

E:\Digital crime,  
Technology and  
Social Harms\>\_



# The Incel Rebellion

The Rise of the  
Manosphere and  
the Virtual War  
Against Women

Lisa Sugiura

# **The Incel Rebellion**

# EMERALD STUDIES IN DIGITAL CRIME, TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL HARMS

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# **The Incel Rebellion: The Rise of the Manosphere and the Virtual War Against Women**

BY

**LISA SUGIURA**

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United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India – Malaysia – China

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

This book is dedicated to all those whose lives have  
been affected by gender-based violence.

Praise for *The Incel Rebellion: The Rise of the Manosphere and the Virtual War Against Women* (KU)

“Drawing on extensive empirical research and a masterful use of socio-criminological understanding, Dr Sugiura’s new book offers an incisive and timely analysis of the realities and the threats of the incel community. I hope this book will soon become a key reference point for anyone with an interest in the relationship between misogynistic ideologies and the wider socio-political climate, online harms, and qualitative digital research approaches.”

*Dr Anita Lavorgna, Associate Professor in Criminology,  
University of Southampton*

“In *Incel Rebellion* Lisa Sugiura provides a rare empirical insight into the subcultures and practices of incel communities in the manosphere. The result is a compelling and innovative account of how some men find their way into incel communities, as well as the links between such spaces and wider misogyny in our increasingly digital society. This book is an outstanding contribution to the field of digital criminology and will be an essential resource for those studying cybercrime and other online harms.”

*Anastasia Powell, Associate Professor Criminology &  
Justice Studies, RMIT University (Melbourne).*

“*The Incel Rebellion: The Rise of the Manosphere and the Virtual War Against Women* is an extremely timely and brilliant exploration of a pressing and immediate area of concern; one that has direct implications for safety, security, policy, and the general moral health of society. Cutting across various disciplines, including gender studies, criminology, and terrorism studies, Dr Sugiura masterfully navigates a number of important and complex considerations, including why people self-identify as incels, and what motivates them to join these types of communities. The jewel in the crown is the author’s collection and use of qualitative interviews with current and former incels. As far as I’m aware, this is the first empirical academic study of its kind, and the rich data brings this fascinating area of research alive. This book is an absolute must for anyone interested in this topic and should form part of the foundation for any future work.”

*Dr Suraj Lakhani Lecturer in Criminology and Sociology Sussex University*

“Sugiura’s *Incel Rebellion* is a must read for anyone wanting to understand the history and ideology around the Incel community. In a time where male supremacy is becoming an increasing security concern, Sugiura expertly details the links existing between the so-called ‘manosphere’, white supremacy, and the mainstream political arena. In addition to providing a stellar account of the history of male supremacism, Sugiura reflects on the methodological and ethical issues that come from being a woman studying misogyny, an account that will no doubt be extremely valuable for future researchers wishing to conduct similar studies. Most importantly, this book provides clear evidence that extreme misogyny is not just a problem for the fringe, but rather has crept into the mainstream infecting the normative culture of our western societies.”

*Ashton Kingdon - Doctoral Fellow at the Centre for  
Analysis of the Radical Right*

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# Abbreviations

Incel – Involuntary Celibate  
MGTOW – Men Going Their Own Way  
MLM – Men's Liberation Movement  
MRA – Men's Rights Activist  
MRM – Men's Rights Movement  
PUA – Pick Up Artists  
SMP – Sexual Market Place  
SMV – Sexual Market Value  
WLM – Women's Liberation Movement  
XRW – Extreme Right Wing

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# Glossary of Terms

**Men's Rights Activists (MRAs)** are driven by anger and want to effect change, namely a return to the traditional values where women are subordinate to men. Women need to be put back in their place and to do so abuse of women, particularly feminists, is encouraged.

## **Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW)**

Despite what its name may imply, MGTOW members weaponise homophobia in order to solidify their heterosexuality in a space that rejects women, and they use online harassment to police the borders of hegemonic and toxic masculinity. The MGTOW movement differs slightly from much of the manosphere as it rejects any form of relationship with women, but the same issues of violence and harassment are present.

