4 Sex, power, and controlling bodies

Incels and pickup artists

Luc S. Cousineau

Context and overview

Our personal and gendered expectations are guided by deeply engrained and internalized systems of power (Berbary, 2012; Butler, 1990; Connell, 2005), systems that dictate what we should do and how we should act, as well as how others should act toward us. Gendered systems of oppression and power like patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity situate those who identify as men and women in specific ways and afford specific understandings of sex, power, and control in and outside of relationships. Gayle Rubin (2009) called these "sex/gender systems" and explained them as a "set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which those transformed sexual needs are satisfied" (p. 159). Through sex/gender systems and the constructed power relationships that come along with them, many men find entitlement to women, women's bodies, and sex (Connell, 2005; Kimmel, 2017).

The feelings of entitlement to sexual and social power felt by some men remain, even as social norms and power systems are changing (however slowly) in parts of the world (Kimmel, 2017). It is this entitlement that reinforces the core philosophies of some men's groups and communities, including the loose grouping of communities that make up what Debbie Ging (2019) calls *the manosphere*. First appearing as a concept in a blog in 2009, and subsequently popularized by the publication of *The Manosphere: A New Hope for Masculinity* (Ironwood, 2013), the manosphere has been described as a "loose confederacy of interest groups [that] has become the dominant arena for the communication of men's rights in Western culture" (Ging, 2019, p. 1). Within this larger community, a diverse set of sub-communities exist, each with particular (and sometimes disparate) areas of focus in promoting men and men's interests. Communally, these groups share certain characteristics, including anti-feminist beliefs, and a belief that men are disadvantaged in Western society. Individually, subgroups interpret social expectations differently and range in how aggressively they espouse their beliefs. The philosophies of these subgroups manifest less as a continuum of ideologies (where on one end their work would be passive and contained, and on the other wild, aggressive, and militant) but rather in more of a hub-and-spoke configuration, where groups share a common core of beliefs or ideologies but diversify

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as they extend away from that core. This creates a sort of wheel without a bounded external edge, where the hub at the centre houses antifeminist, misogynistic, and inwardly focused ideologies, and these beliefs compound and/or expand as one travels down any given spoke. For example, incel and pickup artist groups (along with other "manosphere" groups like "men's rights" and "The Red Pill") share anti-feminist sentiment, but their solutions to the feminist "problem" vary from legal reform in order to more equitably represent men in custody and spousal support cases (men's rights) to complete subjugation and subordination of women (The Red Pill). This chapter will focus on two of the many subgroups in the manosphere, incels and pickup artists. These two groups share similar antifeminist feelings and beliefs about men's sexual and social superiority over women, but due to very different sexual and relationship interactions with women, find themselves in different places in the manosphere.

Incels, certainly in a Canadian context,[1] are the best known of the sub-groups in the manosphere. *Incel*, which stands for *In*voluntary *Cel*ibate, is a self-descriptive term used by individuals who identify with this community.[2] Imbricated in the current use of the term is the presupposition that although these men wish to engage in (heterosexual) sex, they are unable to find women willing to have sex with them. In the world of incels, all men are afforded the *right* to heterosexual intercourse and sexual activity, and their inability to engage sexually with women is a sign that women (and certain women in particular) have taken control of access to sex. In doing so, women have overstepped their genetic and evolutionary roles and taken away the historic and evolutionary rights of these men. Incels feel shut out of the (hetero)sexual marketplace while simultaneously believing they should be superior mates. The violence that is sometimes incited by incel ideology (Humphreys & Edmiston, 2018; Reeve, 2018) is couched in the idea that the best way to revert the social order to its rightful place is to eliminate those who choose to upset it (kingturtle, 2019).

Pickup artists are another subgroup of men that exist both online and offline (you can take a pickup artist class in "real life"),[3] who believe that the pinnacle of manhood and human experience is the act of (hetero)sexual conquest. Through the development of "game,"[4] these men seek to increase the number of sexual partners they have and achieve status in the community by maintaining multiple sexual relationships simultaneously. Although pickup artists carry similar misogynistic and antifeminist views to their incel compatriots, they occupy a very different part of the manosphere, deriving meaning from sexual conquest rather than lack thereof. Pickup artists hold a worldview where women are less-than-human objects of conquest because they are "submissive, choosier than men when picking sexual partners, entranced by shiny objects" (Baker, 2013, p. 8). "Artists" believe they have mastered the social interactions required for open promiscuity. To do so, they organize their personal lives, physical appearance, and social experiences in such a way as to further those sexual conquests. More is better, and the constant push to work on their "game" drives discussion within their community – often fuelling their antifeminist and anti-women worldviews. Deeply rooted in

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this worldview is the idea that women lack agency, and exist to be manipulated, used, and conquered.

