

# Misogyny as Medication:

## The Red Pill, Self-Help, and Neoliberal Masculinity

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### Introduction

The Red Pill is a central tenet of many men's identity communities online. Drawing on an evolutionary psychology framework, proponents claim that women are naturally manipulative and self-interested, and that feminism has given them social and political dominance over men.

***What leads men to engage with Red Pill content, and how do they make sense of its claims?***

### Theoretical Background

***Neoliberal masculinity:*** Hegemonic forms of masculinity are privileged under the logic of neoliberalism, with characteristics of individualism, competitiveness, and rationalism closely associated with understandings of successful behavior.

***Self-help:*** Narratives of personal transformation often reflect a valuing of individual responsibility, potentially at the expense of addressing social or political forces.

### Data & Methods

18 interviews with viewers of Red Pill content

- 8 currently supportive viewers
- 8 formerly supportive viewers
- 2 unsupportive or "oppositional" viewers

### Results

Engagement with Red Pill content was facilitated by its self-help framing, as participants came to accept its misogynistic framework because it was perceived as helpful in addressing personal dissatisfactions.

"It's almost a self-help cult a bit because a lot of its ideas are helpful, you know: Go to the gym more... Eat healthier, act more confident. But they tie these ideas to masculinity. They say these things are extremely masculine, and that it's being taken away from you."

Red Pill advice appeals to a set of "alpha male" values consistent with neoliberal masculinity:

- Ambition, resourcefulness, and high performance
- Stoicism and unemotionality
- "Frame", defined as one's "sense of self" that should not be compromised under any circumstances
- Rationalism, including in interpersonal relationships
- Dominance towards both women and "beta males"

If participants found that Red Pill advice was not helping them, they adopted various responses to make sense of this failure:

- Self-blame and shame
- Rejection of the Red Pill worldview
- Adoption of the Black Pill, which maintains a belief in the Red Pill's gender hierarchy but positions men's status within it as innate and unchangeable