**Pick Up Artists (PUAs)** view women as mere objects, bodies to be tricked into sex. There is no consideration of women as autonomous human beings worthy of honesty or respect; moreover, they are simply shallow and motivated by looks and money, and thus fair game to be deceived and used for sexual purposes because that is all they are good for. Pick up artistry is informed by a hegemonic ideal of what it is to be masculine evident in the lad culture and banter so pervasive in contemporary society – link with ladette culture in the 1990s/2000s.

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/nov/05/pickup-artists-teaching-men-approach-women-industry-street-harassment>

## **Fathers for Justice (FFJ)**

Unlike the aforementioned groups residing in the manosphere, the primary focus for FFJ is actual men's problems rather than espousing vitriol against women, progressiveness and feminism. FFJ is concerned with paternal rights and ensuring that fathers have access to their children when relationships break down, when Criminal Justice Systems entrenched in sexist, conservative ideals ordinarily operate in favour of the mother. In this respect, the continuation of traditional gender roles, the desire and ideal of other groups in the manosphere, marginalises men and devalues their status as parents.

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## Author Biography

**Lisa Sugiura** is Senior Lecturer in Criminology and Cybercrime at the Institute of Criminal Justice Studies at the University of Portsmouth. Her research examines the intersections of gender-based abuse, harassment, sexual violence and technology, and she is the author of *Respectable Deviance and Purchasing Medicine Online: Opportunities and Risks for Consumers* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). She has worked on projects, which includes funding from the UK National Cyber Security Centre and the UK Home Office, investigating the language of cybersexism, victims of computer misuse and extremist and misogynistic behaviours in incel communities. She has been the Lead Investigator on a UK Home Office-funded project on technology-facilitated domestic abuse. She is the Deputy Director of the Cybercrime Awareness Clinic, which won the UK National Cybercrime Awareness award in 2020.

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Thanks to my many feminist friends, colleagues and mentors in Criminology, Cybercrime and elsewhere, in particular to Alessia – working on the cybersexism project with you provided me with the initial inspiration to continue researching this field; Anita – the most efficient writing partner, whom collaborating with is always a joy, and who provided me with productive opportunities to reflect upon the research as well as an empathetic ear; Anastasia – my inspirational mentor and friend who has encouraged me, helped me grow as an academic and who first suggested that I should write this book; and Sarah – who I credit in helping me to have the courage to believe in myself. Thanks also to April, Ashton, Anna, Harri and Kath for your friendship, wisdom and for helping to keep me sane. I am also deeply grateful to my male mentors, colleagues and friends – Mark, Pete, Paul, Vas, Jason, Suraj and Adam – who have supported and encouraged me and inspired me to not set boundaries upon myself. I express my heartfelt thanks foremost to my family – to Dad, Mum, Denise, Kevin, Bill and Dot, thank you for standing by me and believing in me. Josh and Dylan, you are the reason I do what I do, and I hope that in some way I am contributing to making the world a better place for you. Matt, I will forever be grateful for you, thank you for being the most supportive, thoughtful and grounded person I know.

Finally, thank you to my participants who spoke honestly and openly with me and treated me respectfully. Thank you for enabling me to appreciate the humanity within the incel community.



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# The Incel Vocabulary

I have tried to include as comprehensive a guide to incel words and neologisms as possible, drawn from my research and the incel wiki page, but there is probably terminology that I have not encountered and so has not been included here. Nevertheless, hopefully, the following is useful in providing insight into the self-created world of the incel, reflecting their worldview.