In the case of both incels and pickup artists, the majority of participants and proponents of these ideologies do so as leisure activity. There are very few (if any) individuals who make a substantive living espousing, teaching, or living as/representing incels or pickup artists. For example, Sarah Sharma (2018) wrote an exposé piece about how one of the leaders of the pickup artist community Daryush Valizadeh (AKA Roosh V) was living in his mother's basement, even at the height of his popularity. This lack of paid avenues for participation, the community structure, and the derivation (however problematic) of participant well-being from participation makes involvement in these communities a form of (troubling) leisure practice, akin to the leisure practices engrained in crime and murder (Mowatt, 2012; Williams, 2016, 2017). This chapter will explore historical and disciplinary roots of community, digitality, and sex as leisure pursuits, and situate incels and pickup artists within these frameworks. By doing so, I will demonstrate the tensions and challenges presented by this kind of leisure in a society and field of study which has (generally) considered leisure to be inherently good and socially productive. I will echo the calls of D J Williams, Rasul Mowatt, and others for a broader consideration of leisure in our scholarship and inclusion of fringe and problematic leisure practices.

Historical and disciplinary roots

The nature of participation in incel and pickup artist subcultures are confluences of leisure pursuits and modern connectivity. The ideologies carried by the members of these groups have existed for some time, as men's groups (in particular men's rights groups) came into existence as an offshoot of second-wave feminism in the 1970s (Messner, 1998, 2016). With the introduction of widely available home internet access in the 1990s, social groups (including the men's rights community) were able to leverage a new connectivity between ideologically similar but geographically dispersed individuals and expand their membership and reach (Turkle, 1996; Wellman & Gulia, 1999). Early text-only networked communication spaces led to early websites, including organizations like National Coalition for Men ("National Coalition For Men" (NCFM), 2019)[5] and early versions of the types of forum-based discussion sites which are still the mainstays of these groups online.[6] These forums and websites do not generate revenue for individuals or groups (the exception to this might be someone like David Wygant [www.davidwygant.com] who calls himself a dating and relationship coach but began as a pickup trainer) and are sites of leisure participation for their members. The remainder of this section will explore how digitality, community, and sex have been theorized in the leisure literature, and how each of these inform the consideration of incels and pickup artists as leisure embedded in sex and digitality.

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Digital leisure practices

Almost 30 years after the introduction of consumer-available internet access, leisure scholars are just beginning to understand leisure in digital landscapes to be equivalent to, and not solely a niche subset of, leisure practices as we have traditionally understood them. Authors like Deborah Lupton (2016) and Silk, Millington, Rich, & Bush (2016) have discussed the ubiquitous role that digital technologies now play in our lives, and Spracklen (2015) has made convincing arguments about the absence of any onto-epistemological separation between digital and non-digital leisure. Other authors have taken up this argument of similitude (Rose & Spencer, 2016), and some have proposed methodological approaches that take into account the imbricated natures of digital and person-to-person realities (Cousineau, Oakes, & Johnson, 2018). Journals in the field have published special issues dedicated to the development of digital leisure scholarship, including *Leisure Studies* issue on digital leisure cultures (Lupton, 2016) and *Leisure Sciences* special issue on digital leisure studies (Spencer Schultz & McKeown, 2018). Beyond these special issues, authors have explored the nature of digital leisure worlds (Holt, 2011; Orton-Johnson, 2014; M. Wearing, 2017), digital enmeshment in sport and sport fandom (Lawrence & Crawford, 2018; Wood, Hoeber, Snelgrove, & Hoeber, 2019), and digital leisure practices across the lifespan (Berdychevsky & Nimrod, 2017; Lifshitz, Nimrod, & Bachner, 2018; Valtchanov & Parry, 2017). There have also been a number of studies focused on social media as digital leisure practice (Janković, Nikolić, Vukonjanski, & Terek, 2016; Lopez, Muldoon, & McKeown, 2018; McKeown & Miller, 2019; Rose & Spencer, 2016) and Geo-Social Networking Applications (Cousineau, Parry, & Johnson, 2020; Filice, Parry, & Johnson, 2020; Petrychyn, Parry, & Johnson, 2020).

