

The Digital Making of Real Monsters: The Escalation Process of Online Commitment to an Antisocial Identity

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Abstract. Online communities can bring many wonderful benefits. But there is a dark side to the availability of online communities. An example is the lone wolf, i.e. extremely violent acts committed by a single individual who emanates from a community on the dark side. The purpose of this paper is to explain the process by which digital communities spawn the lone wolf. The process involves the escalation of individual's identification with traits that are antisocial. This research aims at providing an elaborated explanation of the mechanisms that lead single individuals to act violently offline. We argue that in the highly specialized online interactions context, self-presentation motives are underexplored in escalating commitment situations. This theory has the power to explain why individuals keep acting towards questionable endeavors.

Keywords: escalation of commitment; social identity; online communities; process explanation