**Alpha** – highest ranking (male)

**AM** – Alex Minassian who killed multiple people in Toronto 2018

**Ascension** – leaving incelhood behind (usually by entering into a romantic relationship with a woman, unclear how this is distinct from betabuxx or being cucked)

**Aspie** – someone on the autistic spectrum

**AWALT** – All Women Are Like That (see also EWALT – Enough Women Are Like That)

**Becky** – an average young woman, subordinate to Stacy in terms of looks and social status

**Beta** – below alpha – lacking in social skills and attractiveness to be an alpha – some incels, who do not consider themselves to be that ugly/have some redeeming qualities such as money/good job, etc., refer to themselves as betas

**Betabuxx** – a man who has been able to find a female partner. However, incels believe that this happens when a woman has ‘hit the wall’ and has lost their sexual market value (SMV) and because they desperately have settled for a man who can (financially) support them. Therefore, incels dislike and are judgemental of men who betabuxx, believing they are being cucked

**Blackpill** – the incel ideology, the nihilistic version of the redpill (TRP)

**Blackops2cel** (also known as St.BlackOps2Cel) – drawing on the computer game Call of Duty Black Ops II, where an image of a gamer has been appropriated by incels as physically representative of their community. The individual’s name and the origins of the photo are unknown but he is held to be typical of what an incel looks like

**Bluepill** – opposite to the redpill (TRP), belief in a false reality, an inability to appreciate nuance and unquestionably accepting conventional sources and convenient tropes

**Braincels** – r/braincels the most popular incel subreddit after r/incels was removed in 2017. This too was shut down in September 2019, amid concerns that the release of the Hollywood movie *Joker* would encourage further incel inspired attacks.

**Buster** – a Chad version of a dog

**Chad** (chadlite, chadrone) – the antithesis of incel, a man who is sexually successful with women. Incels have a complicated relationship with Chads; on the one hand, they despise them for being alpha and winning the ‘genetic lottery’, while on the other hand, they idolise them for their ability to access and use women

**Chang** – East Asian Chad

**Chadpreet** – Indian Chad

**Chaddam** – Arabic Chad

**Cock carousel** (‘riding the cock carousel’) – incels think that women want to have sex with as many alpha Chads as possible

**Cope** – all incels can do is cope as (according to the blackpill) it is impossible to improve or change their situations, as their problems are structural rather than individual

**Cuck** – a man whose wife/girlfriend is cheating on him with another man (usually a Chad). There are also racial connotations as the word is often used in relation to a white woman cheating with a black man

**Currycel** – an incel who is of Indian descent

**Dogpill** – suggestion that human females prefer to have sex with dogs over human male (virgins)

**ER** (Saint Elliot, The Supreme Gentleman) – Elliot Rodger, who killed multiple people in Isla Vista, California, in 2014

**Fakecel** – someone who is not a real incel. They might have had (regular) sex with a legitimate partner (not a sex worker), thus invalidating their incel status

**Fap** – masturbate

**Femcel** – female incel; however, (male) incels claim that women cannot really be incels because they all can have sex if they want it.

**Femoid** (female humanoid, female android) – used to describe women, demonstrating they are subhuman, necessary of dehumanisation

**Fuel** (suicide fuel, life fuel) – posts which provoke emotion in users

**Gf** – girlfriend

**Gymcel** – an incel who copes by going to the gym

**Heightcel** – a short incel (height is viewed as a determinative of sexual success, and similar to race or bone structure, is seen as immutable and therefore a barrier to incels not being incels)

**Hitting the wall** – a woman when she reaches her 30s is used up and starts to lose her looks and will settle for a less attractive partner on account of needing the financial security

**Hole** – a woman, reducing women down to mere sex objects

**Hypergamy** – originating in the caste system in India meaning dating or marrying up, the belief that women will only mate with high-status males. Involves a co-option of Pareto's 80/20 rule – that the top 20% of men have the top 80% of women competing for them, while the bottom 80% of men are competing for the bottom 20% of women.

**Incel** – involuntarily celibate, someone who is unable to have sex due to reasons beyond their control

**Incels.co** (formerly incels.me) currently the most prominent incel forum. Set up in November 2017 after the closure of r/incels and created by Sergeant Incel. Internal surveys suggest that the majority of its members are white.