The digital nature of incel and pickup artist communities is what allows for continued and consistent connection between the men who participate in these groups. Their digital leisure practice is not only significant in their private lives; it is essential to how many of these men situate themselves in the broader world. Much like the early digital communities that laid the foundation for the internet (Kollock & Smith, 1999), these online communities allow members from diverse backgrounds and wide geographical distributions to connect with one another regularly and synchronously (in real time) (Rheingold, 1993). The ability to connect people over these distances makes few feel like many, while mitigating the isolation and disassociation that occurs when individuals have little exposure to like-minded people (Hakken, 2002). Pickup artists use their digital footprints to discuss their game, to exchange tactics, to give "field reports" for others to learn from their actions, or as a self-reflection exercise to improve their own game (Dayter & Rüdiger, 2016). Post titles like "Expert Seducers i [*sic*] have a question for you!" and "how to deal with three or more relationship [*sic*]" are not uncommon on popular pickup artist forums and generate many responses and comments (hugo_man, 2019; u/HDominus, 2019). Incels practise a rather more intra-social digital leisure, where participation is about connecting with similar others for

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both solace and interaction – many incels spend much of their lives interacting with almost exclusively other incels (Reeve, 2018). Through communities online, these men access what Arora (2014) called the leisure commons of the internet and leverage the ability it affords for the formation of social ties with others.

Leisure community

The links between leisure participation and community are well established. Most common in this literature is the framing of leisure as a generator of social capital, or "networks of individuals connected through social ties who then have the possibility of accessing each other's resources" (Mulcahy, Parry, & Glover, 2010, p. 4). Troy Glover and colleagues (Glover, 2004, 2016; Graham & Glover, 2014) have explored social capital in leisure spaces across a variety of settings, and have demonstrated how the community building and support functions of social capital within leisure spaces are essential for personal and community development, through interdependent use and access of shared resources. Leisure spaces, then, form communities of weak and strong ties between members through shared goals, ideologies, resources, or socio-cultural positionality.[7]

The community context of leisure spaces has been further theorized by other authors. Arai and Pedlar (2003) use social capital to examine social structures and leisure participation as ways to create shared meaning and community. In their introduction to the special issue on leisure and community, Glover and Stewart (2006) proposed a repositioning of leisure research from "community *recreation* to the study of *community* recreation" (p. 315), as a way to emphasize the important contributions to community and personal development through leisure participation. Most salient to the discussion in this chapter, Yuen and Johnson (2017) theorized leisure spaces as third places, repurposing Oldenburg's framework by including technology not as a limiting factor but as a possible enhancer of the concept of third place through social media and digital connection. Their theorization is complemented by the work of Payal Arora (2014), that has explored how online communities provide a "social space that contributes to the constructing, regulating, and sustaining of leisure architectures" (p. 6), leaving us with a strong framework for leisure as a practice of community, while recognizing that those communities can happen online as readily as offline.

Each of these theorizations place emphasis on the roles of leisure as an important part of community development but also demonstrate how community participation can benefit the individual. It is clear that leisure participation has a significant impact on participant well-being (Chen, 2014; Cousineau & Misener, 2019; Janke, Nimrod, & Kleiber, 2008; Lifshitz et al., 2018; Windsor, Anstey, & Rodgers, 2008), and that analogue (Glover, 2004) or digitally mediated (Orton-Johnson, 2014) leisure pursuits contribute to well-being in the same ways. Both incels and pickup artists engage in communities of like-minded people for the same validations, self-testing, and reinforcement as any other leisure participant (Crandall, 1980; Valtchanov & Parry, 2017). These communities promote and support the lifestyle and ideological choices of their members and police those

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choices as a way of binding the edges of the group's representation, exemplified by the harsh (and sometimes violent) rhetoric used when they perceive outsiders as trying to "infiltrate" their community (blockhead24 (banned user), 2019). Much like niche groups within other leisure communities, this rhetoric is likely less about the desire to exclude others, but rather the desire to maintain the community itself. Members of these communities derive positive social and emotional benefits from their group participation, and for some incels the social contact within their community is the only regular social contact they have (Reeve, 2018).

