

Study suggests the manosphere is becoming more toxic

17 February 2020, by Bob Yirka



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A team of researchers from EPFL, Binghamton University, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University College London, Boston University and the Max Planck Institute for Informatics has found evidence showing that the "manosphere" is becoming more misogynistic and toxic. They have written a paper describing their findings and have uploaded it to the arXiv preprint server.

The "manosphere" is a newly coined term to describe a collection of Internet-based groups of men who post men's rights messages on public forums such as subreddits. In recent months, the term has increasingly become associated with misogynistic messaging, and in a few cases, has been connected to real-world violence by men against women or groups of people. In this new effort, the researchers break down males participating in manosphere messaging forums by type: men's rights activists (MRAs)—men who claim men are losing their rights relative to women; men going their own way (MGTOWs)—men who are fed up with women and are living their life without them; pick-up artists (PUAs)—men who serially date

women; and involuntary celibates (incels)—men who want a wife or girlfriend but cannot figure out how to get one.

The focus of the study was to learn more about how such messaging groups are evolving, because prior research has shown that some of the groups in the manosphere are becoming radicalized—particularly incels. The work involved applying a machine-learning system called Perspective that Google created—it looks for instances of words and their types and categorizes them. In this case, the researchers used it to find words that were part of toxic discussions on web-based services such as subreddits and to track which types of groups were posting them. The team ran it on data from 2015 to the time of their request. In all, the researchers analyzed 38.4 million messages on seven message boards, including 57 subreddits.

The report produced by Perspective showed that the number of messages along with the number of men posting messages in the "tamer" groups such as MRA groups decreased over the time period studied. Meanwhile, the number of messages and the number of men posting them in the more radical groups, such as those for incels, increased. They suggest that such an evolution in the manosphere indicates that these groups are becoming more radicalized—a possible indication of an increased risk for [women](#). They note that in 2014, a self-described incel named Elliot Rodger stabbed and shot random people near the University of California, Santa Barbara, killing six and wounding 13.

More information: From Pick-Up Artists to Incels: A Data-Driven Sketch of the Manosphere, arXiv:2001.07600 [cs.CY] arxiv.org/abs/2001.07600

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