**Inceltears** – subreddit dedicated to critiquing incels. Screenshots of extreme and shockingly offensive content are regularly taken from other incel communities and posted, leading to some threads/sites being closed

**It** – a woman

**It's over** (followed with 'it never began') – men who are ugly, short, not white, or have small wrists have no possibility of ever being happy or sexually satisfied.

**JBW** – just be white, belief that women will primarily choose white men to be their sexual or romantic partners

**JFL** – just fucking lol, used to show incredulity

**KTHHFV** – kissless, touchless, hugless, handholdless, friendless, virgin – status markers within the incel community

**LDAR** – lay down and rot

**Lifefuel** – positivity, enabling incels to regain their faith in humanity (see also whitepill)

**Looksmatch** – someone who is your match in terms of appearance. Incels claim to be able to objectively rate people's appearance, and optimal relationships are those in which partners are looksmatched

**Looksmaxxing** – an attempt to improve one's appearance (rejected by incels who in ascribing to the blackpill would not see any point in attempting looksmaxxing)

*xx The Incel Vocabulary*

**LMS** – looks money status

**Manlet** – a short incel

**Meeks** – the idea that women are attracted to men purely on their aesthetic appearance, with no consideration about personality. Drawn from Jeremy Meeks who was dubbed ‘America’s most attractive felon’ after his mugshot went viral and he received significant attention from women while in prison. He later became a fashion model

**Mentalcel** – a man who is celibate due to his mental health, for example, those who have autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) but can also relate to low intelligence

**Mogs** (AMOG – alpha male of group, heightmogged, lifemogged) – to be dominated by another man’s looks

**NEET** – not in education, employment or training (not viewed positively among the community)

**Noodles** – persons of East or Southeast Asian descent

**Normie** – non-blackpillers/believers, those who have an inferior worldview and belief system, people who are neurotypical, average looking and of average intelligence

**Omega** – incels below beta

**Postmaxx** – posting to get likes/attention

**Racepill** – women are more racist than men due to the partners they choose

**Ricecel** – an incel who is of East or Southeast Asian descent

**r/incels** – most prolific incel site that was closed down in November 2017 for inciting violence against women, encouraging rape as well as castration of attractive men.

**Roastie** – a woman whose labia has stretched to replicate a roast beef sandwich from having sex with lots of men

**Rope** (fuel) – suicide ideation, something that causes a non-whitepilled incel to want to end their life

**SEA** – Southeast Asia

**SIMP** – Suckas Idolising Mediocre Pussy, guy overly desperate for women, puts women before men in order to obtain sex, does way too much for women who don’t deserve it

**SMV** – sexual market value

**Snake** – a woman

**Stacy** – the most attractive of women, has sex with lots of men (usually Chads) on account of their looks, is stereotypically an unintelligent bimbo

**SUI** – suicide

**Tallcel** – a fake incel (tallness equates with sexual success)

**Toilet** – a woman

**TRP** – the redpill – rejection and opposite of the bluepill. Allows people to understand the truth about the world. Differs from the blackpill in that it offers the belief that the system can be played

**Truecel** – true incel, purity of the incel ideology – have never kissed/touched a woman and genuinely are unable to have sex despite having tried

**Tyrone** – a black man who is a Chad equivalent, has racist and classist connotations. Tyrone might cuck other men, but Stacys will always seek out a white man to settle down with because they have more power and status

**Validation seeking** – seeking out compliments to boost one's own confidence, for example, women (Beckys) using dating apps for this purpose

**Volcel** – incels who could have sex (with women) but have voluntarily chosen not to

**Whitepill** – worldview based on the maximisation of happiness through an individual accepting his situation, a stoic extension of the blackpill

**Wristcel** – incels who have small wrists

**Zeta** – incels who consider themselves to be the absolute lowest of the low

## Epigraphs

*There are two reasons why people don't support the word feminist: The first is they don't know what it means. The second is they do know what it means. Gloria Steinem*

*Male fantasy is seen as something that can create reality whereas female fantasy is seen as something used for escape. bell hooks.*