Sex and leisure

Incel and pickup artist ideologies are deeply rooted in sex and sexuality. For pickup artists, sex and sexual activity is the singular purpose of many of their leisure activities, including their trips to the gym to maintain "masculine" bodies, their time at clubs, bars, or social gatherings working on their "game," or discussions of their activity in pickup artist forums and discussion boards. For some men in this group, even the careers they choose are linked to the self-presentation of hegemonic masculinity they believe is required to be sexually successful. The identities of incels also reflect sex and sexuality, although some incels might dispute the idea; their community participation is tied to sex, or rather lack of access to sex as a biological right as men.

Regardless of the deeper motivations for making it so, sex as a leisure pursuit is essential for both group ideologies. Outside of this book, sex as leisure has received increasing attention since the mid-2000s. Since then, sex has (slowly) moved out of a place of deviance and into an important line of leisure inquiry (Byrne, 2006; Franklin-Reible, 2006; Hardwick, 2008; Meaney & Rye, 2013; Newmahr, 2010; Parry & Penny Light, 2014; Williams, 2009). With this repositioning, authors are exploring sexuality and sexuality subcultures through leisure theory, helping to build a better picture of how sex fits into the broad and complex leisure landscape. Feona Attwood (2011; Attwood & Smith, 2013) provides a good base discussion on the place of sex within constructs of leisure. Using a critique of the placement of sex within Stebbins' (1982, 1997) casual/serious leisure framework as a pivot, Attwood argues that the deep complexity of sex in the lives of individuals and societies is too intricate for Stebbins' reductive and largely binary concept. While making their argument, Attwood and Smith highlight how discussions of sex and sexual practice have suffered from the same types of limited theorization as leisure more broadly. Research on sex as a leisure activity has been examined through what Gayle Rubin (1992) described as the "charmed circle" of "'good,' 'normal,' and 'natural'" sexual behaviour, which should "ideally be heterosexual, marital, monogamous, reproductive, and non-commercial. It should be coupled, relational, within the same generation, and occur at home. It should not involve pornography, fetish objects, sex toys of any sort, or roles other than male and female" (p. 280–281). This "vanilla" (Attwood & Smith, 2013) conceptualization relegates behaviours outside of its boundaries into taboo or deviant recesses of human sexuality and is discussed and theorized accordingly.

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We have done much the same with leisure pursuits as they fit (or do not fit) into acceptable (current) concepts of leisure behaviour. If they do not fit, they are cast as deviant, taboo, or otherwise denigrated or pathologized and rendered as lesser-than pursuits or activities.

The changes brought about by the work of the authors listed above, as well as Berdychevsky and colleagues (Berdychevsky, 2016; Berdychevsky, Gibson, & Poria, 2015; Berdychevsky, Nimrod, Kleiber, & Gibson, 2013; Berdychevsky & Nimrod, 2017), Williams and colleagues (Williams, 2016; Williams, Prior, & Thomas [this volume]), and others (Parry & Penny Light, 2014; Piha, Hurmerinta, Järvinen, Räikkönen, & Sandberg, 2020; Christian, Gray, Roberts, & Eller, 2020) are exploring the vast conceptualization of sex as leisure practice presented by Attwood. In doing so, they allow for theorization around the actions and dispositions of incels and pickup artists toward sex as leisure (deviant or otherwise) and whether they are having sex (pickup artists – or at least some of them) or not (incels – or at least most of them[8]). The point here is that whether we agree with the types of leisure these men undertake related to sex or not, we are able to consider those actions as leisure practices worthy of scholarly examination and exploration.

Tensions or challenges

The most significant difficulties when we consider incel and pickup artist participation as leisure are the deep misogyny and objectification of women inherent in both these worldviews. These problematic worldviews make us balk at the idea of seeing and examining them as leisure practices without being derisive in our interpretations. This is not to say that the views, actions, and discussions had in these spaces are not appalling, inexcusable, and dangerous, as they are each and all of these things. However, as leisure researchers interested in both social justice and creating a better world, we are remiss if we are unable to examine these groups and actions as a form of (deeply problematic) leisure. Mowatt (2012) contextualized leisure as "a tool for the expression of one's inner self" (Mowatt, 2012, p. 1382), and many of the men involved in incel and pickup artist communities find connection and identification in these groups, evidenced by the wide variety of sub-communities and discussion subjects on forum sites like incels.co. We should be called, then, as leisure scholars, to explore the implications of leisure participation in these groups as strongly as we explore recreation management or program supervision, for example.

