it can give more insight as to whether this spread is harmless or problematic. An analysis of incelese on a larger, more established social media website like Twitter or Facebook would help extend these findings to a wider demographic.

Endnotes

1. My choice to use “the Chad” or “the Stacy” versus just “Chad” or “Stacy” is a deliberate one. While incels use common male and female names for these groups, they do not view the Chad or the Stacy as distinct characters in a narrative, but rather as archetypes that certain groups and demographics fit into. Thus, I believe it is more fitting to reference them as if they were groups rather than referring to them as distinct characters.
2. Heritage (2023) argues that in the incel community, the slur “faggot” is not exclusively used as an insult towards gay people; instead, the term has transcended its bounds as a homophobic slur, existing primarily as a catch-all insult for men that the community collectively dislikes. Faggots are thought to exist on a level below that of the incel (Heritage, 2023).
3. Subreddits are different subcommunities on the social media site Reddit. Users consume and post content under these subreddits. Users are free to create and moderate their communities.
4. Wojaks are crudely drawn black-and-white doodles of different facial expressions, used often for comedic effect.
5. On Discord, “roles” are groups of members that can be assigned certain permissions and referred to as a group.

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