One of the challenges we have with seeing and studying the activities of incels and pickup artists as leisure is that it is intertwined with sex and sexuality in ways that make us deeply uncomfortable – as it should. Both ideologies represent different kinds of dominion over women; first as sexually subordinate and solely implicated in the pleasure of men (Fuchs Epstein, 2012), but also as agentic actors actively working to dismantle the correct and logical patriarchal ordering of things (LeGates, 2012). These deep issues notwithstanding, we cannot have it both ways, and deeply sexist and sometimes violent motivations aside, the men

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who participate in incel and pickup artist communities are engaged in leisure as they do so.

To study leisure from any perspective is enmeshed in the deep importance of social justice, equity, and the illumination of the lives of individuals relative to the activities and actions they are engaged with beyond the necessities of life (Parry, 2014; Parry, Johnson, & Stewart, 2013). The tension created when we call for exploration of communities, ideologies, and actions that are problematic, violent, “abnormal,” or abhorrent is not unexpected or misplaced. However, that does not relieve us of the responsibility to engage with these leisure practices and examine what they provide to their participants. We not only limit the field of leisure scholarship by doing so but also pass a judgement on these kinds of leisure, which counters calls for social justice and inclusivity from within our own field. We certainly do not need to agree with the thoughts and actions of these men to include them in our scholarship, and we should take lessons from Rasul Mowatt and D J Williams, neither of whom condone lynching spectatorship or serial murder as leisure practices but argue they are leisure practices just the same.

Seeing leisure while exploring in a community of incels or pickup artists is a challenging task, even when we use the very basic elements I have presented in this chapter. Incels often spend a great deal of time in the darker corners of the internet, but they use that time to find other like-minded men and develop unique norms, criteria for participation, and vernacular, just like any other leisure community (Kini, 2017; Reeve, 2018) and demonstrate important elements of Stebbins’ serious leisure (Stebbins, 1982). Pickup artists are no different, although their leisure is divided between the discussion of “game” online and the practice of it in the real world, on real people.

Seeing things differently

Whether we are comfortable with the changing face of leisure scholarship or not, we have a responsibility to be looking at activities, communities, and social spaces which we previously thought taboo or deviant forms of leisure. These spaces are not new, but their importance and size has changed in the recent past and renders them to (sometimes) formidable social forces.[9] There have always been men who sought to leverage the social and personal dynamics of power and control in sexual relationships, to satisfy the socio-sexual expectations of hegemonic masculine ideology, as well as the patriarchal features of control over women, by men. There have always been men who believed they were entitled to the attention, bodies, and sexuality of women but were being denied that right. Like any other individual who feels as though they are disadvantaged, these men have sought like-minded individuals to commiserate over their shared “oppression.” These have been leisure spaces, but with a relatively young field focused on theoretical development and bigger-picture research, small niches of communities on the social fringes like these have yet to find their way into our research and discussions. Digitally mediated sociality and leisure practices are beginning to change that.

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Now the followers of these communities number in the tens or hundreds of thousands, and though only a fraction of those individuals are active at any given time, a number of things are true. (1) These groups are more active, present, and more influential than ever before. (2) The rhetoric, community norms, self-aggrandizing, and ideological echo chambers developed within niche online communities generate, inflate, and encourage increasingly extreme viewpoints and expressions. (3) Sometimes these escalated emotional entanglements result in perpetuated misogyny and/or gender-based violence – sometimes people *die*. And (4) these communities are unequivocally leisure space.

New and broader definitions of leisure, sexuality, and their intersections in scholarship are necessary for communities like these to be properly included in leisure theory and research. While still existing on the social fringes, bringing groups like incels and pickup artists into our scholarship can do the work of highlighting the problematic nature of their worldviews and leisure practices, where they can be explored, deconstructed, and (hopefully) mitigated. We must be willing to explore these ideas, communities, and activities with the same enthusiasm that we give to our other current settings and theories. Like the (slow) move to understand digitally mediated leisure as simply leisure, we should be working to remove the "purple," deviant, and taboo filters applied to some activities and explore them deeply to help us better understand leisure as a whole.

The call I am making is not new, and I could not make it without the work of scholars like D J Williams (2016), Stephen Wearing and colleagues (2013), Heidi Franklin-Reible (2006), Sullivan and LeDrew (2007), Meaney and Rye (2013), Sue Shaw (2007), Feona Attwood (2011), Diana Parry (2003, 2014), and many others. If we, as leisure researchers, can help to illuminate how the digitality and community of incel social spaces function and influence their participants, perhaps we can play a role in reducing the violence which is a growing issue within that community. Leveraging what we already know about gendered leisure practices, especially in dating and relationship formation, might provide new insights into pickup artist culture and how we might push back against the deep exploitation and misogyny inherent in this worldview.

Charting the future

The future starts with collections of authors and ideas like those in this book and special issues of our journals like the special issue of *Leisure Sciences* on sex and leisure. Establishing a strong foundation of writing and theorising about formerly taboo topics, like sex, provides us with theory we can use to explore more fully and think more deeply. This type of thinking is necessary to study the dangers that leisure communities like incels and pickup artists might pose. This is not to say that individuals who participate in these groups are inherently bad or dangerous on their own, but the ways that these communities grow online and develop echo chamber rhetoric will continue to put people at risk through leisure practices. For a future where our scholarship remains impactful, leisure research must keep pace with the evolution of leisure as our lives change through digitality and changing

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communities. We must also, for the types of communities and leisure that continue to rely on antiquated sex/gender systems, continue to employ the robust social justice frameworks used in leisure scholarship, strive for broader and continued interdisciplinarity, and continue to use feminist theory to bolster our scholarship.

Leisure research already has a deep history of social justice work, and the concepts of a more *just* world are essential when we examine the leisure practices of these men. Beyond the obvious challenges to equitable society brought forward by incel and pickup artist ideologies about women and sex/gender roles, these men are deeply troubled by conflicting sets of expectations, and images of masculinity.[10] Narrow articulations of what it means to be a man, and men's entitlement, lead both groups down a path that brings them to a hatred of women (and especially those women who identify as feminists). A social justice orientation within leisure research is well positioned to push back against arguments and perspectives within these communities, even when those perspectives are so egregious that they should not merit any response at all.[11]

Along with a continued social justice focus, I echo Diana Parry's (2014) call that leisure studies must continue to leverage feminist theory and interdisciplinary study as we expand our scholarship into more novel areas of inquiry. At the intersection of digitality, social justice, and feminist theory, we should continue to build on the work in this book but also the works of others exploring these worlds outside of leisure. Sarah T. Roberts (2019) and Safiya Noble (2018) have each done work that explores the underbelly of the internet through content moderation and search algorithms, respectively. Their work has implications on the ways that we use the internet, what content we are exposed to in search, social media, and the advertisements we see. These are each important parts of our leisure participation online, even if they are passive and unseen.

As we build a body of digital leisure scholarship, we must read and examine early and contemporary feminist work on online environments to help us properly frame our arguments and discussions about usership, gender, and technology. Judy Wajcman (2000, 2004, 2007, 2010) discussed feminist theories on technology and science and wrote the book on techno-feminism. Lori Kendall (1998), Sean Zdenek (1999), and Roberts and Parks (1999) have written on gender and gender ambiguity online in personal interactions and software design. Jessica Ringrose and colleagues (Harvey, Ringrose, & Gill, 2013; Ringrose & Harvey, 2015; Ringrose, Harvey, Gill, & Livingstone, 2013; Ringrose & Lawrence, 2018) have written about the dynamics of digital images shared and exchanged and the implications of men and women of their propagation and rating through social media. Bivens and Hoque (2018), as well as Hobbs, Owen, & Gerber (2017) are making critical observations and analysis of dating apps and their social networks. Through the lens of leisure research, we can make an important contribution to the critical scholarship being developed around digitality and our lives online, whether it be through examination of the deeply oppressive and challenging sex/gender views of the men who are part of incel and pickup artist communities or how our leisure activity is changing and adapting throughout the life course due to digital technologies in our lives.

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Unfinished business

The work in exploring fringe digital leisure communities and examining the implications of their existence and rhetoric is only just beginning, and because of this, it remains almost entirely unfinished business. My work explores only a small part of the larger group of men's communities – communities which span a wide range of ideological territory and potential militancy. One of my lines of enquiry explores the community actions of men's rights groups, which, different from both incel and pickup artists, have a broader ideological focus. They share anti-feminist, anti-women, and misogynistic characteristics but are couched in rhetoric of a worldview which is misandrist, anti-sexist, and manipulated by a feminist power structure. I urge others to look to the fringes of the social and digital worlds they occupy and deem them worthy of exploration. There is so much to learn and unfortunately, lots at stake.

Notes

1. This is because, among other reasons, the largest mass killing in recent memory in Canada was carried out by a self-proclaimed incel when he drove a rental van through a crowd of people in downtown Toronto (Humphreys & Edmiston, 2018).
2. The term incel and the movement now associated with it have their roots in a text-based webpage, Alana's Involuntary Celibacy Project, built in 1993 by a Canadian undergraduate student who intended the site as a meeting place for women and men who wished to have sex but had been unsuccessful. The first scholarly article published on involuntary celibacy appeared in a 2001 issue of *The Journal of Sex Research* (Donnelly, Burgess, Anderson, Davis, & Dillard, 2001).
3. See www.pickupartistacademy.com as just one example.
4. "Game" (divided into inner (confidence) and outer (appearance) (Baker, 2013)) is the term used in the pickup artist community to refer to the acts and actions used by men to meet, get involved with, and ultimately have sex with women (Strauss, 2016).
5. The earliest iteration of the NCFM website available is from the web archive of 1996 ("National Coalition Of Free Men," 1996), but the copyright on that site reads 1995, indicating that the site was active at that time.
6. See here the active communities of incels on dedicated websites ("Incels—Involuntary Celibacy," 2019; "Involuntary Celibacy," 2019), anonymous forums ("4chan," 2019; "8chan," 2019), or pickup artist discussions on Reddit.com ("R/seduction," 2019) which currently has over 351,000 subscribers.
7. A good example of a problematic, but no less accurate, application of this concept would be the community leisure atmosphere surrounding public lynching explored by Mowatt (2012).
8. Within incel culture, and especially with recent media attention and scrutiny (Reeve, 2018; Wendling, 2018), some individuals (whether they are interested in participating in incel culture or are just looking to observe/troll) are deemed not true "incels" and are named, among other things, volcels (voluntarily celibate), or fakecels (claiming to be incels but recently had sex or were in a relationship) (Stokes, 2018). The response to these individuals can be strong and/or violent (e.g. blockhead24 (banned user), 2019).
9. Some members of these communities have, after all, murdered people.
10. Admittedly, likely most of them would deny that this was the case.
11. Take, for instance, a recent post on an incel-linked subreddit (www reddit.com/r/braincels/) which proposes a modern-day chastity belt for women (leaving aside the anatomical issues with the design for the moment) – (u/embarrassed_hermit18, 2019).

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Further reading

Wajcman, J. (2010). Feminist theories of technology. *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, *34*(1), 143–152. doi: 10.1093/cje/ben057

A deep reflection of feminist work on technology with a focus on Science and Technology Studies. This is a good foundational read for those looking to explore feminist work with a focus on technological development and technology use.

Star, S.L. (1999). The Ethnography of Infrastructure. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *43*(3), 377–391. https://doi.org/10.1177/00027649921955326

A methodological piece which also serves the purpose of having the reader consider the infrastructural pieces of our lives that we rarely think about but that have profound effects on all aspects of what we do. Especially pertinent in a digital setting.

Noble, S.U. (2018). *Algorithms of oppression: How search engines reinforce racism*. New York: NYU Press.

A deep exploration of how the algorithms that control our searches and the content that we see have roots with the people who wrote them and are engrained with the social ordering and preferences these people have.

Roberts, S.T. (2019). *Behind the screen: Content moderation in the shadows of social media*. New Haven, USA: Yale University Press.

This book explores the behind-the-scenes workers who are employed by major media companies to moderate content seen by millions online. It shows how big tech companies are using under-paid labour and a shadow workforce where computers and AI are unable.

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